THE CRIMSON CONQUEST

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A Romance of Pizarro and Peru

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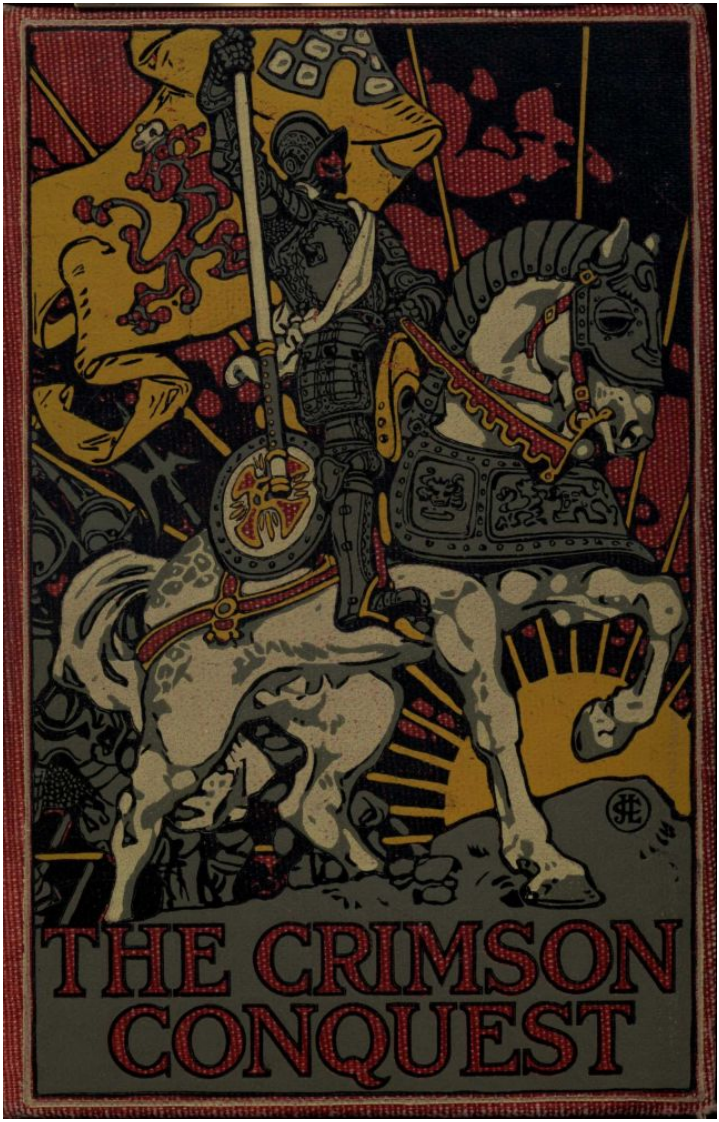

Cover art

"Quick!" Cristoval whispered, "They are upon us!" (Page 196)

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FOREWORD

This tale is to be of days when the green forest-aisles and mountain trails of America saw the glint of the steel of men in armor. It will have to do with times when the aborigine looked upon the sparkle of lance, the flutter of pennon, the gleam of corselet, helm, and morion, and felt his primeval turf tremble beneath the hoofs of steeds in full panoply. It will tell of plumed and plated cavaliers, "In brave pursuit of chivalrous emprise," who found in the wilderness of the New World adventures no less hardy, and near as strange, as any fabled one encountered by knight of old.

It is easily half forgotten that our continent has its chronicles which link us with the age of chivalry; that its soil once sustained the march of men armed cap-a-pie, as bold of heart, greedy for renown, and thirsty for blood, as ever a crusader. They came, proof-valiant against all peril; of a fire-eating, eager courage surpassed alone by their truculence and cruelty; of a courage to meet not only dangers real, but a myriad direful ones born of fancy. For they were, withal, men of imagination and fine, wide credulity. They peopled the West with Amazons, giants, dragons, and legions of beings of varied and curious monstrosity. They were prepared in mind not only to fight battles, but to encounter sorcerers, witches, and the Fiend himself; to undergo all manner of spells, charms, enchantments, and kindred grisly experiences and phenomena. They sought earnestly, conscientiously, and with diligence, for golden Manoa and its emperor, El Dorado, and for the Fountain of Perpetual Youth. If they failed to come upon these, and did no preternatural deeds, they were none the less heroes, animated by the spirit of knight-errantry, which with them took its final leave of earth.

THE CRIMSON CONQUEST

CHAPTER I

Booty from Peru

Toward the end of a day in the year Fifteen Hundred and Thirty-one, as the air cooled slightly with the sun's decline, the plaza of the little Spanish city of Panama grew languidly animate. The square had blazed, shimmered, and baked

all day, shunned in its fervor except by those compelled to cross it in order to avoid the exertion of going round, or by the few straggling natives whose half-naked bodies and sun-tanned hides were proof; but this was the hour of listless awakening, and groups formed at the corners, exchanging gossip—if by a blessing there was gossip to exchange—and awaiting the sole break in the sultry monotony of the day, the evening parade of the garrison with its stimulating bang of the culverin at sunset.

The dominant type in these groups was that of the fighting man. Some were sailors, a few were planters; but most of the swarthy faces wore the unmistakable marks of the soldier. The dress and bearing of a small number indicated rank; but all, save a sprinkling of ecclesiastics and civil officers of the Crown, were adventurers, and bore evidence, in their worn apparel, in their scars, and in their bronzed and weatherbeaten features, of severe campaigns and hardship.

This particular evening the ceremony of the parade received less than usual attention. Two ships had entered the harbor the day before, bearing news and plunder from Francisco Pizarro's expedition to the coast of South America. The inn at the side of the plaza was full of men. Its wineshop was overflowing, but the rattle of dice, the oaths, and controversy were wanting. In front lounged a crowd, thickening at the door, where swayed lazily a banner displaying a device new to heraldry,—the arms of Pizarro. At the portal stood a halberdier in corselet and morion fresh-burnished, recounting with vaunt and gasconade an alluring tale of rapine, which was heard with varying degrees of interest, credulity, or scepticism. There was no enthusiasm. Some sauntered doubtfully away. A few heeded, and finally entered the door. Within, there was more animation.

Behind a table near the rear, leaning comfortably against the wall, his legs sprawled under the board and his hands thrust into his belt, sat a sturdy cavalier. He was listening with some amusement to the excited comments of the men about him as they passed a golden bracelet of barbaric design which he had tendered for their inspection. He was between thirty-five and forty years old—perhaps nearer the latter. His sunbrowned countenance gave the impression of being stern, almost fierce. A close-shorn beard, nearly black, covered a firm, well-formed jaw, and with the trim cut of his hair, suggested a care of person conspicuous among the rough-looking campaigners in the room. The upward twist of his mustachios and strongly aquiline nose gave his face a pronounced military character, borne out presently, when he straightened up from his lounging attitude, by the erect bearing and squareness of shoulder that belong to the soldierly calling. A closer view dispelled the first notion of fierceness, for from the ruggedly marked brows looked a pair of dark eyes, clear, frank, well lined about with crow's-feet, and enlivened by good humor.

While he conversed with those nearest, the bracelet circulated from hand

to hand, was scrutinized, bitten, rung upon the tables to test its metal, and was finally handed back by a seedy-looking soldier, who observed: "By my faith, Señor Cristoval, that bauble hath the proper color. There is more of yellow in its complexion than I've seen for many a day. Thou mayst set me down. I go to Peru. *Hola! camaradas*, d'ye hear? I go to Peru. Who will follow?"

His example and the lure of the gold had their sure effect. In a moment the officer was busy with his pen, while an eager group leaned over the table to watch as he wrote their names and answers to his brisk questions. Their enthusiasm spread among the loungers outside, and before it subsided a dozen or more enlisted for the expedition. Most of the recruits were half-starved fellows who had idled about the colony for months, unable to secure employment for their swords since the rebellion in Nicaragua had been suppressed, and disdainful of work less honorable. A few were fully equipped, but many had sold, pawned, or gambled away their arms and armor, and had only their rapiers, which they retained as a necessity. During this first day of recruiting, a score had been sent to the temporary quarters, with instructions first to gather up or locate whatever of equipment they could find.

Candles had been brought, the room had nearly emptied, and the officer was arranging his papers, when he heard the sound of hoofs and the voice of the halberdier, evidently addressing a rider.

"*Hola*, Pedro! Blessed Faith! Is it thou?"

The response was not immediate, and the creaking of the saddle, with sundry grunts and adjurations to the animal, indicated that the newcomer was dismounting. The operation was made difficult by the fact that he had a wooden leg, the left having been taken off at the knee. He puffed as he finally stood, but presently answered the soldier in a voice of much volume and with uncommon blandness and fluency.

"It is I,—that is, my solid parts. Of the rest, those volatile are volatilized; those meltable, melted and bedewing the grass along my trail. Thou seest but a parboiled residuum. Wilt hold my mule?"

"Hold thy mule!" replied the halberdier, with proper soldierly scorn. "Not I, by the fiend!"

"Nay! Keep thy temper, my lusty buck soldier," said the other, with suavity. "I meant no flattery."

"Flattery!"

"In offering thee the privilege.—Here, boy," he called to a half-breed urchin, "guard my steed. But keep in front of him, for he hath a twofold nature,—tenderhearted to a fault as far as the saddle-girth; behind it, maleficent as the powers of evil." He turned again to the soldier. "Is this thy recruiting office, *Señor Alabardero*?"

"Ah!" assented the halberdier. "But, *Sacramento*! Dost think to enlist, Pedro?"

"And why not?" demanded Pedro.

"Why, if I can count, thou hast legs too few by half."

"Then thou canst not count, for I have three. Two I have with me,—one mine by right of birth, the other by right of purchase, and of as good wood as that of which thy head is made. The third lieth in Italy, four feet under ground, but still mine, *nihilo minus*,—which is Latin, my friend, and meaneth 'nevertheless.' But dost require more legs in thy recruits, halberdier? If so, it must be a running game, this campaigning in Peru."

"*Bastante*!" growled the soldier. "Thou hast legs enough, and tongue enough, God wot!"

"Good! Then I'll enter. Who is the officer?"

"Lieutenant Cristoval de Peralta."

"I've heard of him," said Pedro, and stumped into the room. Cristoval looked up, to behold a man ten years his senior, slightly corpulent, with a full round face, now reddened by the heat and exertion of riding, which he mopped vigorously as he advanced with sombrero under his arm. Smooth-shaven, somewhat bald, and with gray hair closely cropped, there was a suggestion of the priest or monk in his countenance, further aided by the genial benignancy of his expression. A frock would, indeed, have made him the most jovial-looking of ecclesiastics, and his well-fed and comfortable appearance would have helped the disguise. A large mouth, a nose formidable but well shaped, and eyes with ever a lurking twinkle, made up a face to be warmed to at first glimpse. The precision of his salute left no doubt in Cristoval's mind that the missing leg had been lost on the battle-field, and he surveyed the man with interest.

"Let me not interrupt, *Señor Teniente*," said Pedro. "I am in no hurry."

"I have finished," replied Cristoval. "How can I serve thee?"

"Thou'rt recruiting for Pizarro?"

Cristoval nodded, thinking of the rabble already enrolled that day, and wondering whether this one-legged veteran purposed offering himself.

"*Bien!*" said Pedro. "I would join the expedition."

"But thou'rt maimed, *compadre!*"

"*Como asi*! Just so!" replied the other, with a wave of the hand. "I'm not all here, as the cannoneer observed when his pieces were scattered over a thousand yards by the explosion of his gun. But there is enough of me for the purpose, señor, for I am a cook,—a *cantinero*. I seek not to enlist, but the privilege of filling a moderate space aboard thy brigantine with myself, my helper, called Pedrillo, and such stores and gear as will fit a canteen."

"Draw up a chair," said Cristoval, pleased with the cook's manner. "We will

consider it. Thy name?"

"Pedro."

"So I heard thee called by the halberdier."

"Ah!—the rest of my name? H'm! Why, I'll tell thee, señor, I have not always been a cook—and—pardon me—"

"I see," said Cristoval, with delicacy. "*No importa.* We'll let it go. Thou'rt Pedro."

Pedro bowed. After some conversation the arrangement was made. "Now," said Cristoval, "there are three or four of us from the ship quartered together, and we need a cook. There is Ruiz, the pilot; José, the principal armorer; and I look for De Soto from Nombre de Dios. He is to command when we sail. Couldst take charge of the *rancho* whilst we remain in Panama? Couldst begin at once? Good! Then 'tis agreed. I've taken the inn kept by Señora Bolio for quarters for the company, but her cooks are all Indios and worthless, and—What aileth thee, man?"

At the señora's name Pedro opened his mouth, pushed back his chair, and sat looking at the cavalier in manifest disquiet. "Bolio!" he whispered. "Bolio! Dost know her, *Señor Teniente*?"

"No. What of her?" demanded Cristoval, remembering that certain of his recruits had heard her name with similar uneasiness. "I saw her only for a moment when we came ashore yesterday. Dost know her, thou?"

Pedro turned away with a gesture as if to wave him off. He faced about. "Do I know her! Warily and charily, señor—as a pup knoweth the family cat! Ah, *Madre*! Lieutenant Cristoval, she hath a tongue like a flail—like a red-hot rapier. Thou shouldst hear her storm—at some other man—when she is roused! Nay, smile not! I once heard her berating her servants, and they wilted, withered, shrivelled like spiders on a hot skillet. Ah, stew me! Bolio!"

"Thou dost stir mine interest, Pedro," said Cristoval. "Who is the lady?"

Pedro laid a broad hand upon the table with suppressed vehemence. "Bolio!" he replied, as if nothing could be added.

"I know little save from hearsay, señor," he continued; "she was a *vivandera* with the armies in Italy in her youth. Thou knowest that training. *Diablo*! I saw her in the Neapolitan campaign against Louis XII."

Cristoval interrupted. "What! Didst serve with Gonsalvo?"

"With the Great Captain," said Pedro.

"Then, by Saint Michael, we were comrades!"

Pedro nodded without surprise, and continued quickly: "She had beauty then, señor. Poor girl! She was learning, by hard experience, to hold all men her enemies. She hath not forgotten. I heard of her again in the campaign of '22, and again at Pavia, where I left my leg. After that, no more until I found her here at

Panama, two years ago. It is said she worked her way hither from Spain, disguised as a common sailor, and I doubt it not, for I have known of another woman who did as much. *Por cierto*, her eloquence was not gained in camps alone! It hath the savor of the sea as well, and she commandeth the most vigorous that each affordeth, my head upon it! But whatever her youth, Señor Cristoval, the saints preserve the man who would turn a soft eye upon her to-day. She weigheth, I should guess, some twelve or fourteen stone. 'T is all hostility!"

Cristoval reflectively gathered up his papers. "Well," he said, "we can pray for peace. Let us go."

"Whither?" asked Pedro.

"To the señora's."

"*Misericordia*! I think I had best ride back to my *hacienda* for the night, *Señor Teniente*."

"How far?" asked Cristoval.

"Three leagues or less."

"Absurd, Pedro! Thou 'rt to begin thy duties in the morning. Come."

Accompanied reluctantly by the stout cook leading his mule, and followed by the halberdier, Cristoval led down a narrow, garbage-littered street to a large house built around the usual patio. It had been the residence of some officer of government, and its size made it suitable for the recruiting officer, the poverty of whose levies made it necessary to provide for their keep before sailing to join Pizarro. They entered the suggestively quiet court, and having seen that his recruits had made proper use of the kitchen, Cristoval gave orders concerning quarters for the night, and ascended to the second floor in quest of the señora. He found her alone in a dim-lighted, lofty, bare-walled apartment,—the salon of the establishment in its better days.

The señora was a black-haired, black-eyed woman of generous proportions. She wore, now and generally, an air of stern repression of what Cristoval, after Pedro's account, knew to be the hostility mentioned. Notwithstanding the marring effects of a stormy career on her rather florid face, she was not uncomely. Her eyes were those of her race, which seem always smouldering with the fire of passion, gentle or the reverse as the case may be. She received the cavalier with dignity; heard his explanation of Pedro's status; directed, coldly, that her servants be called upon for assistance, and Cristoval bowed himself away with

relief.

CHAPTER II

The Señora Declares a Purpose

The next day the whole city crowded to look upon the booty from Peru, on display at the office of the governor, and many an adventurer, after feasting his eyes on the gleaming treasure, went straight to the door beneath the banner of the "Army of the Conquest." Thereafter the recruiting went on rapidly, and the Bolio establishment soon wore the appearance of a barrack. When sufficiently advertised the office was transferred from the square, and now the banner floated over the Bolio gate.

The arrival of Hernando de Soto with a small company lent new impetus. The participation of a leader of his reputation gave confidence to many who had hesitated to enlist in an enterprise which had already met serious reverses and was led by one commonly regarded as visionary. Neither Pizarro nor his partner, Diego de Almagro, had been known as other than needy soldiers of fortune, and not even the countenance given by the Crown of Spain had raised them above the derisive scepticism of Panama. It had long been incredulous regarding a rich and civilized empire to the southward, and had been niggardly in its support. The two preceding expeditions had met disaster complete; but the leaders persisted with unconquered resolution, and the matter began to assume moment. There were scoffers still, but many who had held aloof hastened to offer service. Most of the levies were drawn by mere hope of plunder, or driven by sheer necessity. Some were impelled by ambition for the sort of glory won by the conquerors of Mexico. A few were attracted by the audacity and perseverance of the commander, but these qualities were not uncommon enough to give Pizarro preëminence among men of a race then unsurpassed in its soldiery, and of all considerations they weighed the least.

Whatever the motives that led recruits to Pizarro's banner, they comprised all sorts and conditions of men, from the noble and hidalgo to the fugitive from the law—younger sons of ancient families bearing historic names; veterans of European wars, free-lances from every country on the northern shores of the Mediterranean. It was a band as mixed as the swarms of pirates infesting the Indies in later years, and hardly less ferocious in hunger for blood and plunder.

The days flew quickly, and few remained before the command should embark. Considering the character of the men, the preparations had gone on smoothly. But there had been, it must be said, certain flurries, even small tempests, from another source. These episodes were due to the temperament and powers of Señora Bolio. This worthy lady proved to be a slumbering volcano—yet not always slumbering—with potentialities that justified the impressive words of Pedro. She erupted unexpectedly, for causes unforeseen, and spread sudden confusion throughout the establishment. There would be heard from time to time in the patio a quick disturbance, a scurrying of soldiery, and then a tirade in the deep tones of the señora, matchless for rapid invective. Perhaps a soldier, a newcomer to Panama, would venture to oppose her eloquence with his own, like in kind, but feeble in comparison. It was only to court defeat and humiliation.

To Cristoval, at first amusing, it soon grew monotonous, and as his time became precious, an annoyance and irritation. He appealed, to Pedro, in whom there might lie hope.

"In the name of the fiend, Pedro," said he, "canst suppress that woman? If so, do it—in a gentle way if possible; for she is a woman. Those varlets below deserve their flaying, but it groweth wearisome."

Pedro shook his head. "I doubt if she could be estopped by anything short of strangulation. However, I'll cast about." But he muttered as he moved away: "Now the saints lend me their protection! This is what cometh of being a cook."

Thereafter, when the lady broke out, Pedro, with marvellous patience, would go to the patio, approach her with all deference, and oppose her torrent with an equal flood of apologies, assurances, entreaties, compliments, and cajoleries, with splendid versatility. And however great her rage, the moment would come when Madame would stop to listen—and be undone. The cook would thereupon lead her ceremoniously to her door, bow her across the threshold, and return to his kitchen leaving the lady appeased. But having regained his privacy, Pedro would swear roundly.

These repeated softenings were not without their effect upon the señora. This effect was cumulative. As the days went by it grew apparent that in her hostility toward mankind she made the suave *cantinero* an exception. This he noticed at first with natural complacency. Later, when her attitude became one of tolerant friendliness, he blessed his stars, vowing privately that his circumspection should be without a flaw. Still later, as a consequence, the señora's amiability grew more pronounced, expressed by small favors, and even by occasional invitations to sup. The good Pedro's serenity increased, and its influence seemed to spread over the establishment. Alas for his tranquillity, for its life was short! The señora had speaking eyes, and as they looked with growing favor upon the gracious cook, they softened in a measure that could never have escaped one less

unsuspecting than he.

Pedro went his placid way, unconscious of the growing tenderness, until a glance awoke him to his peril. There was no doubt, no need of words to interpret. It was only a glance in passing, but Pedro looked after the lady in consternation. As she passed he crossed himself, stood a moment, then deserted his task and stumped with precipitation to the first refuge—to Cristoval. The cavalier looked up as the cook entered. Pedro sank into a chair.

"Ho! Pedro, what is to do?" demanded the cavalier, surveying his agitation with concern. "What hath happened?"

Pedro stared at him in silence, with parted lips, and in abstraction. He seemed not to have heard the question, nor to see his questioner, in the absorption of contemplating the tacit revelation of a moment before, with the possible complexities to follow. Señora Bolio's avowal was unspoken, but how long would the silence be preserved? And with the ardor of that impetuous nature turned to tender passion, with her boundless powers of utterance directed against him as its object!—ah, *Dios!* what would become of him?

Again Cristoval demanded, more than half alarmed: "What is it, Pedro? Name of a saint! Why dost stare in that ghastly way? Come! Speak, man! Hast lost thy tongue?"

Pedro, still speechless, gathered up his apron and wiped his forehead; placed a fist upon either knee, and glowered at the floor. Cristoval leaned back in astonishment. Never before had Pedro's language failed. Once more the cook passed his apron across his brow, glanced again at Cristoval, arose abruptly, and went as far as the door. Here he paused, hesitated, then turning back, whispered hoarsely, "Señor Cristoval, by the gods of heathens, I've—I've overdone it!"

"Overdone it! Overdone what, thou mysterious cook?" But Pedro had gone.

He regained his kitchen by stealth, moving by short dashes, with many a halt to reconnoitre. His boy-helper, Pedrillo, was there, and approaching, Pedro clutched him by the arm. "Pedrillo," he said solemnly: "Pedrillo, have I been good to thee?"

Pedrillo looked up with wide-open eyes. "Why—bodkins!—of a surety, Master! Who saith not?"

"No one hath said. But hear me, Pedrillo!—as thou hopest some day to be a cook, stay by me! Stay by me! Dost understand? Until we are safe aboard ship, leave me not for a minute!—not a minute!"

"*Cielo!*" exclaimed the astonished boy. "What is wrong, señor? Do—do you have fits?"

"It will be worse than fits, Pedrillo," replied Pedro, seriously, "if thou failest me an instant. Promise!"

Pedrillo promised, swore to it, and for the rest of the day watched his patron

in mystification. Thereafter the cook slept with his heavy furniture piled against the door.

Pedrillo kept his word as far as possible; but vigilance cannot be eternal, and sometimes Pedro was alone. On one of these occasions the worst befell. The señora entered. That she came with fell purpose Pedro divined at a glance. He saw flashes of soft lightning in her eyes, more dreaded now than the blaze of her ire. Instinctively he placed himself with the table between.

The lady looked quickly about, and approaching, said in a tone he had not heard her use before, "Pedro, I have a word for thee."

"Oh, the fiend, señora!" he interrupted, paling slightly and looking for Pedrillo. "Say it to some one else—now do! There's a good woman! I—stew me!—I am a busy man. I have a roast on the point of burning, I swear it! Come, now, I—"

"It is for thee, Pedro," she said with resolution, but Pedro noted with relief that she spoke slowly. He had expected a storm of tender protestations without prelude, as vehement as her upbraidings of the men. "It is for thee," she said again, and Pedro quailed.

"Nay, Señora Bolio," he pleaded. "Be discreet, I pray thee! Talk of it first to—to Father Gregorio, now. Thou'rt young, and—" The señora blushed, and Pedro cursed the slip. Said she:

"I will talk to Father Gregorio later, Pedro; but first to thee."

Pedro groaned, and swore under his breath. "Hold, señora!" he cried. "Thou 'rt making a mistake. Say it not to me—to some other man. To Peralta—to De Soto! They are good men both; but I—"

"And so art thou!" she said hastily, "though once I did think thee a knave, like the rest."

"Ah! So I am! So I am!" cried Pedro with impetuosity. "That and worse, my word for it! I am a very Turk—a basilisk! Señora, thou knowest not the depth of mine iniquities—and moreover, I have but one leg. Consider that! Peralta hath two good ones. I am incomplete—a cripple—a—"

"Oh, Pedro, thou 'rt the only man I ever knew!" interrupted the lady, with fervor; then, rapidly: "Thou 'rt a good man, Pedro, and hast a kindly heart. Not once beneath this roof hast thou used an unbecoming word to me. Whilst these scapins of soldiers have tried my patience with their insolence, thou hast spoken only with gentleness—and 'tis rare enough to me—rare enough, God knoweth!" She brushed away a coming tear. "But I have come to tell thee, Pedro—"

"Do not say it! Do not say it!" shouted Pedro in desperation. "I tell thee, señora—"

"But I will say it," she said with a sudden return of firmness. "And why not? I've come to tell thee—I am going to Peru. Why should I not say it?"

Pedro staggered. "Is that all?" he exploded. "Is that all? Naught else?"

"Numskull!" retorted the lady. "Is it not enough? What more wouldst have me say?"

"Nothing more, by the Sacrament! 'Tis enough! Why didst not say it in the beginning?" and Pedro's good knee grew suddenly weak, as if he had been snatched from death. The señora regarded him kindly for a moment, and went on:

"I am going to Peru—not now, for De Soto hath denied me passage—but later. I'll find thee, good Pedro. We shall meet again." Pedro's jaw set, but he said nothing.

She took a step forward and said gently, "Pedro—" Pedrillo entered, almost embraced by his master, who at once became feverishly occupied in a variety of duties. The señora tarried a moment and withdrew, with a smile to Pedro, who sank into a chair and used his apron on his forehead with industry, pausing at intervals with his hands on his knee to glower at the floor. The señora was going to Peru!

De Soto took command a few days later, and the force marched to the Cathedral, where solemn High Mass was celebrated and the sacrament partaken of by every soldier. The two brigantines for the expedition rode at anchor off the town; before midday they were standing out to sea.

You may learn, Reader, from history, how Pizarro, strengthened by De Soto's reënforcement, descended upon the Peruvian city of Tumbez, and how he found it in ruins, the result of a civil war between the two heirs of the Inca Huayna Capac. The old monarch had left his domain to be divided between the princes Atahualpa and Huascar, fatuously hoping that either would be content with less than the whole. For five short years the brother kings had reigned in peace. Atahualpa, younger of the two, was son to a princess of Quito, a kingdom conquered by his grandfather. He was an ambitious and warlike ruler, and to him fell Quito as Huayna Capac's bequest. To the elder brother, Huascar, fell Cuzco, the ancient capital, and the southern part of the empire. Huascar was the son of the legitimate wife of Huayna Capac, a woman of the Inca blood; and although a wise and generous king, he was inferior to Atahualpa in aggressive energy. Causes were not long wanting for war. Huascar was vanquished, and when Pizarro landed at Tumbez, was prisoner in the fortress of Xauxa. Thus much, briefly, Pizarro learned concerning the country he was invading, and that Atahualpa with his victorious army lay at the interior town of Caxamalca, some three hundred miles to the southward.

You may read, furthermore, how the Spaniard, tarrying not long at ruined

Tumbez, marched down along the coast, peaceably for the most part, by rigid restraint of his men, and was hospitably welcomed by the wondering natives. Three weeks he marched, proclaiming the temporal sovereignty of the King of Spain, the spiritual sovereignty of the Pope of Rome, unfolding his banners, and formally recording as acknowledgment of vassalage the acquiescence of the Peruvians to manifestoes of whose sense they had no inkling. Fine hardihood! With a handful of men—fewer than two hundred and fifty—Pizarro was invading an empire of whose civilization and warlike character there was ample evidence. He was calmly laying claim to the realm of a prince whose power he could not guess!

Toward the end of May he halted in the fertile vale of Tangarala, near the sea, and announced his purpose to build a town. And build a town he did! He pressed the natives into service, and they quarried the stone and hewed the timber for buildings as solid as his own intrepidity. He named the place San Miguel.

Four months were consumed in establishing this base. On the twenty-fourth of September the Army of the Conquest took up its march to meet the legions of the Inca. The command, reduced by the number left at San Miguel, mustered seventy horse, one hundred infantry, and two small pieces of artillery.

CHAPTER III

Nipping a Conspiracy

The column found convenient halting places in the caravansaries, or *tambos*, established for the troops of the Inca. These were of great extent, with barracks, magazines, and extensive fortifications. They afforded more than ample security for Pizarro's force, and he availed himself of their shelter and stores of food without scruple.

Five days out from San Miguel there occurred an incident but for which this story had not been written,—an incident, not only of momentous import to the fortunes of Cristoval in its sequence, but one which threatened as well to end Pizarro's dream of conquest.

The command had halted at a *tambo*, finding it, as usual, ungarrisoned. Details were quickly made for guard and other duties, and Cristoval was assigned to command a patrol to reconnoitre the neighboring village. An hour after sunset the detachment returned, and Cristoval went to his quarters to disarm. De Soto

entered a moment later, and together they repaired to Pedro's.

The portly cook had already established himself as no mean adjunct of the expeditionary force, and at every halt set up his *cantina*, opened his wineskins, and served whatever broils, fries, or stews his unscrupulous energy as a forager made possible. He was a good cook, his kettles and spits always held something more savory than the kitchens of the companies afforded, and as a consequence he was well patronized by the soldiers, of whatever rank. On the march, with Pedrillo leading his two pack mules, himself astride of an ambling gray, his peg-leg in a stirrup specially contrived, his saddle festooned with vegetables and other predatory trophies, he brought up the rear or jogged along beside the column, bantering the soldiers, telling droll stories, or singing ballads of doubtful propriety. When camp was made, headquarters were not established more promptly than Pedro's cook shop, and from sunset until closed by the rounds it was full of men, eating, gambling, or drinking *chicha*, the native beverage distilled from maize.

Places were made for the two cavaliers at one of the tables, and soon Pedro limped across the room, wiping his hands on an apron once white. "Well, Señor Cristoval," said he, lounging against the table, "what news?"

"News? I'm hungry."

"No news at all!" retorted Pedro. "Who ever knew thee otherwise? I have better. A few more turns, and I'll have a haunch of llama done to a brown; and it will taste none the worse for the fact that it is a misdemeanor for anyone but an Inca—a noble, that is—to eat of it."

"Oh, Pedro, thou prince of foragers!" exclaimed Cristoval. "How camest thou by it?"

"Why," said Pedro, "I made an excursion this morning with my boy."

"Unhappy Peru! Well?"

"Well, we met a herder on the road, a few miles back, with a beautiful drove. We dismounted, my boy and I, and I paraded my wooden leg to the marvel of the Indio; took a pack of cards from my saddle-bag and wrought divers tricks of magic—vanishing cards and the like—thou knowest; swallowed a horseshoe nail and took it out of mine ear; swallowed it again and took it out of his ear. He was spellbound with wonder—turned to stone, as if he had looked upon the ægis of Minerva,—and at this juncture my boy threw his jacket over the head of one of the calves, or lambs, or colts, or pups, or whatever Heaven may be pleased to call the offspring of these heathen quadrupeds, and vanished into the bush. He might have removed the herd entire! I patted the Indio on the back, embraced him as a brother—found he had no pockets!—and sent him on his way. When last we saw him his jaws were still agape!"

As Pedro finished, his face grew red, his eyes closed in a convulsion which

gradually extended over his broad body, and from the depths came a succession of wheezes that shook his frame. He made no other sound. Apoplexy seemed imminent, and Cristoval exclaimed:—

"Gods, man! Be sparing of thy laughter, if that is the form it taketh. Thou 'rt too plethoric to do it safely, Pedro!"

Pedro's symptoms subsided, and he stumped away to send Pedrillo with the roast.

A few minutes later an orderly entered, seeking De Soto. The latter rose, and, saying that he would return presently, followed the messenger, leaving Cristoval dawdling over his supper. There were few besides himself in the room—a spacious apartment with walls of unadorned stone, a flagged floor, and great doors opening upon the court. In the rear Pedro had his fire on the pavement, the smoke escaping through a hole in the roof, which, like all thus far seen, was of thatch. Rough tables and benches had been thrown together by the soldiers, always willing to do Pedro a service, and in the corner sat two troopers and three or four of the infantry. They had been conversing over their *chicha*, with heads together, and evidently occupied with a subject of interest. After De Soto went Cristoval noted casually that they were referring to him and glancing in his direction. Finally Moreno, one of the troopers, caught his eye, and beckoned him to join them. He sauntered over.

"Sit, *compañero*, and have a cup with us," said the trooper, pouring for him. "We would have thine opinion."

"My opinion!" said Cristoval, in slight surprise. "In what connection?"

"Regarding this," replied Moreno. "Thou hast soldiered enough to think with a cool head—to estimate chances for and against in a campaign. Now, what are thy views here? Thou knowest our strength,—some three-score horse, well equipped; a hundred foot, miserably equipped; two pieces of artillery, three arquebuses, a handful of arbalests. What force hath this Señor Inca whom we seek? God knoweth! We have heard, ten thousand warriors; again, fifty thousand; again, one hundred thousand. *Por cierto*, he may have at the beck of his finger every man and boy in his kingdom, not to say the women! Now, what will the Inca do with the Army of the Conquest some morning after breakfast? He will wipe it out! He will eat it up! We shall dance one merry fandango to his piping, and—pouf!—*Adiós, la Conquista*!"

"And copper-colored dames will rock their copper-colored brats in Spanish bucklers," added an infantryman named Juarez.

"And make soup in Spanish morions," growled another.

"Hast thought of these things?" asked Moreno.

"Aye, I have thought of them," replied Cristoval, "and I confess your prophecy seemeth not unlikely; but—"

"But the worst of the matter is that the farther we go the smaller our chance of plunder," continued Moreno. "At Coaque every varlet of the natives wore his gold and silver. They shed it at a poke of the finger in the ribs. Hereabouts the people are as innocent of precious metal as a flock of sheep."

"At Coaque, moreover," said Juarez, "we were not far from Quito, and if there was aught in the rumors concerning that city, the looting of it would load us all with what we seek. At any rate, if the Inca with his army lieth beyond these accursed mountains, he is not at Quito. We might have sacked the city and been away ere this, and getting the worth of our gold in pleasure at Panama."

Cristoval quietly sipped his *chicha*. "Well," said he at length, "what would you, Señores?"

"In brief, this," responded Moreno, emphatically. "Give over this hare-brained purpose of bearding the lion and being made meat for his whelps, and go back where we found gold in plenty."

"But the general hath planned otherwise," remarked Cristoval, revolving his cup. "Dost think he is a man to alter at our discontent? I think not."

"Most certainly he will not alter—so long as he hath followers," replied Moreno. "But if we refuse to follow?"

Cristoval eyed him for a second before answering. "But we have given oath to follow, Moreno."

"A witch's blessing upon our oaths!" exclaimed Juarez, hotly. "Have we given oath to jump into fire after this *loco*? I, for one, set value on my hide. Let him lead with his senses about him, and we will go! Otherwise, by—"

"Softly, softly, *amigo mio*!" interrupted Moreno, unwilling that the disaffection should be too outspoken until Cristoval was more thoroughly sounded. "As thou sayest, we will go with him, Juarez, but," he turned again to Cristoval, "we are losing time and golden opportunity. If we but drop this insane purpose of conquest, a month's campaigning, rightly directed, will make us all rich men—thee as rich as the rest, Peralta."

Cristoval pushed away his cup. "Waste not thy breath, Moreno. If you men are discontented, quit the expedition. Return to San Miguel without spreading your dissatisfaction. It were better."

Moreno bit his lip. "Art thou, then, as mad as Pizarro? Canst not see that every league we march toward the Inca doubleth our peril? Dost not see this seeming friendliness on the part of these heathens is only to lure us farther into the trap? And what have we gained thus far? Not a *maravedi*!"

"Enough, Moreno!" exclaimed Cristoval, with impatience. "I see the danger, *seguramente*! But better the danger than perfidy."

The last word was unwelcome. A foot-soldier swore, and a murmur rose from the group.

"Peace!" commanded Moreno, glancing at his fellows with darkened face. "Thou hadst best consider, Peralta. Listen," he lowered his voice and leaned over the table. "As a matter of truth, there is dissatisfaction among the men at rushing blindly against the Inca's unknown strength. They would have a more prudent leader, Cristoval, and—several have spoken of thee."

Cristoval blurted a sudden oath and pushed back from the table, glaring from one to another with kindling eyes. "What! Hath it gone so far?" he demanded. "Have ye settled the details of your treason? Furies and devils! And ye would have me one with your cursed scheme of mutiny? A more prudent leader, forsooth! By the saints, ye should have a swineherd! Ah! Have ye smelled an enemy, that ye've so suddenly lost your bowels for going farther? Then go back!—sneak back with your tails between your craven legs!"

Moreno sprang to his feet. The others rose with him, and a growl went up as they turned upon Peralta, several with swords half drawn. He remained seated, contemptuously ignoring the menace, and continued:—

"Thou hast asked mine opinion, Moreno, and, by Saint Michael, thou shalt have it to sleep over!—and these pig-driver's dogs of thine shall have it as well!"

However, they did not have it. His words were not uttered before a confused gleam and the sinister ring of steel went round the table, as every weapon was bared. In a flash Cristoval was on his feet, sword in hand. Moreno and Juarez vaulted over the table. The others came round its end, pell-mell, stumbling over one another in blood-thirsty eagerness. The soldier nearest was too close to use his blade, and before he could step back Cristoval felled him with the heavy hilt of his own; but felt the steel of the man behind as it grazed his side. He sprang back of the overturned bench and placed himself in the angle of the wall, his right partly protected by another table. They were upon him in the instant, but the confusion of their combined attack was in his favor. There was a lightning play of steel about him, but each of the assailants impeded the others. Aided in defence by a poniard in his left hand, Cristoval warded cut and thrust, and after a short moment of rapid clash and glitter his opponents fell back, one with a cheek laid open, another coughing from a thrust in the chest.

"Damn your zeal, learn a lesson of caution!" muttered Cristoval, and they were upon him again. This time the assault was circumspect. Moreno, by far the most formidable, had been hampered in the first attack by the crowding, but now he assured himself of ample room. Cristoval found himself hard pressed, and thrice he felt the burning of their points.

Meanwhile Pedro, who had gone out before the conflict began, reëntered and stood for a moment transfixed. The confusion was so great that he was unable to distinguish the sides opposed; but when he saw the danger of Cristoval he broke into a stream of oaths, dancing about, frantic at his own unarmed helpless-

ness. His boy stood petrified, a fork in hand, gazing at the battle. Pedro sprang at him.

"Fetch Pizarro!" he shouted. "Call the guard! Quick! Jump, thou imp, or I'll spit thee!"

The boy dashed out, and Pedro jerked a kettle of boiling soup from the fire, seized a ladle, and threw himself into the fight. A flood of the scalding liquor descended upon a pikeman, and he whirled upon the cook with a howl of rage, to be promptly knocked down by a blow from the heavy ladle. Shower after shower fell upon the group in front of Cristoval, carrying scalds, dismay, and demoralization. Blinded and smarting, they fell away from the attack, and Moreno, recognizing the source of the hot counter assault, lowered his head and charged the cook with his rapier. Pedro's ammunition was exhausted. He hurled his kettle, missed, fell backward over a bench, and rolled under a table, where Moreno was thrusting at him ineffectually when a heavy hand jerked him back, and Pizarro stood before him, black with anger. The guard had followed him in, and was already making the other combatants secure.

"How now?" Pizarro demanded hoarsely. "Fighting among ourselves? Name of God! Is Spanish blood so cheap that we can waste it in brawls?—Seize this man!" he commanded, turning to the guard.

Pedro had gathered himself together, and was lifting Cristoval out of the corner where he had fallen. A sentinel was posted at the door, and a soldier despatched to summon the officers. De Soto and José, the old armorer, had followed Pizarro, and Cristoval's cuts were quickly bandaged. The officers hurried in, a summary court was organized for inquiry, and the assailants, with the exception of three who were receiving rough surgical care, were lined up under guard, blistered and sullen.

Pedro's testimony was the first to be taken, but it gave no enlightenment regarding the origin of the affray, and Juarez was examined. He was disposed to be recalcitrant, but Pizarro ordered thumbscrews, and the sight of the instrument loosed his tongue. Discipline was enforced in those days by effective means. Juarez well knew what was coming. He glanced at the screws, at Pizarro, and shrugged his surrender; then, with apparent candor, he told of the conversation and of the growing discontent among the men. Pizarro ordered the prisoners into confinement, and they were marched away by the guard, their relief at escape from the thumbscrews marred by a vision of a courtmartial and the garrote on the morrow.

Cristoval was conveyed to his quarters, and Pedro immediately turned the management of the *cantina* over to Pedrillo, assuming the role of nurse as a matter of course.

About midnight he stepped outside the cavalier's door and stood for a mo-

ment enjoying the freshness of the night. The *tambo* was silent except for the footfalls of the sentinel at the gate, a murmur of voices from the guard-room, where the affair was being discussed, and an occasional sound from the distant stables. A light shone through Pizarro's door, and as Pedro stood a shadow passed and repassed within. An hour before dawn he again stepped into the square. The light still burned, and still the shadow came and went. Clearly Pizarro was having a bad night. Pedro shook his head and muttered an anathema upon all traitors.

In fact, Pizarro was having a bad night. On his stone table, weighted down by one of his steel gauntlets, lay the record of the summary court, left there by his secretary hours before. He could not read it, for he was unlettered; but he knew every word of its content. It told of sedition. He could only guess how far disaffection had spread, but the knowledge that the spirit was abroad had come with stunning effect. Hour after hour he paced the room, his footfall a dismal accompaniment to dismal reflections. After years he had almost reached his goal with an army at his back, only to feel the earth crumbling beneath him, undermined by cowardice and treachery. As he walked, his thin lips moved as if in prayer. But Pizarro was not praying. He was heaping black curses upon his riffraff soldiery.

José relieved Pedro at daybreak, and an hour after reveille the cook returned with breakfast for the wounded man. His jovial countenance was perfectly blank.

"Well, what news?" asked José. "Do the conspirators get the rack or the garrote?"

Pedro put down his burden with deliberation. "Thou 'rt a fool at guessing, José, and I another. Neither rack, nor yet garrote! Let me tell thee. After roll-call and reports the general stepped forward. He looked along the line, and the line stopped breathing. Torres, of the infantry, let fall his pike. Then Pizarro began to speak—as quietly as I am speaking now. He said it had come to his attention,—had come to his attention, José!—that there are certain ones among us who have lost enthusiasm—not that they are damned traitors, José, but have lost enthusiasm! He would say to these that the hour is critical; that it is big with events which it will need all our courage to meet bravely, as becometh Spaniards. He would have no man go forward who goeth not with a whole heart, and to such as had liefer return the road is open. With those who choose to follow him, few or many, it is his purpose to pursue the adventure to its end."

José resumed tearing bandages. "*Jesucristo!*" was his only comment.

"Stew me to rags!" observed Pedro with slow emphasis. After a pause he continued, "Didst ever see such a man, José? He staked much on a single throw. On my oath, I should not have been surprised to see half the army take the route to San Miguel! Hah! He would have no coacted, weak-kneed service, quoth he; but to my mind he chose a perilous way of stiffening it and weeding out

discontent. The rack were better. However, every cook hath his own way of cooking."

Before noon nine malcontents slunk out of the *tambo* and started back to San Miguel. Three wore bandages.

In a few days the march was resumed. Little fever resulted from Cristoval's wounds, and José pronounced him in condition, to go forward, borne in a litter.

CHAPTER IV

The Inca's Encampment

Six weeks later the Army of the Conquest was descending the eastern slope of the Maritime Cordillera into the interior valley of Caxamalca. Here, Pizarro learned, the Inca Atahualpa lay with fifty thousand warriors.

The march over the mountains had been one of toil and hardship, but the few Peruvians encountered had displayed nothing but hospitality. Two embassies from the Inca had met the invaders, bearing presents and assurances of welcome. The messages were translated by a young native, called by the soldiers Felipillo, who had been picked up on a former expedition, taught the Spanish language, many Spanish vices, and retained as interpreter. Through him the commander sent courteous replies, and, while neglecting no precaution, marched with a sense of security always.

To Cristoval, stretched helpless on his rude litter, the first few days had been torture. Later, however, a halt was made at a mountain village whose friendly *curaca*, or governor, proffered the use of his sedan with native bearers. They were hardy, sure-footed mountaineers, and thereafter Cristoval swung along with little discomfort. Halts were frequent, and some were protracted, for Pizarro hoped for reënforcements from San Miguel if ships should come from Panama, whither his partner, Almagro, had sailed in quest of fresh recruits. He tarried in vain, but the halts were favorable to Cristoval. His rugged health, aided by the bracing mountain air and the vigilant care of Pedro, hastened his recovery; and by the end of October his wounds were healed, though he had yet to regain his strength. He bore his inactivity with what patience there was in him, but with no prevision of the gratitude he should one day feel for those very wounds.

The Fifteenth of November saw the last day's march in the mountains. The column had for hours trailed down a rocky gorge, which at last opened upon a

full panorama of the valley of Caxamalca. It stretched out far below, a fertile and verdant plain, checkered with fields, damaskeened with the silver of rivulets and canals for irrigation, and traversed throughout its length by a fair river. Near its centre, gleaming in its setting of green, lay the town of Caxamalca, surrounded by orchards and gardens, and groves of willows, quinuars, and mimosas, in whose shelter could be descried the tinted walls of the cottages and villas of the suburbs.

Involuntarily, when the scene burst upon him, Pizarro reined his horse. His trumpeter sounded a halt, and De Soto, whose troop was in advance, rode up beside him, joined straightway by the officers of the staff. They surveyed the valley with amazement. Pizarro was the first to speak.

"*Maravilloso*!" he exclaimed. "Ha! Señores, what say you to it? Have your eyes ever beheld a fairer vale? Did I not know better, I could think myself in Andalusia—but, *Santa Madre*!—look beyond the river—at those hills!"

"Tents, as I live!" ejaculated De Soto, "and by the ten thousand."

"By the soul of me!" growled Hernando Pizarro, the eldest of the commander's four brothers. "Methinks, Francisco, thy dreams of conquest have overreached. Ho! good Father," he continued, turning with a grin to Valverde, the square-jawed chaplain of the expedition, "I'll presently call upon thee for a shrift. Meanwhile, do thou pray a little."

"Aye!" muttered Candia, the Greek captain of artillery, "pray a little, and have the other frocks at it with thee. We'll need all your supplications, and,"—to himself,—"the devil's aid besides."

The priest did not reply even with a glance. The commander had ridden a few paces in advance and was looking over the vast encampment below with as little emotion in his thin, sallow face as if the Inca's army were a flock of goats.

When the leading files of the column first caught sight of the distant encampment a shout arose and was quickly carried to the rear: "*El Inca! El Inca! El ejercito del Inca!*" and pikes and halberds were brandished with fierce enthusiasm. But as realization of the magnitude of the host came over them the demonstration gave place to ominous silence, and they gazed with something akin to consternation. Pizarro noticed the change, and looked back over the ranks with a barely perceptible curl of his lip. "Forward!" he said to the trumpeter, and moved down the trail.

The command wound its descent through the foothills, and at midday halted again. Pennons were affixed to lances, plumes to helmets, and the banners were uncovered and spread to the breeze. Here Cristoval demanded his horse, and, when Pedro protested, declared with emphasis that he was well, and if not well, then well enough; that in any event he would not go into the presence of an enemy borne in a litter, like a woman. So he mounted, though without his armor. The formation most favorable for action in case of attack was now adopted. The

infantry and artillery were placed in the middle of the column with cavalry in front and rear; and, with a small advance guard, the army debouched upon the plain.

No hostility met the Spaniards. As on the coast, they came upon knots of the natives gathered at the roadside, and these gazed upon the glittering, bannered pageant as if stupefied. When the outskirts of the town were, reached the afternoon was late, and rain, for some time threatening, set in with dreary steadiness. To their surprise they found here no sign of life. The last group of Indios had long been passed, and as the troops plashed along the muddy highway through the suburbs they were greeted only by silence and desertion. Cots and villas were numerous, but all closed and tenantless. They marched through a desolation emphasized by every mark of recent habitation. The people had fled at their coming as from a pestilence.

At length they were in the town. Here, too, vacancy and silent thoroughfares, awakened now to unwonted echoes by the ring of horses' hoofs and the rumble of the guns on the pavements. They entered through one of the poorer quarters, where the dwellings were of bricks of sun-dried clay, heavily thatched with straw, all of a single story, substantial, and severely plain. Toward the middle of the town they passed larger buildings of heavy masonry, whose blank walls, unbroken by window or decoration, wore a dull gloom and mystery which, indeed, pervaded the very air. The gray streets, depressingly regular and paved throughout, were unrelieved by a single tree or shrub or patch of sward. Over all a sombreness profound; no sign either, of welcome or hostility; only the apathy of abandonment everywhere.

The thoroughfare opened into a great plaza. Pizarro rode to the centre to direct the deployment of the column: on the right, cavalry; in the centre, artillery and foot; on the left, cavalry again; and in the rear, the pack train. The line formed in silence—a spiritless, sullen line, rain-soaked, mud-splashed, with drooping plumes and dripping banners; and oppressed withal by yonder vast encampment and the sense of being in the toils. The march was ended.

Patrols were detailed, scouring the town and its outskirts to make sure the desertedness was not merely apparent. Pizarro assembled his officers. He began with his customary terseness:—

"Señores, I purpose sending an embassy to the Inca at once. We must know better than we can judge from the cold reception he hath seen fit to accord to us how he regardeth our coming. We must know to-night. To-morrow we will govern our actions accordingly. So do thou go, Soto, and tell him we have come. Say that we have sailed across the seas from a great prince,—God save him!—to offer service and impart to him and his people the True Faith. Put it in a courtly way, but with no servility—thou knowest how—and say that we pray he will

honor us with a visit to-morrow.

"Remember that to these people we are superior beings, almost more than mortal. Carry thyself as a superior even to this emperor, and he'll not fail to credit thy assumption. Did he know our estate, do not doubt that he would hotly resent our pretension. In a word, by every look, gesture, and tone of thy voice strive to impress him. Display thy horsemanship, if there be opportunity,—he hath never seen a horse,—and hold thy chin well in the air. 'Tis important, Soto! Now go, and *Dominus vobiscum*. Take Felipillo and a dozen lances,—more if thou wilt."

The captain saluted, and, turning his horse, cantered to his troop to select a following for the perilous mission. In a few minutes, with fifteen chosen cavaliers, he was clattering down the street. Pizarro looked after him, and said, turning to his brother:

"Hernando, take twenty more and go with him. He hath too few."

The second detachment followed at a gallop.

Pizarro briefly surveyed the place. The plaza was enclosed on three sides by low stone buildings, thatched like the others, with great doors opening upon the square. At the western end, toward the Inca's encampment, rose a redoubt or citadel, overlooking the country and commanding the plaza, from which it was entered by a flight of steps. Hither Pizarro rode, dismounted, and ascended to the *terre-plein*, followed by his officers. Here he could view the Inca's position with the intermediate plain and its river. The road followed by De Soto led over a causeway extending from the town to the bank of the stream, and from time to time the watchers caught glimpses of the cavalcade, until it was finally lost to sight.

It was twilight when the detachment returned, but the dusk could not conceal its gloom. The result of the mission had not been cheering. De Soto and Hernando Pizarro dismissed their detail, and hastened to the commander to report the interview.

Cristoval was in his quarters in one of the large buildings on the square, seated with José over a flask of *chicha* when, an hour later, Pedro entered.

"Good evening, Señores," said he, smiling benignly. "My blessing—a cook's blessing. Ah, Cristoval, thou 'rt the first cheerful-looking man I've seen this night! 'Tis most commendable. Put a good face on 't, and discountenance the devil. *Hilarum semper fac te et lubentem*!—which meaneth, gentlemen, be cheerful and good-humored always—a good maxim just now, is it not?"

"Excellent!" replied Cristoval. "Sit and have a cup with us, Pedro. These be serious times."

"True!" said the portly cook, squeezing himself between the bench and the table with difficulty. "And there is something like demoralization abroad among the men. So many are clamoring to Father Valverde to be shriven that the good

priest is beside himself. *Terror incidit exercitui, bonum facit militem*—fear striketh the army and maketh the soldier good. They have just consecrated the building next the infantry quarters for a chapel—and 't is well placed, I'll swear, for not a pikeman but is a thief!—and there will be services all night. Pizarro goeth about among the men like their own father, blowing upon the embers of their extinguished courage. What a man! He knoweth neither fear nor doubt, and he can talk both out of any man who weareth ears. *Cara*! To-morrow might be a *fiesta* so far as it fasheth him. Just now I met him on the square. 'Hola, Pedro!' quoth he, 'hast heard? This pagan king cometh to-morrow for a visit, and I would give him a taste of Christian cooking. Canst scrape up a meal?' What d'ye think of that, Señores?—with the army in a cold sweat from looking at the Inca's camp and counting his tents!"

Cristoval smote the table with his fist. "By the fighting Saint Michael, he hath not his peer in armor!"

"No!" Pedro concurred with emphasis. "Thou sayst right, Cristoval. But the poor *veedor*! Have ye seen him? He hath been waddling about the square, swollen with consternation, now climbing to the fortress to stare at the campfires on the hills, now scuttling down again to tell how many there are; one minute praying, the next swearing, and the next bellowing like a calf that he is a civilian, no fighting man, and is misplaced. And misplaced he is, I'll take my oath! Pizarro locked him up at last, to prevent the panic he was beginning to spread. Gods, gentlemen! were I the commander I'd melt him and make him into tallow dips."

A bugle sounded in the square, and Cristoval exclaimed, rising, "Officers' call! The general hath something to say."

Pizarro had something of moment to say, and was in council with his officers through the night.

CHAPTER V

The Monarch and the Princess Rava

The entry of the Spaniards into Caxamalca had not been spirited, nor jubilant. But the rain, which had conspired with other depressing circumstances to dishearten them, ceased during the night, and the sixteenth of November broke with a cloudless sky. Its first light was greeted in the Peruvian camp by the clamor of trumpets, the wailing of conches and horns, and the thunder of drums—a war-

like and mighty dissonance which struck faintly upon the listening ears of the invaders in the town, and set many a good Christian making the sign of the cross and murmuring his prayers. The army of the Inca was portentously astir.

The monarch was quartered in a villa at the edge of the eastern foothills. Not far away, their position marked by columns of rising steam, were the hot mineral springs which had made the place a resort of the Incas for generations.

The villa itself differed little in its severe simplicity from other structures of the country. It was massively built of stone, with the usual high-pitched covering of thatch—a form of roof far from primitive in this instance, for the thatches of Peru were artfully and durably constructed, often highly ornate in the weaving and gilding of their straw. The building was without exterior decoration except for the sculptured geometrical design bordering the entrance. This doorway, like the small windows set high up under the eaves, and the numerous niches with growing plants, which served to modify the severity and blankness of the walls, narrowed from threshold to lintel as in the architecture of ancient Egypt. The walls, too, broad at the base and sloping inward as they narrowed to the top, further suggested the comparison.

On either side of the villa entrance stood sentinels in the blue of the Incarial Guard, in heavily pourpointed tunics or gambesons, similar to those worn by the European men-at-arms of the fourteenth century. Each wore a casque of burnished silver, with heavy cheek-plates descending to the point of the jaw, and surmounted by the figure of a crouching panther, the device of their corps. Above the head-piece rose a high crescent-shaped crest, not unlike that on the helm of the warrior of ancient Greece. Their arms were bare to the shoulder, but encircled by heavy bands of silver above the elbow and at the wrist. Their legs were protected only by the blue and silver lacings of their sandals, which entwined them to the knees. They were armed with javelins, small round shields of polished brass, and from their broad, heavily plated belts hung small battle-axes and short swords of bronze, an alloy which the Peruvians tempered almost to the hardness of steel.

At an early hour the throne-room was filled with officers and nobles costumed as brilliantly as the court of an Oriental potentate. The majority were Quitoans, but among them were a small number of the nobles of Cuzco, recent adherents of Huascar, who had tendered their allegiance to the successful Atahualpa, or whose presence at the court the latter had commanded. All were in the sleeveless outer garment of the country, belted at the waist, with skirts falling to the knees, and not unlike the *tunica* of the Roman. The stuff was of wool, woven in fanciful and often elegant patterns, and not infrequently decorated with elaborate passementerie, or with braid or scale-work of gold and silver. Every stalwart form glittered with jewelled armlets, bracelets, necklaces, and girdles in

the precious metals, while the nobles of Cuzco wore, as a distinguishing mark of their order, heavy discs of gold let into the lobes of their ears.

The apartment in which they awaited the coming of the monarch was no less splendid than the assemblage, and showed the same lavish use of gold and silver, which in the empire of the Incas had no value except for ornamentation. It was a lofty chamber with walls of polished porphyry, divided by pilasters into panels bordered with vines in precious metal, perfect in leaf and stem. Suspended from silver brackets wrought in forms of serpents, lizards, and fanciful monsters, were lamps burning perfumed oil, filling the room with faint aroma, and dispelling the obscurity of the early morning with their radiance. The ceiling, panelled by heavy rafters, was of rushes, gilded and elaborately woven in squares and lozenges. At intervals the walls were niched like those of the exterior, to receive natural plants or imitations of them in the metals.

In the rear of the apartment, beneath a canopy resplendent with embroidery and featherwork, was a dais of serpentine on which stood the Inca's seat, a low stool of solid gold, richly chased and jewelled. Back of this, against the wall, was the imperial standard, on whose folds blazed and sparkled in embroidery and precious stones a rainbow, the insigne of the Incas.

The room was nearly bare of furniture, but its marble floor was softened by richly dyed rugs and the skins of animals. In a word, in this country villa of the ruler of an empire of the farthest West was a wealth of decoration that would have dimmed the splendor of the palace of a maharajah.

Presently, a door in the rear swung open, and a silence fell as a grizzled veteran in the splendid uniform of a general of the Quitoan troops entered and raised his hand. He was followed by two officers of the Incarial Guard, who halted and took post at each side of the doorway. A breathless moment, then came the Inca Atahualpa, attended by his personal staff. The nobles went upon their knees, bending until their foreheads touched the floor, and so remained until the monarch, moving with brisk, soldierly pace, had gained the dais, where he turned with a brief command that they arise.

Atahualpa was then close to his thirtieth year. His countenance was one which would have been striking among men of any race. He had the warrior-face of the American aborigine—the aquiline nose, the high cheekbones and firm jaw and mouth, the calm pride and dignity of expression—but refined by generations of Inca culture. It was the face of a fighter, and a slumbering ferocity was perhaps lurking in the dark and somewhat bloodshot eyes; but it was also an intellectual one, clear-cut in line and contour, and backed by a well-formed head, handsomely poised. His complexion, of the usual bronze of the Indian, was yet not more swarthy than that of many Spaniards. His black hair was closely trimmed, and on his head was the royal diadem, the *llauta*, a thick cord or band of crimson, wound

several times around, with a pendant fringe covering his forehead to his brows from temple to temple. Set closely in the *llauta* above the fringe, diverging as they rose, were two small white feathers, each with a single spot of black. These were taken from the wings of the *coraquenque*, a rare bird sacred to the Incas. He was simply clad in deep red, the royal color. His tunic was quite devoid of decoration, but the cloak thrown over his shoulders glittered with embroidery and scales of gold, and besides his heavy ear-ornaments he wore at his throat a collar of emeralds worth an emperor's ransom.

A powerful man, well and serenely accustomed to his power, mentally and physically equal to its exercise, and sufficiently wonted to it not to be self-conscious, is truly a fit object of admiration. There is nothing more sublime, in its way, on earth: nothing more majestic, and only suggested by the brute kingliness of the lion. Atahualpa, the descendant of a long line of absolute monarchs, a line believed by the Peruvians to have sprung from Inti, the Sun-god himself, wore his majesty as naturally as he wore his cloak and with as little thought of it.

On this occasion the audience was short, and the Inca did not seat himself. Having heard the reports of his generals, he directed that supplies be sent to the Spaniards in Caxamalca, gave a few orders concerning the disposition of his troops and the formation of his escort for the visit to Pizarro that afternoon, and retired, while the nobles went again upon their knees until he had quit the apartment. In the court outside he dismissed his staff and descended a terrace into the garden in the rear of the palace.

It was an alluring place at any hour, and to its quiet seclusion the young monarch often resorted when he wearied of councils, the affairs of government, and the endless formalities of the court. From the rear of the villa an avenue, bordered with flowering shrubbery and spreading palms backed by tall quinuars, led to an open lawn in the middle of which played a fountain. Around the margin of the green, set in shady niches in the foliage, were marble benches. Over one of these rugs had been thrown, and leaning sadly on its arm with her cheek resting on her hand sat a maiden of seventeen. A few paces away were half-a-dozen attendants, seated on the sward, arranging armfuls of flowers. So busy were they, and so deep the maiden's reverie, that the Inca's coming was unnoted, and he paused, surveying the group and hesitating to interrupt. At that moment, slightly turning her head, the girl observed him; with sudden pallor and a movement of her hand to her heart she arose.

She was handsome and womanly, and as she stood timidly awaiting her monarch's approach he did not fail to note her beauty with brotherly pride; for she was his half-sister, the Ñusta[1] Rava. Her dark eyes, heavily veiled by their lashes, were downcast, and her color came and went with every step of his ad-

vance. Her cloak, falling back as she arose, had left partly uncovered one dimpled arm and shoulder, and the low-cut white robe, or *llicla*. This garment, made of the soft wool of the vicuña, was loosely and gracefully draped about her form, caught in at the waist by a richly jewelled girdle, and secured by golden *topus*, or large, broad-headed pins. A necklace of pearls and the jewelled band of gold about her head were her only other ornaments, save those necessary to keep in place a wealth of black tresses coiled in a form of Grecian knot.

[1] Ñusta = Princess.

As the Inca drew near she would have knelt, but he stayed her quickly, and taking her hand, reverently carried it to his lips.

"May the sun shine brightly upon thee this day, my sister," said he. "Thou 'rt abroad early. I thought to find the garden deserted."

"I have been walking, my lord," she replied, with eyes still lowered, and drew almost imperceptibly away. "I was about to return."

"Nay: let me walk with thee. Perhaps I can tell thee something to lighten thy heart. Come."

"Ah, my lord," she sighed, raising her eyes to his with a swift glance, and turning them away filled with tears.

"I know—I know! Thou grievest for our unfortunate brother Huascar," he said kindly. "It was partly on his account that I had thee come to Caxamalca. I would not have thee mourn needlessly, nor think me a monster in holding him in brief imprisonment. It is against my wish, believe me, and only to prevent renewal of the late unhappy war."

"Oh, most unhappy, most dreadful, my lord!—and between my brothers!" she answered with a sob.

"Most dreadful!" repeated Atahualpa, gravely. "Yet thou knowest how it was forced upon me."

"Forced upon thee, my lord? They told me different."

"They told thee falsely!" he exclaimed. "Dost thou not know how it was brought about?—I fear not, in its truth. Then let us walk whilst I tell thee." He passed his arm about her fondly, and led her down the avenue.

"Thou knowest, Rava," he began after they had taken a few steps, "the will of our father, given at Cuzco some months before his death, by which the kingdom of Quito was bequeathed to me, and Cuzco to Huascar. Thou knowest that for several years we reigned in peace, each in his own domain. So it might have continued had Huascar been content. But, chafing under the loss of Quito, which

but for me would have been one of his provinces, he sent an ambassador demanding that I acknowledge myself vassal and feudatory. It was a challenge, and what reply could there be but war? Huascar's misfortunes flow from his misguided ambition and impious disregard of our father's will."

"Oh, pardon him, pardon him, my brother!" implored the princess, turning to him and pressing her clasped hands to her breast. "He was ill-advised. He was hounded to his fault, I know, by wicked ministers. Most bitterly hath Cuzco repented it!"

"Cuzco!—it may be," replied Atahualpa, slowly; "but Huascar—However, it is my purpose to pardon him, Rava; so banish thine unhappiness. For the present, for the sake of the tranquillity of the empire, we must hold him. But when that is assured he shall be free. Weep no more."

"Oh, Atahualpa, what words will tell thee my heart's gratitude!" sobbed the young girl, taking his hand in both her own. "Thou knowest not what my grief hath been!"

"Nay! but I do know, my dear. Since the war began I have thought often what it must be. But do not thank me. No need of words. Thy happiness is more than thanks enough. I always loved thee, Rava, when we were together in the old palace at Cuzco. Now, thou 'rt no less dear to me than mine own daughters in far-off Quito. I trust soon to remove the nearest cause of thy sorrow. It was for this, as I have said, that I sent for thee to come to Caxamalca."

They were interrupted by a youth of twenty years, in the uniform of a Quitoan general. As he drew near he removed his helmet, disclosing the yellow *llautu* worn by the princes of the blood royal, and knelt as he placed a pebble upon his shoulder in the customary sign of homage. It was the Auqui[2] Toparca, brother to Atahualpa, and like the latter, a half-brother of the Ñusta Rava. Not even his exalted rank permitted him to approach the sovereign otherwise than in the attitude of a subject; but the obeisance performed, he arose and was embraced by the two, and the trio strolled on together. The conversation turned at once upon the strangers in Caxamalca. The purposed visit of the Inca was deprecated with timid earnestness by the Ñusta, and with energy by the Auqui; but Atahualpa waved aside their objections with a smile, and soon afterwards returned to the palace.

[2] Auqui = Prince.

CHAPTER VI

The Massacre

It was after midday when the Inca gave the order for the formation of his troops, and the brazen notes of trumpets rose from the parade in front of the villa. As the last measure died away the call was taken up in one quarter after another, and the air trembled with the din of the horns of the legions from Quito, the hoarse bellow of the conches of the coast tribes, the shrieking pipes of the mountaineers from the highlands around Chimborazo, and the growl of the drums of the fierce hordes from the eastern slopes of the Andes,—a huge wild diapason that sent another chill to Spanish hearts as it floated over the valley.

The tumult died away on the distant flanks of the encampment. Presently, company after company was sweeping into the low plain between the camp and the river, and forming into battalions. Here they stood motionless, broke at last into columns, and marched down to the fords, the earth shaken by the feet of their thousands, the air hideously vibrant with the fierce music of their instruments and wild chanting. A sound as of surf breaking on a shingled beach rose above the stream, its silver turned into yellow turbidity which stained its course for many a mile below, while the dark columns crept up the eastern bank and deployed on the plain in front of Caxamalca.

Pizarro, standing with a small group of officers on the parapet of the redoubt, gazed upon the dense, sinuous line of masses, silent now, stretching up and down the valley. From tens of thousands of spear-points and from myriads of brazen shields and helmets, the rays of the western sun were thrown back in a restless, quivering infinitude of scintillations. Slowly, but with a terrible steadiness, the line rolled forward, now obliterating a canal or roadway, now a garden or a field of grain; here, a battalion losing itself in a grove; there, in the aisles of an orchard; to reappear on the hither side, perfect in alignment. At length, at a distance of something less than a mile, the central battalions halted, but the wings swept on until a vast, dark semi-circle confronted the town.

Pizarro watched the progress of the movement in silence, speaking only to give an order, or in brief reply to some remark or inquiry from one of his companions. With him were several of his staff, Father Valverde, Felipillo the interpreter, and two or three orderlies. At the head of the stairway descending to the square were Candia's two cannon, commanding the place. Close at hand was a brazier of burning charcoal for the matches of the cannoneers, who were clustered at the parapet, barefooted and stripped to the waist, watching, half-stupefied, the advancing hordes.

Below, the sunlit square, with its shadows now stealing out from the westward, was deserted—peaceful as on a Sabbath. And the Sabbath it might have

been, for from one of the buildings came the unceasing murmur of the priests at prayer. All night long priests had knelt in pious invocation of the aid of the Lord of Hosts and the Holy Virgin upon this day's undertaking. Thus, too, they had knelt since dawn, when mass had been celebrated, the soldiers joining devoutly in the hymn, "*Exsurge, Domine, et judica causam tuam.*"

"Rise, O Lord, and judge thy cause!"—so they had chanted, with hearts swelling with the exaltation of faith that the cause was just, with the sublime confidence that the Holy Cross must triumph. Through the night Pizarro had been among them, had spoken with simple eloquence, had inspired their zeal by his own; and had roused alike the fires of religious fervor and the lust of conquest and of pagan gold. Through the night the ecclesiastics had given themselves to discipline, had shed tears and blood while they scourged themselves and cried to Heaven to give victory to the soldiers of the True Faith. Such was the prelude!

And now, behind the great doors giving upon the square the companies waited in grim readiness: in one of the buildings, the infantry; in another, De Soto's troop; in a third, that of Hernando Pizarro. The hours had lengthened through the morning, and still they waited in suspense. Under prolonged tension their enthusiasm had waned, and now many a villanous face, recently alight with devotion, grew anxious or lowering. Some time after midday a *chasqui*, or runner, had arrived from the Inca with the announcement that he would come with warriors fully armed, like the Spanish emissaries the day before. Replied Pizarro, "Say to your Señor that in whatever manner he cometh he shall be received as a friend and brother." Then he turned to Hernando with a black scowl: "Let the infidel come as he will!—only Heaven grant that he may not come tardily! Delay is more to be dreaded than an onslaught. A few more hours of this waiting, and the blood of our men will turn to water."

Hernando shrugged gloomily, and turned his eyes upon the advancing lines.

It was late afternoon before the movement of the Inca's troops was completed. For any sign of perturbation Pizarro might have been observing a parade; though his thin lips were more than usually compressed, his face a bit more pallid, his taciturnity increased. De Soto was conversing in a low tone with Candia as they surveyed the field. Hernando Pizarro was standing beside his brother on the parapet, muttering occasional oaths.

"*Caramba!*" he exclaimed, as the wings of the approaching army began to close in. "It appeareth that the Inca accepteth thine invitation with some emphasis, Francisco! Had we better not change our plans and prepare to defend the town whilst there is yet time? That is a pretty formation for attack, if I ever saw one, and more promising of a fight than of a neighborly visit, I'll be bound!"

"Wait!" replied the commander, shortly.

"By the saints, we have little time for waiting! They will be upon us in half an hour; and not even a barricade! Let me take my troop and show them our metal, at least."

"Wait!" repeated Pizarro, sternly.

Hernando sprang down with a curse, and strode away. At this instant an exclamation broke from De Soto.

"Look!—The causeway!"

The head of a column had pushed out from the trees which hid the approach to the bridge. The distance was too great to disclose its nature, but soon the highway was covered with thousands. Presently Pizarro noted with relief that the movement of the encircling line had been arrested, and the approaching column had advanced beyond it. He could hear the rolling of drums and the weird strains of heathen marching music. Soon no doubt remained that it was the escort of the Inca. About half a mile from the edge of the town the column turned from the causeway and halted, and the anxious watchers saw they were pitching tents. A *chasqui* was seen speeding toward the town. Pizarro descended to the square with his officers. A soldier from the exterior guard hurried in with the *chasqui*, a half-naked, clean-limbed, intelligent-looking youth, lithe and supple as a panther. He bore a message, translated by Felipillo, to the effect that the Inca would camp for the night on the plain, and would enter in the morning. An impatient oath, quickly suppressed, escaped Pizarro, and he replied coolly:—

"Tell him that our disappointment will be immeasurable. We have made all preparations for his reception, and hope to have him sup with us."

The *chasqui* darted away.

After an interval another arrived. The Inca would be pleased to come; and as he would remain overnight, would bring his attendants, but without arms. The *chasqui* departed. Pizarro, his pallid face lighted for an instant by a smile, sinister and triumphant, turned to his officers.

"Now, gentlemen, the quarry! Remember—everything, our lives, all, hang upon the absolute and implicit observance of my instructions. If we fail," he waved his hand toward the menacing dark semicircle outside the town, "ye know what to expect. But we shall not fail. Now, to your posts, and may the Virgin have us all in her keeping! I believe every man knoweth his duty. Candia, art ready?"

"More than ready, General!"

"Then, to thy guns!"

Candia returned to the redoubt, occupied now only by his cannoneers and the sentinel.

On the plain the tent-pitching is given over, the column has regained the causeway, and is again approaching the town. In front are a multitude of sweep-

ers, clearing the way of every pebble, fallen leaf, or twig, singing as they work. In their rear are a hundred drummers beating, in a strange cadence, long-bodied drums of varied size and pitch of tone. Following these, the imperial band of five hundred musicians, gorgeously liveried and resplendent with trappings of burnished metal, playing on trumpets, pipes, and stringed instruments of divers forms, the wild but not unmusical march sung by the sweepers. Then, at an interval, follow a thousand nobles in white tunics, bearing small mallets or hammers of copper and silver. Another interval, and a second body of nobles of higher rank, in tunics of checkered white and red, ablaze with ornaments of gold. Now, two battalions of the splendid warriors in the blue of the Incarial Guard, but without arms. Between them, and guarded by a platoon of nobles, floats the standard of the Inca. Immediately after the detachment of the guard, seated upon an open litter, or sedan, borne on the shoulders of half a score of nobles of the highest rank, and surrounded by his attendants, counsellors, and priests, is Atahualpa, a most imperial and commanding figure, as we have seen. In the rear, follows a great column of guards and nobles no less splendid than those of the van.

Treasure enough here, Pizarro, to whet the greed and nerve the arms of your ravening, plunder-hungry companions, could they but behold it from their concealment! Let us see. Twenty-five thousand ducats in the seat on which the Inca sits. Thousands more in the decorations of the sedan. Thousands more in the gem-encrusted standard, and every noble in the train wearing a small fortune on his person. Such a display never before met the eyes or brightened the dreams of your Spaniards, whom the *chasqui* has reported, not without truth, as huddled, panic-stricken, in some of the buildings of the town.

The pageant has passed the suburbs and is in the streets, deserted as Pizarro found them yesterday; for the exterior guards have been withdrawn, to be of use, presently, elsewhere. Now the column has entered the great square, opening its files to the right and left to permit the passage of the Inca and his suite, who move to the middle of the place and halt, the escort massing on the flanks and rear. Company after company of the guard, and body after body of the nobles, march into the plaza and take position with a celerity and precision of movement showing the highest discipline; and it is long before the rear has deployed from the narrow street. Meanwhile the Inca has looked about, at first with expectant interest, then with growing suspicion and impatience as he perceives no sign of welcome, nor any living being outside of his own following. The silence is strange, in truth, and not reassuring,—even it is ominous. The great doors facing upon the square are closed and blank. At the head of the stairway entering the redoubt two bronze muzzles overlook the plaza, but these are quite without significance. At last the Inca demands, with increasing ire at the too evident discourtesy:—

"Where are the strangers?"

As if in answer to his question a door opposite partly opens, and the dingy, gray-black figure of Father Valverde, in march-worn cassock, bearing crucifix and breviary, enters the square. A soldier follows, in complete armor. He is known to history as Hernando de Aldana—introduced and dismissed for all time by a dozen brief words. Behind him comes the malicious, spoiled renegade, Felipillo, shaking now in his Spanish boots, and scarcely fit to perform his office of interpreting.

Slowly, and with priestly dignity, the gray-black figure approaches the Inca as no man ever approached him before, with unbended knee or back, bearing no burden or symbol of one, and no doubt regarded curiously and contemptuously enough by the monarch, who is not done with considering the quality of his reception.

Father Valverde, informing the Inca that he has been ordered by his general, Pizarro, to teach him the doctrines of the True Faith, at once sets about that undertaking, expounding its tenets briefly and as convincingly, perhaps, as could have been done under the circumstances. Then, following the formula customarily used by the Spanish conquistadores, he announces the spiritual supremacy of the Pope, and the temporal power of the Emperor Charles the Fifth, and urgently recommends that the Inca acknowledge himself tributary to the latter, forthwith.

No doubt the father expounded the doctrines as convincingly as possible under the circumstances; and with as much effect, probably, as was expected of the perfunctory mockery by the Spaniards themselves: at any rate, not convincingly enough, but with the effect looked for and desired; for Atahualpa, firing at the suggestion of vassalage, reddens with anger, and demanding of Valverde his credentials and authority, seizes the breviary, turns its pages rapidly, then casts it upon the ground with right kingly scorn and rage.

"Tell your general," says he, with hot pride, "and let him say it to his emperor, that I am no man's vassal! And say further that before I leave this place your people shall account to me for every act of presumption or violence done within my territories!"

Shocked at the sacrilege offered the holy book, the good father snatches it from among the feet of the heathens. The doughty Aldana claps hand to his sword with Spanish bravado,—even draws it, says one,—but the priest is scuttling across the plaza to Pizarro, who is waiting in the building occupied by the infantry. Aldana follows. The wretched farce is ended—a farce truly Spanish, as what follows is truly and characteristically Spanish.

The door opens again, and Father Valverde, pale to the lips, enters and stands before Pizarro, who is no less pale, but infinitely more composed. Back of him in the dim obscurity of the great hall is massed the infantry, every sword bared, every pike and halberd clutched with nerves strained by long suspense.

The priest, his voice husky with excitement and rage at the indignity put upon the holy book, and, it may be, at the unconcealed contempt with which he was received by the monarch, exclaims:—

"Dost not see—dost not see what is taking place? Whilst we are engaged in courtesies and parley with this dog full of pride, the plains are filled with his warriors! Fall upon him! Fall upon him!—I absolve you!"

Pizarro makes no reply, but flushes with unaccustomed color, and steps out of the door into the plaza, in his hand a white scarf. The Inca, with the frown deepening upon his stern, calm face, sees him raise it over his head, and wonders what new idleness——

A quick, sudden flash, half perceived, a sharp, ear-stunning explosion, as of lightning striking near, and an unseen messenger of death ploughs a mangled, horrid furrow through the dense ranks of the Peruvians. A plunging, white sulphurous cloud has burst from one of the guns on the redoubt, and rolls low and stifling over the square. There is a brief instant of stillness, then a moan of terror, broken quickly by yells of wounded men, answered by a second flash and roar. The great doors swing back, their blankness giving place to sudden fell activity as charging columns crash into the open with the battle-cries of Spain. An avalanche of steel-clad men and horses here; another there; a rushing, bellowing phalanx of infantry between. "*Santiago à ellos!*" "*Cristo y San Miguel!*" They strike the fear-numbed mass of the Peruvians, cutting, thrusting, slashing, with resistless fury. The ranks of nobles, silent and motionless a moment ago, are whirled by the shock into a seething, shrieking tumult. Those on the edge of the concourse are hurled back upon their fellows by the tremendous impact, and cut down while they reel. The mail-clad Spaniards, released from the nervous strain of hours' duration, are seized of blood-madness. Their battle-cries are lost in an infernal chorus of screams of agony, overtopped by the reports of the cannon which thunder savage accompaniment. A pandemonium! An outbreak of hell itself! A horror not to be dwelt upon!

The worst of the slaughter is around Atahualpa, whose person the Spaniards are making most desperate efforts to gain; but a large number of his escort, cut off by the charge of De Soto's troop, have stampeded in wild panic down the narrow streets leading from the plaza. A few escape, but in a moment these avenues are blocked by the crush. De Soto, having perceived at once that the Peruvians are unarmed and that victory—if this atrocity can be so called—was assured by the very first collision, essays gallantly to check the worse than useless butchery. His commands are unheard. He snatches his trumpeter's instrument and blows the recall—blows again and again. As well shout injunctions to a tornado, or call to a pack of wolves. He drives among his men, striking up their weapons. De Piedra, enraged by his interference, aims a cut at him, and

is unhelmed and unhorsed by a blow from the captain's mace. Well struck, De Soto! Pity it had not been better; for Piedra will be breathing again before an hour has passed. But De Soto finds it perilous work. In a moment his horse is wounded by a pikeman, and rearing, slips and is down. Steed and rider are lost in the confusion: at last, up again, the captain unhurt. It is some minutes before he is mounted, and meanwhile a wall of stone and adobe forming part of the enclosure of the square has given away before the crush of the fear-driven horde, and they burst through the break in a huge struggling torrent. They reach the plain outside the town, pursued with relentless ferocity by the cavalry. The Inca's troops, already in consternation at the uproar in the village, the shrieks, the cannonade, and the overhanging cloud of smoke, take the panic and scatter as chaff before the wind.

In the square the din has lost its volume. Candia has ceased firing, for the smoke impedes his view of the shambles, where friends are endangered by his guns. Around the Inca the unequal struggle goes on under his horror-stricken eyes, and he stands, benumbed and helpless, tottering on his reeling litter. In the anguish of their despair his nobles cast themselves to death with a loyalty of devotion the gods might envy; but the bulwark they interpose before their beloved lord grows steadily less. Several of the Spaniards now are making frenzied efforts to reach him with their weapons, and one has hurled his pike. Pizarro sees the movement and shouts, hoarse with weariness, unheard and unheeded, "Strike not the Inca, on pain of death!"

But he is heard by Cristoval, who, with two or three sick men, has been left as a guard for the priests, still at their supplications. Since the first thundering charge he has watched the long tragedy, at first with tense excitement at the onslaught, then with deepening horror and loathing when he saw the defencelessness of the Peruvians, until he has turned away, sick to his very soul, hating his race, his blood, his parentage, himself. He has cast his sword upon the ground. Now he seizes it and bounds toward the scene with a curse at every stride.

The enclosing line of Spaniards has drawn near to the Inca. One of his bearers goes down, then another. The sedan plunges wildly and sinks, throwing its royal burden almost upon the weapons of his enemies. He is down. A pike is at his breast, but swept aside by Cristoval's sword, whose savage thrust the infantryman barely escapes. An axe flashes overheard, and crashes upon Cristoval's buckler. But Pizarro is beside him. As the general stretches out his hand to raise the Inca, a pike-thrust rips both hand and arm—the only wound, be it known to the everlasting infamy of this band of murderers, received by a Spaniard in the day's affair!

Pizarro's voice rises above the tumult: "Back, dogs! Back, or, by God, ye

shall suffer!"

De Soto has dismounted, and dashes through the rabid pack. His buckler touches that of Cristoval, and the two shields ring with a shower of blows aimed at the Inca. It is minutes before the murderous zeal is quelled, and a circle cleared around the captive prince.

A stillness has settled over the plaza—alas! not a stillness; for the din has given place to sounds yet more dreadful, in the shrieks and groans of the wounded and dying.

There are many prisoners, and Hernando Pizarro is directing the work of making them secure in the buildings. Surrounding the group about the Inca is a turbulent circle of soldiers, panting yet from their work, and jostling one another for a view of the royal prisoner. They make a savage and grewsome picture as they glare, red-eyed, faces flushed, reeking with sweat and splashed with blood from head to foot, leaning upon their gory weapons. Atahualpa stands silent, proudly erect, his features immovable as bronze, seemingly devoid of emotion as if his heart were of that metal. His dark, stern eyes overlook the encircling mob, but as if they see no man. He is no less kingly now than a few hours ago, when surrounded by the splendor of his court. Those guarding him are equally silent in the stupor of weariness and reaction. At length Pizarro speaks:—

"Come, gentlemen, let us move! Guard him closely!"

They close round him. As they are about to leave the square, Atahualpa turns toward the heaps of his people who vainly gave their lives in his defence, and raising his hands, speaks a few words in Quichua, broken by one great sob that shakes his frame. Then he turns away, his countenance as sternly impassive and inscrutable as before.

As they enter the building which is to serve as his temporary prison, the sun is setting—setting forever upon the empire of the Incas.

CHAPTER VII

Cavalier and Cantinero

Night fell before the cavalry returned from pursuing the wretched fugitives, whom they hunted almost to the confines of the Peruvian camp, riding them down in their flight, and slaying without mercy. The troops of the Inca had fled without striking a blow. It would be difficult to explain their complete demoral-

ization did we not consider the superstitious awe with which the Spaniards had been regarded from their first landing upon the Peruvian coasts. Their aspect and the supernatural powers ascribed to them bore out the ancient tradition of the fair-faced god, Viracocha, who, it is said, had once appeared upon earth, and whose reappearance had been foretold by the oracles. The white men were his descendants and agents. Already they were known as Viracochas. A mere handful, but armed with thunderbolts, they had seized the sacred person of the Inca and destroyed his nobles and generals at a blow. The keystone, the arch itself, of the empire had crumbled and fallen under the dire calamity. The people were without a ruler, the army without leaders. The authority which had held the tribes together was dissolved in an hour. Accustomed for generations to the rule of the most absolute despotism the world has ever known, they were now incapable of initiative. The Empire of Tavantinsuyu was a rudderless ship. The army resolved itself into its elements and fell in pieces.

The Inca supped that night with the Spanish commander and his officers, as had been promised. Cristoval, the only officer fit for duty after the day's work, had been detailed as commander of the exterior guard, glad to be relieved of the need of sitting at table with his comrades after so base a massacre, which, in his enforced role of spectator, he had seen in its full horror. He was a soldier, and possibly not less callous to bloodshed and suffering than many others of his calling, but never had he beheld butchery so wanton and unhindered. Had he been a participant—and now he fervently thanked God for preventing it—he would have been less impressed by its enormity. He must even have shared in some degree the infection of ferocity, until he should have realized, as had De Soto, the uselessness of the slaughter and revolted. But compelled to look on in cool blood, he had sickened. He sickened more at the brutal exultation, and at the ghastly sights in the square. A battlefield he could have surveyed unmoved. This slaughter-pen horrified him.

When his detail was formed he marched it away, grateful to Heaven that his post was remote alike from the jubilation of the soldiers and from the sounds and tainted air of the plaza.

At a villa beside the road along which the Inca had entered the town, he halted his command. The place had been broken into the evening before for use as a guard-house, and while his sergeant was making up his reliefs, Cristoval took a lantern and walked through the vacant rooms. They showed at every step the marks of the vandalism of yesterday's guard, and he explored gloomily the ruin of what had been a handsome dwelling. Tapestries before the doors had been torn down for beds. Quaintly carved furniture had been used for firewood; fragments of tableware were scattered everywhere, with curiously fashioned bronze and brass vessels crushed by the heels of the soldiers. More precious articles had been

sought, as was evident in the disorder of every apartment, in broken chests, and doors with battered fastenings. Cristoval ordered a room cleared and prepared for his vigil.

Just after midnight, having returned from his rounds, he heard a challenge from the sentinel in front of the villa, then the voice of Pedro, and in a moment the cook stumped across the court and knocked. Cristoval called to him to enter, and he came in, followed by his boy, laden with what Pedro guessed would be welcome at midnight to any officer of any guard.

"*Tibi bene dico!*" quoth Pedro, "and may the night be without alarms. I have brought thee good cheer, Cristoval, lest hunger contend with vigilance. *Stomachus plenus vigiliam longam contrahit*—which is to say that a full stomach shorteneth a long watch. Cæsar, I believe." Pedro grinned benignly upon the cavalier, who arose and greeted him with warmth.

"Pedro, thou 'rt a good man, full of good deeds. On my soul, I rejoice to see thee with or without thy cheer, for I find the night melancholy."

"Good!" said Pedro. "Then am I doubly welcome. Here, Pedrillo, lay out the supper on this table. Have a care, boy! Spill that soup, thou imp, and I'll make another of thee!"

"Why, *amigo*," said Cristoval, surveying the repast, "it is a feast! Thy substantial cheer is second only to the spiritual cheer in thine atmosphere. Accept my thanks. Hast supped, thyself?"

"No. No time for it. I prepared the banquet to the Inca and saw it served."

"Then thou'lt sup with me. There is more than enough for two. Pedrillo, another chair. Fall to, thou good culinary saint, and tell me about the banquet. How doth the Inca bear it?"

"He near broke my heart with his indifferent appetite," growled the cook, as he seated himself; "but otherwise he is most commendable. I thought to see a sullen, savage chieftain, oppressed by conscious inferiority and afraid of the tableware. Not so! He was gloomy, 't is true,—and who, in his position, would not be so?—but he strove against it, and talked graciously with Pizarro and the others through Felipillo, making the best of matters right gallantly, like a man. He wore a dignity and fortitude in the face of adversity, Cristoval, that would become any king, white or bronze."

"So he bore himself in the square, when taken," remarked Cristoval.

"Ah!" said Pedro. "'T is as much as a point of honor with them, saith Felipillo, not to show emotion. I tell thee, *amigo*, he compelled the respect of the officers, and no one said a discourteous word but that beast of a Mendoza, whom Pizarro commanded to keep his tongue between his teeth, and forbade Felipillo to translate his words. The Inca paid much attention to De Soto, who sat nearly opposite, and who, it appeareth, defended him against the pikes of those hounds

of the infantry who would have had his life. He asked for someone else, and De Soto spoke thy name, Cristoval. Wast thou beside De Soto when the Inca fell? Then that was it! Well, the Inca hath not forgotten. I would there had been other acts of chivalry done by Spaniards this day worthy to be remembered!"

"A horrible affair, Pedro!" said Cristoval.

"Most damnably horrible!" replied Pedro, lowering his voice. "I have never seen its like but once. That was when a boy, in Palencia. One night near dawn a pack of wolves, driven by the winter's cold down from the Cantabrian Mountains, broke into the sheepfold. I thought of it to-day. I have soldiered long, Cristoval, but curse me if my sword ever took life from a defenceless man! But let me warn thee to make no comments likely to reach the ears of the commander. He and De Soto have had words already. De Soto tried to stay his troop during the slaughter. José and two others aided him."

"I am glad to hear it of José," said Cristoval.

"I fear José hath trouble in store," returned Pedro, with a shake of his head. "That little jaundiced friar, Mauricio, hath announced that during the struggle he saw the Virgin and Babe, with Santiago mounted on his white charger smiting the infidels with a flaming sword. He hath been seeking corroboration, and two infantrymen swear they beheld it too. The friar asked José, and José ripped out a great oath, 'No; and if such a sight was seen, the observers must have mistaken the spirits, for none but the devil and his devils would have taken part in such infamy!' Fray Mauricio's face went livid, and he denounced José as a heretic. He hath gone to Father Valverde and the commander. Thou knowest he is fresh from the Inquisition? Well, it is so! He was one of its most zealous officers, and the soldiers say he hath a chest full of instruments to make good Christians of the Indios."

"He will hardly make trouble for José," replied Cristoval. "José is indispensable to the army."

"A heretic is indispensable to the Inquisition! For the present José is safe; but wait!" Pedro hitched his chair a little nearer, and bent forward. "I tell thee, Cristoval, Fray Mauricio intendeth trouble. Thou knowest José is sometimes called '*El Morisco*' by the soldiers. *Bien*! And a Morisco I believe him to be. Hast ever thought of it?"

Cristoval laid down his knife and regarded the cook seriously. "By the saints, Pedro!" he said at length, "I believe thou 'rt right. I had given it no thought, but now I reflect, he hath the look, for a certainty."

"Ah!" said Pedro, leaning back. "He hath the look! He hath the manner; and for one not a clerical he is a learned man—too learned for a good Christian, Cristoval. He saith,"—here Pedro laid his hand upon, the table with great impressiveness—"he saith, and sweareth by it, that the earth revolveth on an axis,

like an orange twirled on a skewer!"

"Holy San Miguel!" exclaimed Cristoval.

Pedro nodded with solemnity. "And what is more—not to say worse," he continued, "he holdeth that the earth circleth about the sun!"

"Gods!" said Cristoval, with redoubled incredulity.

Pedro nodded again, then shook his head. "This," said he, "is a pagan teaching, and José were better without it. 'T was held by Pythagoras, by Philolaus, by Hicetas, and later by Cicero. Saith Cicero of Hicetas, '*Hicetas Syracusius, ut ait Theophrastus, coelum, solem, lunam, stellas,*'—"

Cristoval brought his fist down upon the table with a crash: "Ten thousand demons and goblins, man! Be done! Hath the day not been trying enough without thy jabbering? Contain thy Latin, or I'll forget thy goodness!" He glowered at the cook, who smiled blandly.

"It is of no importance, *amigo*," said he. "Let it pass. I was but going to say that José hath pagan beliefs. But what is more serious, Cristoval, Fray Mauricio seemeth to have suspicion of them, and some knowledge of the armorer's past. Once he questioned me. I evaded a direct reply."

"Thou didst, Pedro! How?"

"Why, I asked him if he had ever tried swallowing toasted rags for his liver."

"Ho!" blurted Cristoval, and Pedro grew red from a fit of wheezy laughter until his chair creaked accompaniment.

"Didst ever take a setting hen from her nest and hold her under a pump, Cristoval, then release her?"

"Name of a saint! Of course I never did, thou unaccountable cook! Why should I?"

"Only to observe her state of mind—her indignation. Make trial of it some day, and thou'lt have Mauricio when he gave over questioning. Unctuous knave! Stew me! He should have no word from me against José, were I put to the rack for it!"

Pedro resumed his supper, and Cristoval studied him for a time with interest. At last he said abruptly: "Pedro, thou 'rt an uncommon man—a most singular and unexampled cook, by the faith! How comest thou by thy learning—thy Latin and curious lore? And having these, how comest thou a cook? What the fiend doth a cook with Pythagoras, and Cicero, and Cæsar?"

Pedro flushed, and leaned back, regarding the cavalier soberly. "Why, Cristoval," he said slowly, "'t is a long story—and one I do not tell."

"Oh, thy pardon, Pedro! I thought not to pry, believe me! Prithee, forget that I asked!"

"Nay!" said Pedro, reflectively. "It is natural, and I begrudge thee not an answer." He turned to his boy, who was sitting near: "Pedrillo, seek the sergeant

of the guard, and ask him to explain to thee the theory of fortifications. Thou mayest some day find it useful." Pedrillo's chin dropped, and he retired slowly. Pedro continued: "It is a long story, Cristoval, but I will make it brief.—I was not always a cook, as I have said to thee before. I—I have a name. It is not Pedro. I am Luis de Cardeñas—of a family as ancient as thine, Peralta. *Bien*! I am a younger son, and, if thou wilt, an *indigno*—a worthless one. I was intended for the priesthood, and partly prepared for it. It was a mistake. I studied by day to the satisfaction of my instructors, but one night they found my bed arranged with the pillows lengthwise in a simulacrum of my form. I was elsewhere. Thus they found it the next night, and many following. I had learned to scale a wall, to sing a serenade, and mount to a balcony in a most unclerical way, Cristoval. My superiors held council. I was disciplined. Grew weary of bread-and-water, and escaped. Followed a regiment, and became a soldier. Was disowned by my family. Lost a leg at Pavia. Could soldier no longer, and so turned *cantinero*—sutler. Came across the sea, first to Cuba, then heard of Peru, and here I am—no priest, no soldier, and only five-sevenths of a cook. 'T is all. I am Pedro, *el cocinero*—Pedro, the cook. Know me thus, *amigo* and not otherwise." Pedro sighed almost inaudibly, and toyed with his knife. Cristoval extended his hand.

"I thank thee for thy confidence," he said gravely. "Thy name shall not pass me, but I am glad to know it. Thou hast been a friend, and if thou'lt believe me, hast made one."

Pedro accepted the hand without a word. Cristoval poured the *chicha*, they touched their cups and drank. After that, little was said, and, the supper finished, Pedro arose. "Now," said he, "I must go. I have been made lord chamberlain to the Inca until he shall be better provided, and must be up betimes. *Adiós*, Cristoval."

"Wait!" said Cristoval. "I will escort thee, my Lord Chamberlain. I've need to go to my quarters."

"It will be a knightly courtesy," answered Pedro, "for I have no gizzard in me for crossing that square unattended. Not that I am afraid, look thou, Cristoval; but that boy is as whole-souled a coward as ever looked behind in the dark, and he maketh me nervous with his gasps and snorts. I have no superstition, but they do say that the souls of infidels wander in eternal restlessness."

"The souls of all men dead by violence wander until masses be said in their behalf," replied Cristoval, "and hence the souls of infidels must wander eternally. But have no uneasiness, amigo. Ghosts fear a sword as a live Italian the evil eye, and dread the sign of the cross even more. Come!"

They set out with Pedrillo carrying a lantern, and took a street leading toward the plaza. Just before they reached it Cristoval halted at a small door and pushed it open. "Come this way, Pedro," he said, "and we can avoid the barricade of dead at the end of the street."

"Heaven be praised!" responded Pedro. "On my way to the guard-house I thought never to pass it with my heart in my body. 'T is not as if these people were slain in battle, Cristoval. I fear not a battlefield."

"This is thrice more grewsome," assented Cristoval. "But come! Enter!"

"Thou first, prithee, my friend! 'T is villanously dark—and thou hast two good legs for running!"

"*Bien*! Then follow!" and Cristoval entered the building. The door opened into a passage leading to the patio. They traversed the latter, and crossing an apartment, found themselves at the doors opening upon the plaza. Cristoval swung one of them open. Pedro took a step forward, then recoiled with a suddenness that sent a quick chill down the back of the redoubtable Cristoval, who was not without dread of the supernatural.

"*Nombre de Dios*! What is that?" gasped the cook, peering out into the darkness and clutching his companion's arm.

"What is what? Where?" demanded Cristoval.

"There—in the plaza!" whispered Pedro, making signs of the cross by the score.

The place was faintly illumined by the starlight. On the farther side the buildings rose dim and silent. Between, the area was ridged and strewn with formless heaps, from which rose the moans and low wails of anguish of the few unfortunates to whom merciful death had not come. For a moment Cristoval failed to perceive a cause for Pedro's sudden fear. But while he looked a vague form rose from among the shadows, moved forward a few skulking paces, stooped, and was occupied with something on the ground. Farther away, Cristoval saw another, then a third and a fourth, slinking and bending over the fallen Peruvians, and their occupation came to him in a flash. They were robbers of the dead—foul carrion-birds whose greed even the satiety and weariness of the day's slaughter could not restrain. With an exclamation of disgust and rage Cristoval went quickly forward, unnoticed by the ghoul, who, knife in hand, was tearing at the precious decorations of the victims. As Cristoval approached, he heard a groan, then a faint, pleading voice, and saw the knife raised to silence it. He was upon the murderous soldier at a bound, and his hand closed upon the uplifted arm. The startled soldier turned with an oath, seized the knife in his free hand, and struck savagely at his captor, the blow ringing harmless upon the latter's corselet. Before he could strike again Cristoval's mailed fist crashed into his face, and he rolled senseless upon the pavement. His companions heard the disturbance, and hurried to aid their mate. They drew at once, and fell upon the disturber of their hideous business with one accord. Cristoval drove among them with his sword, and the sudden clash of their weapons resounded in the square. They gave way before his first rush, but closed round him immediately,

bent upon his death, when Pedro, perceiving that they were not unearthly and that his friend was in danger, charged, stumping across the intervening ground, sword in hand, awakening the night with vehement imprecations. Meanwhile Pedrillo had likewise found his voice, and was clamoring at its highest pitch: "The guard! Ho, the guard! The guard! *Santiago á nosotros*! The guard!"

Doors flew open, and half-asleep soldiers broke into the square. Lanterns flitted, an arquebusier on the redoubt fired his piece, and in a moment the town was roused. The ghouls promptly saw their danger, and fled. The encounter had been of brief duration, but one of them was badly bitten by Cristoval's point, and another bleeding from a cut by Pedro, who had himself received a scratch outside his ribs. In a moment an excited crowd had gathered, and presently Pizarro came up.

"What now?" he demanded. "Another affray? By the faith, our brawling will not cease until I have made an example to be remembered! Who is this?" He snatched a lantern from a soldier and held it to Cristoval's face. "What! Thou again, Peralta—and wiping thy sword? And who is this behind thee? Thou, Pedro?"

"Ah! Pedro!" replied the latter, smarting from his wound. "A cook! A punctured cook, and no less! Here, you pikeman, help me to peel my doublet, for I have a hurt—*vulnusculum in latere*—a little one in the side;—*neque acu pundum*—not a needle-prick, I'll swear;—and damn the man who made it!"

Pizarro turned away impatiently, irritated by the cook's garrulity. "Explain this matter, Peralta!" he commanded sharply. Cristoval explained in a few words.

"Soto, have the companies formed!" ordered Pizarro. "We will learn who is out. Some of these dogs are plundering for themselves. It shall go hard with them! Peralta, I will send thee an additional detail. Post sentinels about the square until daylight.—Ha! Whom have we here?"

The man who had struck at Cristoval had regained his senses and was sitting up, spitting out teeth.

"He is one of them, General," remarked Cristoval.

A soldier jerked him to his feet. "Put him in double irons!" commanded Pizarro, and walked away.

The call was blowing for assembly, and the crowd of soldiers dispersed. Cristoval gave his attention to Pedro, who was already being examined by José. He found the wound slight, and it was soon bandaged. Cristoval set about searching for the injured Peruvian whom he had saved from the soldier's knife. He found him presently, and called to José, who had a lantern. The three gathered round him.

"Look him over, José," said Cristoval. "He is badly hurt, I think—and a youth!"

"A noble!" exclaimed Pedro, inspecting him. "Santa Maria! The gold on his tunic, and in his ears! Our friend whom thou gavest a sore face would have found him rich scraping, Cristoval."

"Ah!" assented Cristoval. "Now, let us get him out of this. Take thou the lantern, Pedro. José, help me with him to my quarters."

The wounded Peruvian was carried from the square. They laid him upon Cristoval's couch, and leaving him in José's care, the former went about his duties. About dawn he returned and found the Indio fully conscious, with his wounds bandaged. Cristoval greeted him in a few words of Quichua. The young noble started at the sound, and regarding the cavalier eagerly, demanded:—

"Do you speak my tongue, Viracocha? Then, in the name of the great luminary who shineth upon us both, tell me what hath become of my brother, the Inca!"

"Thy brother?" exclaimed Cristoval. "God save us! Thy brother—if thou meanest the Inca—is alive and unharmed."

"Oh, thou great God, I thank thee!" murmured the Indio fervently, and closed his eyes, overcome. Presently, looking up again, he asked, "Is he free, Viracocha?"

Cristoval shook his head. "Not free."

"Not free!—a prisoner!" cried the wounded youth, weakly. He raised his hands, trembling with grief: "Oh, woe, woe! My country, what weight of sorrow hath fallen upon thee!" He buried his head in his arms and lay in silence. Cristoval was about to leave when he spoke again, his voice steady once more, and all trace of feeling banished from his countenance:—

"Viracocha, you have shown me mercy. You have saved my life. Let me beg one more favor. Will you say to the Inca that Toparca sendeth his affectionate greeting and sympathy; and that if it is permitted he will share his imprisonment and minister to his wants—that he will share his fate, whatever it be?"

"Willingly," replied Cristoval, and desirous of ending the interview, he spoke a few words of assurance and returned to his post.

CHAPTER VIII

An Arm of the Inquisition

The day following was one of activity. The first task was to clear the square. The

hundreds of prisoners herded in one of the buildings were set at the work, noble toiling beside common without distinction or favor. Not even Indian stoicism was proof against the calamity, and old men, scarred from a hundred battles, worked with streaming eyes, dragging forth the bodies of their friends to be stripped of their ornaments by the Spaniards and borne away for indiscriminate burial.

Hernando Pizarro was sent with his troop to the Peruvian camp to break up whatever force might be lingering there, and to plunder the Inca's residence. Toward midday his return was announced by a sentinel, and Cristoval formed his guard. The troop entered the town with a flourish of trumpets. Its leading platoon was followed by a long procession of captives laden with spoils, of *hamacas* bearing the women of the court, of disarmed warriors, and of townspeople who had been removed from Caxamalca at the approach of the Spaniards. The men, stupefied by what had befallen, marched in stolid indifference. But the women, dishevelled, wild-visaged, and dreading all things for themselves and the children in their arms or clinging to their robes, filled the air with their wailing and frantic lamentations, until securely housed in the buildings on the square.

Late in the afternoon an orderly summoned Cristoval to a council of the officers at Pizarro's headquarters. He picked up Candia on his way, and the two were the first to arrive. They found Pizarro watching the *veedor* at work appraising the plunder brought from the Inca's villa and taken from the bodies of the Indian nobles. The commander's face was haggard, and he looked years older. He greeted the two officers cordially and said, pointing to the table on which were heaped the spoils:—

"The first fruits, *camaradas*! We have come to the harvest season at last. Not a bad wage for one day's work! What say you?"

Cristoval looked with astonishment at the wealth stacked upon the stone table on which the *veedor*, or inspector, had set his scales. In the middle was the chair of the Inca, a fortune in itself, and heaped around it the royal table service of gold and silver. On one of the plates was a little mound of emeralds, some of them of unusual size and brilliancy, and near by, a disorderly heap of the personal ornaments taken from the slain. On the floor were piled rugs, furs, embroidered tapestries, and fabrics of finest weave and dye.

The *veedor* ceased his work as he arose and walked round the table. He was a fat, puffing, putty-colored individual of fifty years, with a peculiar falsetto voice and a habit of perpetually snuffling. Now his bulging eyes were more bulging than ever in their greedy leer. "Ah, look upon it, gentlemen!" he exclaimed, rubbing his hands. "Behold it! Satiate your eyes! Let them revel, my friends! Is it not a feast? Delicious! Delicious! Look at these plates!—gold—solid gold! And these goblets—silver! And these precious stones—ah!" He dug his hands into the heap of emeralds and let them sift through his fat fingers, his head on one side,

fairly drooling with delight, while he screwed his face into so gross and atrocious a smirk that Cristoval looked away with an oath under his breath. The *veedor* snuffled and went on: "And see these gewgaws—stripped from the heathen! Oh, my soul and body, what pickings! They are bloody yet, but how they'll shine when they are clean! They'll weigh too. Eh, Pizarro?—Treasure, treasure, *compadres*! The reward of our courage! A fitting reward of gallantry! We'll divide it by-and-by—we'll all have some! But stay, my friend Cristoval, thou didst not fight! What shall we do about Cristoval's share, General? We all know he did not fight. Of course, nobody would question his courage—but there are so many brave fellows to provide for, and after all there is not so very much to divide."

He turned to Pizarro, puffing out his cheeks and wiping from his forehead the perspiration started by his emotion over the treasure. Cristoval had listened with disgust, hardly able to restrain his hands from gripping the fat throat. The slurring reference to his inactivity in the massacre roused his ire, and the *veedor* encountered a scowl so black that he started back with a gasp and shuffled precipitately behind the table.

"Pizarro! Pizarro!" he cried, his peculiar falsetto rising to a squeak. "That man meditateth violence! He contemplateth doing me an injury! I see it in his eyes! Restrain him, Pizarro! I am an officer of the Crown, and call upon you to protect me with your sword. I have a wife and five small—"

"Be done, Rogelio!" commanded Pizarro, who had small liking for the timorous member of his civil staff. "Thou talkest too much. Learn to hold thy tongue. Come! Get back to thy work, and I'll vouch for thy safety."

"I am a civilian, and a man of peace," piped the *veedor*, rolling his colorless eyes at Cristoval. "I am an officer of the Crown, and I want it understood, Pizarro, that I'll accept no challenges. He may meditate a challenge."

"I think thou doest him injustice," replied Pizarro, with sarcasm. "Thou 'rt safe. Now return to thy work."

Cristoval had turned his back with a snort of contempt, and Rogelio resumed his weighing and figuring, his fear gradually giving place to malicious glances directed toward the back of the stout cavalier.

José entered, and Pizarro hailed him.

"*Hola*, José! Thou 'rt in good season. I have been hearing of thee from Fray Mauricio. Dost know that he hath denounced thee as a heretic?"

"He promised so to do, General."

"A serious charge, José! It would bring thee trouble were we at home, and might do so here, had I less authority. The friar saith thou didst utter blasphemies enough to bring thee before the Holy Office. Many a man hath gone to the stake for less."

The old armorer's dark eyes glowed, and he replied bluntly: "If it was blas-

phemy to defend the Holy Mother and Santiago from the charge of aiding in yesterday's butchery, then I blasphemed, and would blaspheme again; for I tell you, Pizarro, the work of your men was naught less than hellish."

"Have a care, old man!" said Pizarro, with a scowl. "Thy words are more dangerous than blasphemies. Imperil thy soul if it please thee; but understand that, by Heaven, I'll brook no criticism!"

There was no flinching in José as he met the threat in Pizarro's words and look, and he answered hotly, "Then let me not be put to a defence of my words to Fray Mauricio."

De Soto and other officers had entered, followed by the friar, unobserved and in time to catch José's challenge. The monk moved quickly forward and confronted the armorer. "Thou libeller! Blasphemer! Heretic! What!—hath the Church no power to punish such as thou? But we shall see! We shall see! Officers, seize that man! General Pizarro, I demand his arrest in the name of the Congregation of the Holy Office!"

No man moved. All stood for a moment aghast at the friar's invocation of the dread power of the Inquisition. Its very name carried terror, and they hated it as much as they feared its wrath. They stared in silence at Fray Mauricio, but José alone stood unmoved. He faced the friar with calm scorn, his tall, soldierly figure towering above him like a tree. Cristoval glanced at Pizarro and stepped to José's side. De Soto and others followed, and the group faced the Dominican. The commander's irritation at the armorer's criticism was smothered in resentment of the intrusion of the Inquisition in his affairs, already difficult enough, and in a quick detestation of Mauricio as its avowed agent.

"My good brother," said Pizarro, coldly, "thou hadst best reconsider thy demand."

"Oppose me at thy peril, Pizarro!" shouted the friar, whirling upon him savagely. "Dost thou know this man? Dost know that he is a Morisco—this unknown who calleth himself José? Doth any man here know his name?"

"No man here knoweth my name, friar," interrupted José, "but thou shalt have it! I am Abul Hassan Zegri—a Moor. My father was Abul Hassan Zegri—a Moor.—And now hearken!" he thundered, approaching the monk at a stride and glaring down into his eyes with an expression that chilled his blood. "Hearken! If thou seekest more of me, or breathest my name again in denunciation or accusation, to-day, to-morrow, or twenty years hence, thou diest—and I swear it! By the Almighty, if thou barest thy claws again at me, I'll not spare thee! Now go! Go!—or I'll kill thee in thy tracks!"

Mauricio hurriedly retreated. José thrust his poniard back into its sheath with a snap and faced the officers. During the outburst they had stood petrified. His bold declaration that he was a Moor—one of a people which had been pro-

scribed and driven from Spain with every form of persecution, outrage, and cruelty that hatred of their race and greed of their wealth could inspire—staggered even Cristoval. The others had been too much astounded, and even horror-stricken by his rash defiance and arraignment of the Inquisition to interfere in behalf of the friar had they been so inclined. José looked from one to another for a moment with all the pride and fierceness of his race now aroused and burning in his defiant eyes.

"Señores," he said, "ye have heard my name. There may be one among you who liketh not the sound of it, or who would question me further. If there be such a one, I will give him answer on horse or on foot."

"Nay, nay, José!" cried Cristoval, advancing and grasping his hand. "None of us will quarrel with thy name. Thou 'rt a gallant comrade and honest gentleman. That sufficeth. If any man here would dispute it, he hath affair with me!"

"And with me!" added De Soto, with emphasis. "I believe, on my soul, thou 'rt a good Christian, Abul Hassan Zegri, whatever thy blood. Thou may'st count Hernando de Soto one of thy friends."

Hernando Pizarro and others joined in their protestation of friendship, but the rest hung back, fearing the danger involved in adhering to a man under ban of the Inquisition. Mendoza's muttered "*Morisco infiel!*" was taken up, but the group around José was too formidable to encourage open hostility, and the rest stood sullenly apart.

It was noticed by the commander, who said briefly: "There shall be no quarrel about José, nor with him.—José, or Abul Hassan Zegri, or whoever thou art, thou 'rt among friends. Thou hast been a stanch companion, and whilst I have power no hand shall be raised against thee. But guard thy tongue, and beware throwing nettles to the clergy. We are far from Seville, but the Inquisition hath long arms, as men have learned before. But—thou 'rt not an infidel?"

"I am a Christian," responded the armorer with dignity.

"That answereth every question thou shalt be asked. Señores, this affair is mine. It endeth here." He glanced significantly at the lowering group around Mendoza, then, after a pause: "Now, to the business for which I have called you together. These are my orders, and ye will see them carried out to the letter. The captives shall be released and go unmolested. A sufficient number shall be retained as hostages and for such services as may be required. The Inca shall be established with his wives and household, and shall have every privilege and liberty consistent with security. His nobles and people are to be admitted to him without hindrance, and for the present he shall be allowed to conduct the affairs of the empire—with our guidance and counsel when it seemeth expedient. The nobles shall be treated as befitteth their rank, and we'll have no violence offered

any man or woman, noble or other. Ye will make this understood among the men and see it enforced. Thus far our arms have been blessed with success, but for the future as much dependeth upon discretion as upon courage. Be prudent, therefore, as vigilant, and vigilant as ye have been resolute.

"One word more: To-morrow I send a messenger to San Miguel, and with him goeth Fray Mauricio. That is all, Señores. *Adiós*."

CHAPTER IX

Cristoval Meets the Princess

There was a building fronting on the plaza which, from, the great sculptured serpent on its wall, became known to the Spaniards as the House of the Serpent. Plain and massive in its architecture as the others, it covered, in a rambling fashion, a large extent of ground. By chance the invaders had left it untouched until opened for the Inca and his suite. Being an old Incarial palace, Atahualpa requested that he be quartered there. This was readily granted, and Pizarro, to be near his prisoner, moved into the building himself.

That part of it abutting on the square was ancient, but in later years it had been added to from time to time until it could house five or six score people. It extended back a hundred yards or more, enclosing one large and two smaller courts from which entrance was given to the various apartments. In the rear was a park filled with trees and shrubbery, and surrounded by a high wall of stone and adobe. Since the erection of the villa near the mineral springs the palace had been disused, and the garden neglected; but it retained its beauty, enhanced, perhaps, by its touch of wildness. The fountains still playing in its shade were green with moss, the walks overgrown with grass, and wild flowers had invaded the lawns, as if Nature had gently striven against its artificiality. The melancholy of decay had entered the enclosure as in preparation to greet the fallen fortune of the royal prisoner, fated to spend many a moody hour pacing its walks and chafing in his bondage.

Whatever depth of hatred the Inca cherished toward his captors, however burning his thirst for revenge, no sign betrayed them. The bitterness of captivity must have sunk into his proud heart, but it lay hidden beneath unvarying dignity and calm. With strength and patience which rose above disaster and compelled the admiration of the Spaniards, he took up the affairs of his stricken country,

and with masterly readiness stayed the demoralization already sweeping over his empire like a tidal wave. With the few nobles left him he held his councils. Fleet *chasquis* were despatched to the farthest confines of his dominions, bearing assurances of his safety, enjoining peace, and summoning his trusted advisers.

Meanwhile, everything practicable was done to mitigate the hardship of his captivity. The blue-uniformed guard in the anteroom had given place to a detail of steel-accoutred Spaniards, and sentinels were in evidence outside the palace walls, but the monarch saw little of them. Even the officers did not intrude upon his privacy; though later he found pleasure, or at least interest, in the society of certain of them and invited them often. He gave daily audience to his people, who were admitted freely to his presence. They found him still wearing the *llautu* and possessing the semblance—to all immediate intents and purposes the actuality—of his imperial power. They were commanded by him to be acquiescent to the strangers, by whom they were treated with due consideration, and went away reassured.

The soldiers were now removed from the temporary barracks and assigned to quarters in the houses, largely left vacant by townspeople who availed themselves of the privilege of leaving Caxamalca. Cristoval, with De Soto, took a dwelling not far from the palace. He dismissed most of the Indies placed at his service, and assigned a suitable number to the wounded Toparca, whom he left in his old quarters on the square.

The prince was mending rapidly under José's skill, but was still unable to rise. Cristoval visited him daily, thereby improving his knowledge of Quichua and acquiring information about the country. As their acquaintance ripened he found the noble to be very much a man, and beneath his reserve he discovered a genuine urbanity. Toparca, on his part influenced by gratitude, increased by Cristoval's unfailing thoughtfulness, had become strongly attached to his rescuer, whose friendship he regarded as the condescension of a being somewhat more than human.

Returning late one afternoon from a reconnaissance to the southward, Cristoval stopped to inquire for the prince. He entered the patio, rapped upon the half-open door, and, without waiting for an answer, pushed aside the hangings and entered,—to find himself confronted by half-a-dozen young women. He recognized them at once by their costume as attendants at the palace. The sudden apparition of his mailed figure threw consternation among the damsels, nearly equalled by his own at their half-suppressed scream. Stammering an apology, part Spanish, part Quichua, he bowed and was hastily retiring when Toparca called from his couch:—

"Wait, Viracocha Cristoval! Do not go before I have made you known to my sister, the Ñusta Rava. Tarry a moment, I pray you."

The princess had risen, terrified by the formidable man in steel, whose face she could scarcely discern beneath his lifted visor. To her unaccustomed eyes he was huge and monstrous—a direful, enigmatic being from another world, of a race prodigious in destructiveness, unassailable and irresistible as gods, murderous as fiends. The sound of his approach as he moved toward her, the clank and harsh rustle of his accoutrements, struck dread to her heart. Cristoval perceived her trembling. He halted, hurriedly unlatched and removed his helmet.

"I trust the Ñusta Rava will forgive me for appearing in my harness," he said in Quichua made lame by his embarrassment, and bowing gravely; "but I had no thought of finding any one here but my Lord Toparca. With her gracious permission I will retire."

"No, no!" said Toparca. "Let me present you:—Rava, this is the Viracocha Cristoval, who, as I have told thee, rescued me from death."

Cristoval made a low obeisance, but the princess recoiled from him in undisguised horror. Toparca saw the movement and expression, and said quickly: "Rava, thou needst have no fear. I beg thou wilt know the Viracocha Cristoval as my friend."

"Thy friend, Toparca?" she exclaimed, her low voice trembling. "Dost think that I can look upon one of these as the friend of any of our race? The blood-marks have not yet vanished from the square."

Toparca raised himself in anxiety to exonerate his benefactor. "But, my sister," he said, hurriedly, "the Viracocha Cristoval had no part in that."

"Had no part in it!" repeated the princess, with incredulous scorn. "But he is here, an invader! His part began when he set foot upon our soil, sword in hand. Say not that he had no part in it! Doth he hold himself guiltless?—Can you hold yourself guiltless of that blood, Viracocha?" She turned upon Cristoval, her dark eyes burning, her form quivering from head to foot with the bitter intensity of her resentment. "Are you absolved of the foul treachery by which my people were led hither to their death? Of the perfidy that lured my brother into the snare, unarmed and unsuspecting? You have had no part in all this?—Oh, Toparca, canst thou call one of these dreadful beings thy friend whilst Tavantinsuyu still mourns her dead? He had been more worthy the name had he not preserved thee to witness the infinite misfortunes his people have brought upon our unhappy country! He had been merciful had he permitted thee to perish in ignorance of the slavery of our brothers and the dishonor of our sisters. Thy friend, my brother? Tell me sooner thou hast friends among the vultures! They, at least, prey not upon the living. Farewell, Toparca!"

The princess drew her cloak about her, and passing Cristoval with a brief glance in which was concentrated all the infuriate enmity that a woman, raging at injury and helpless to avenge it, can feel for the oppressor, she left the apartment,

followed by her frightened maids.

Cristoval had heard her in silence. No doubt his uppermost feeling was compassion, for he felt the heartbreak beneath her denunciation. He knew better than she how well her indignation was justified, and was thankful that she could not know the sordid greed back of the invasion. Many of her words he had been unable to catch, but he did not fail to get her meaning clearly enough, for that was expressed in every tone and gesture. His freedom from the stains of the massacre had made him proof against much of her reproach, but he could not be indifferent to her hate and scorn. Through all he felt her beauty, somewhat ferine and stormy now, he thought, but still of a transcendent, queenly kind. Altogether, he had listened with sympathy quite without resentment; so that when she met his look in passing, instead of the rage and cruelty she expected, she read a grave pity of which she thought afterward; and in place of the stern, perhaps brutal rejoinder she looked for, a bow of profound respect and deference.

Cristoval expressed his keen regret for the inopportune entry which had sent her away so abruptly, but Toparca was even more disturbed, uncertain of the effect of her anger upon the Viracocha.

"I hope you will not think of her words, Viracocha Cristoval," he said, anxiously. "The princess is young, and hath already known much grief. She will learn that there are generous and humane hearts——"

"Even among Spaniards!" said Cristoval, with a trace of bitterness in his faint smile. "I trust so, my Lord Toparca. But the princess hath my earnest sympathy." Then he changed the subject quickly, and soon departed, giving little further thought to the Ñusta Rava.

It was not long before the constraint at first existing between the Inca and the Spanish officers began to wear away under the influence of the uniform courtesy with which he was treated, partly in observance of Pizarro's strict injunctions, but due quite as much to the innate stateliness of the monarch himself. His captors soon learned to know him as a man of alert intelligence, eager for knowledge of their world. As the months dragged on he formed several friendships with them which went far to moderate the dreariness of captivity, in which he displayed his discrimination of human character. From the first he was attracted by De Soto, whose superiority over most of his comrades he was not slow to recognize. De Soto, in turn, conceived for the unfortunate monarch a deep regard, a sentiment shared by Hernando Pizarro and Candia.

But before all others in the Inca's esteem was Peralta. Atahualpa had not forgotten his part in the affair on the plaza, and his gratitude and confidence had been increased by the rescue of Toparca. Thus predisposed in Cristoval's favor, the cavalier's growing knowledge of the Quichua dialect made their acquaintance of easy growth. Cristoval's wide experience as a soldier appealed vigorously to

the warlike prince, and he spent many hours listening to accounts of European campaigns and methods.

It is doubtful if the monarch had ever, since his youth, known real companionship unconstrained by his majesty. The gulf separating him from his most exalted subject was immeasurable and not to be bridged by any human feeling. As far as friendship was concerned he was alone, wearied to the limits of endurance by the perpetual reverence and awe by which he was surrounded. He did not undertake to exact, did not want, and could not have had from the Spaniards, the servile homage tendered by his subjects, and its absence was a relief. They treated him as a royal man, not as a Child of the Sun, and he was grateful. It is not to be supposed that they were always tactful, that they never overstepped the bounds of familiarity; but his natural dignity protected him, and it occurred infrequently—with Cristoval never. The cavalier was neither presuming nor humble, and their friendship prospered.

For the Spanish commander the Inca never acquired a liking. It was impossible for him to regard Pizarro otherwise than as his arch-enemy and author of his misfortunes. As a soldier he exonerated the other officers in a degree, reflecting that they were subordinates, and attributing to their leader the absolute authority over them which he himself wielded over his troops. So upon Pizarro he placed the entire weight of responsibility. He was repelled, however, by the cold austerity of the taciturn leader, who possessed little of the graciousness of his brother Hernando and had no wish for the good will of the man he had so mortally injured.

To Cristoval the tour as commander of the guard at the palace was always welcome. On one of these occasions, having some need to see the Inca, he was directed by one of the attendants to the garden, and taking one of the side-paths which wound through the shrubbery, had gone but a few yards when a turn brought him face to face with the Ñusta Rava, followed by one of her handmaidens. He bowed, stepped aside, and waited, toque in hand, for her to pass, fully expecting to encounter the indignant scorn which he had seen last in her handsome eyes. He found it, however, quite absent, and in its stead one of some confusion, not unmixed with fear. To his surprise she halted and stood looking up to him with a timidity that made him uncomfortably conscious of the warlike attire which inspired her dread. He bowed again, and in response to his look of kindly inquiry she began:—

"Viracocha,—my words some days ago were spoken in ignorance of all my obligations. My brother, the Inca, hath told me of your many acts of generosity to him in his misfortune. Can you forget my injustice and accept my gratitude?"

"The Ñusta Rava's words are forgotten," replied Cristoval; "and I can only thank her for the graciousness of those just spoken. I beg she will believe the

sincerity of my sympathy for her august brother and herself."

"Ah, I do believe it, Viracocha Cristoval! It hath been proven by your friendship."

"You may count upon all that lieth within its power," said Cristoval, earnestly. "I would it could undo what hath been done; but if it can ever serve you, now or in the future, be sure of it."

He had spoken with the gentleness with which he would have addressed a child—in fact, he looked upon her as little more—and the voice of the unhappy princess broke when she tried to murmur her acknowledgment. As she turned away she extended her hand. Cristoval pressed it for an instant, and she passed on. He continued his walk meditatively. Presently he came to a bench and sat down, studying the gravel at his feet.

"A murrain seize this business!" he thought. "Heaven knoweth what is to become of her, or of any of them. God have mercy on them!—and may the fiend run away with the conquest! There's no glory in it, nor aught but foul outrage and devil's greed and lust. 'T is not even war! Would I had stayed back in Panama, and had no part in bringing this royal brother and sister into the power of these freebooters! Wolves!—She is gentle as a Christian—when it pleaseth her to be, that is! *Cara*! But I envy not the man who doth counter her disapproval. Ah, well!—what a pity she is not a Christian! I'll speak to Father Tendilla: he is a kindly old man, and hath gentleness of speech."

Cristoval rose and walked slowly on.

He came upon the Inca shortly, and found him restlessly pacing back and forth. He turned at the sound of the cavalier's footsteps, and his countenance brightened somewhat as he said, cordially proffering his hand, "May the Sun never hide his face from thee, Viracocha Cristoval!"

"God be with you, my Lord Inca!" said Cristoval. "I trust the day hath gone well."

"Not ill, though I have known better ones," replied Atahualpa, with a slight smile. "I have had another visit from thy general and his priest."

"Father Valverde?" asked Cristoval. "I would it had been Tendilla."

"And I!" said the Inca, with a frown, "for this one pleaseth me not. He persisteth in assailing my religion. Why is it? What is my religion to him?—and to Pizarro? It is the faith of my fathers. Why should I change it at their behest? Hath not every man the right to his own belief and form of worship? We of Tavantinsuyu never forced our gods upon other men; yet this priest saith your people have crossed the seas to bring your religion to me!—to teach me the words of the Prince of Peace—the Prince of Peace! Is it so? Tell me—is that the purpose of your coming?"

His face had grown stern as he put the question, and without pausing for

an answer he went on with increasing vehemence: "Do you tell me it is for this, Viracocha Cristoval, that I am a prisoner, surrounded by guards like a common criminal, while so many of my children lie in unhonored graves? Is it that I may become a Christian? Let me have the truth, Viracocha!"

"By heaven, I will!" blurted Cristoval, weary and disgusted at the cloak of religion under which his countrymen strove to mask their rapacity. "I'll tell you why we are here, Prince! We have come for your gold! Now you have the pith and meat of the whole matter. Had your country not been cursed with wealth you and your people could have gone peacefully down to hell unheeded by Spanish priest or soldier. But you have gold, and we want it!"

Atahualpa regarded him with amazement and incredulity. "Gold!" he exclaimed. "Gold! Dost tell me you have come so far for such stuff as this?" and he pulled the jewelled bracelets from his wrists and cast them scornfully at Cristoval's feet.

"For such as that, my Lord Inca," replied Cristoval, ignoring the precious ornaments.

Atahualpa gazed at him for a moment in silence, the look of astonishment in his eyes rapidly yielding to one of anger. "Dost mean to say," he demanded, in a voice grown suddenly harsh, "that this measureless calamity hath been brought upon me and mine by the childish desire of thy people for these trumperies? Great God! Are you madmen, that you count human lives paltry beside this dross which we dig from the earth? Are the murder of my people and the base treachery to me but trifles?"

"My lord, even greater wrongs have been committed for the love of gold. Few crimes in the fiend's category but have sprung from it. It hath reddened the earth with blood, and made hell populous."

Cristoval encountered a look of mingled wonder and abhorrence. It was some seconds before Atahualpa spoke. Then he said slowly: "Strange beings! Do you consider that it hath some magic virtue, this gold, or doth it not possess some hidden power to give madness?"

"Both, my Lord Inca! It hath a magic that can bring all things to its possessor—save only happiness, love, and salvation; and it can cause madness."

"It is a riddle!" exclaimed the Inca, with impatience. "But enough! Thou tellest me you have come for gold. Dost thou want gold, Viracocha Cristoval? Hear me!" He drew near and lowered his voice, speaking rapidly and with intensity: "I would be free! I want thine aid and friendship. I can give thee more gold than thou couldst carry the length of this garden—more than thou and the strongest of thy companions could raise from the ground!"

Cristoval raised his hand: "My Lord Inca, I pray you, do not offer it. My friendship cannot be purchased. You have it now; and when my aid availeth you

shall have that also, though not for gold, my lord. I will do all in my power in your behalf and to procure your freedom. I know not my commander's design, but should a greater evil threaten you than hath already befallen, reckon my sword, if need be, in your defence."

Atahualpa studied him intently. The sincerity of Peralta's tone was in his eyes, and not to be mistaken. "Viracocha Cristoval," said the monarch after a pause, giving his hand, "I know not whether an Inca ever before asked forgiveness of any man, but I ask thine now! I believe I know thy friendship's worth."

"I thank you, my Lord Inca," replied Cristoval, simply. "But now, let me counsel you. If you have gold at your command, offer it to Pizarro. You shall find that when his nose smelleth a ransom he will turn a willing ear. Have others present to witness your proposal; have De Soto—he is an honorable man—and Candia, and Hernando Pizarro—the more the better. And heed this carefully: Be not too liberal in your tender; rather, be a shade niggardly at first, lest you overstimulate his cupidity. Your offer to me was extravagant, my lord. Be moderate, or you may defeat your end. The hint of a too bountiful source from which to draw may rouse ambition to possess the source itself. Were your supply boundless as heaven, greed would rise to its full measure."

Atahualpa had listened with close attention. He pondered a moment, then said: "I believe thy counsel is wise. I thank thee, my friend. I will follow it."

CHAPTER X

A Royal Ransom

Cristoval's suggestion let a ray of hope into the Inca's heart. To make it effectual without delay, and to bring the Spanish officers together, he decided upon a banquet. He mentioned his purpose to Cristoval.

"Good!" said the cavalier, emphatically. "Nothing could be better, my Lord Inca. 'T is an expedient in favor among Christian statesmen, and much history hath grown out of roast meats and wine—articles uncommonly fertile in liberal views of human affairs, and productive of flow of words in expressing them. Feed Pizarro well, and your proposal will follow most judiciously upon your cheer."

The Spaniards were unprepared for the splendor of their entertainment. Banqueting was a function which the Peruvians had developed to a degree of elegance hardly equalled in Christendom. The table was laden not only with the

choicest viands of the region, but with a lavish display of plate that dazzled the eyes of the guests and rendered the *veedor* suddenly speechless.

The Inca watched closely to observe the effect of the gold, and a moment convinced him that Cristoval was right. He noted the quick lighting of Pizarro's saturnine countenance and the significant glance at his companions, though the leader gave no other sign. Some of his officers retained less of their equipoise, and there were ejaculations of the names of saints, the Faith, the Cross, the Sacrament, and the like, invoked to witness their astonishment. Mendoza broke into a coarse guffaw and slapped his neighbor on the back. De Soto, Hernando Pizarro, Cristoval, and two or three others of the cavaliers of gentle breeding, stood with faces reddened or pale with humiliation, until Pizarro put an end to the exhibition with a stern "Attention, Señores! For the sake of Heaven, be silent! Ye are at the table of a gentleman."

An uncomfortable constraint of some minutes' duration followed the seating of the company. The Inca meditated upon the manifest craving of his guests for the tableware, a greediness to him preposterous. The Peruvians were diligent miners of the two precious metals, not because they assigned to them any especial value, but for the reason that they were beautiful and adaptable to purposes of decoration. The idea of their use as a medium of exchange, that they could be representative of the value of other things, of the luxuries, comforts, and even necessities of life, was beyond the Inca's conception. Money was a thing unknown in Tavantinsuyu, and Cristoval had not yet explained to him its use in Christendom. But Atahualpa saw the Spaniards display an interest in his plate which seemed emotional, even passionate, and which made them oblivious, not only of the common courtesy due to him as their host, but of their own dignity. The unaccountable appetite excited at once his wonder and scorn.

After a moment, however, he recalled the obligations of hostship, and with Felipillo's help engaged different ones in conversation. Pizarro swallowed his irritation and took part with more graciousness than Atahualpa had suspected him capable of showing, and the chill which had threatened to mar the evening gradually wore away. There were several of his nobles present, and they joined as freely in the sociability as circumstances permitted; for at the royal table the extreme formality of the court was for the time suspended, and the rigid distinction of prince and subject laid aside.

At last the table was cleared, cups were served and filled with *chicha*, and the Inca, dipping his finger-tip into the liquor, filliped a few drops into the air as a libation to Inti, the Sun. He raised his cup and bowed to Pizarro. The latter responded, and in accordance with an ancient custom of the Peruvians remarkably like our own, the Inca touched his cup to that of his guest, and they drank together. Thus, with each of the company in turn Atahualpa took a sip of *chicha*.

This ceremony completed, he turned again to the Spanish commander and said with nonchalance:—

"I perceive, Viracocha Pizarro, that your people are attracted by some of our metals—especially so by gold. It is something you have in your own country?"

"It is something which some of us have in our own country, my Lord Inca," replied Pizarro; "and of which more of us have little; but something, by the Faith, which all of us are pushing hardily to get!"

"Ah!" said the Inca. "But you possess a metal of far greater value in your iron, Viracocha. It hath surprised me that you can set so much importance upon one of comparatively little worth. But,—I would ask a question,—can freedom be purchased with gold?"

Surprised by its suddenness, Pizarro seemed to fail for a moment to find a reply.

"Can freedom be purchased with gold, Viracocha Pizarro?" repeated Atahualpa.

Pizarro recovered himself, and replied with emphasis: "By the Crucifix, that it can!—provided gold enough be offered."

"Provided gold enough be offered!" repeated the Inca, unable to conceal his eagerness. "Then hear me, General Pizarro: Promise me liberty, and I will cover the floor of this room with gold!"

The company ceased talking. Pizarro looked at him in astonishment, while a smile of incredulity went round the table. Atahualpa misinterpreted the silence and the expression, taking them to mean that his offer was too meagre. He looked from one to another for a moment, then sprang to his feet, and striding to the wall, stretched his hand above his head as far as he could reach.

"I will fill the room to this height with gold, Viracochas!—Is it enough?" he demanded, his eyes blazing with hardly suppressed excitement. "Is it enough?"

Still the Spaniards were silent—dumb with amazement. Several had arisen. "Mad!" whispered one. The Inca stood waiting for their reply, his arm upraised, his commanding figure drawn to its full height, glittering in the lamplight with gems and golden decorations, while his dark eyes gleamed from beneath the fringe of the *llautu* as he surveyed the astonished Viracochas.

"Is it not enough?" he demanded again. "Then a like amount of silver!"

"Hold, in the name of Heaven!" exclaimed Cristoval warningly in Quichua.

Pizarro regained his voice: "What sayest thou, Peralta?—Can he do it? Ask the noble beside thee!"

The noble answered with emphasis in the affirmative.

"Then 't is done!" shouted Pizarro, unable to restrain his excitement. "Done! Agreed, my Lord Inca! We accept your offer. Make good your terms, and you are a free man—at liberty to go and come without let or hindrance. Here

is my hand upon it. Wait!—We'll give you an instrument in writing. Zapato, step out and send an orderly for my secretary. Hernando, mount a chair and scratch a mark with thy dagger where the Inca put his hand. My lord, deign to raise your hand again. By the gods, Señores! What say you to 't? A hundred thousand demons! D'ye believe your ears? We are all rich men! Ask the noble again, Peralta, whether he can do it!—Ask another of them! Saith he yes? Art sure? Blood and wounds and gods of war! Ha, ha! What say ye to't, Señores?"

Pizarro's cold reserve had gone. Cristoval had rarely seen him smile before: now he laughed, even roared, not pleasantly; and his pale countenance showed unaccustomed color. The *veedor* had pulled several times at his sleeve, unheeded.

"Pizarro!" he whispered. "Pizarro! Hold off a bit! He would have offered more, I am sure of it!"

Pizarro turned upon him with impatience: "Oh, a curse upon thy money-gluttony, Rogelio! Hath it no bounds? Art insatiable? Be silent!"

"He had opened his mouth to offer more, I'll swear it! Oh, misery!" snuffled the *veedor*, as he turned away.

The room was in a hubbub. Every man was on his feet, talking at the top of his voice and gesticulating. Now the *chicha* flowed without stint. When the secretary entered and set about the work of drawing up the agreement they crowded upon him, explaining, suggesting, and advising, until in despair he appealed to the commander, and they were ordered back while Pizarro dictated the document. Rogelio was a notary, and the paper was duly attested and sworn to, the Inca looking on with interest, and making his mark at last in accordance with a confusion of instructions from the wrought-up Spaniards. The business finished, he retired with a faint significant smile to Cristoval; but his going was almost unnoted by the others, and they lingered over their *chicha* and their jubilation until the small hours, when the guard was summoned to carry certain ones to their quarters. Rogelio was hauled from a corner, and awoke to bitter tears and incoherent reproaches hurled against Pizarro's want of commercial sense. Pedro had appeared upon the scene at its close, and directed the *veedor's* removal.

"What, my fat pet!" exclaimed the cook in commiseration. "What, Rogelio, my barrel of grease! Melting thus in tears? Wasting thy blubber in futile drippings? Prithee, now, check thy thaw! A most melancholy deliquation, my friend! A sad prodigality of tallow! Come, stay thy liquefaction! Swab, wipe, stop thy leaks, desiccate, run dry, my civil officer of the Crown; thou'rt growing soggy!—What! Damn Pizarro? Agreed!—Damn the Inca? Fie, my cherub!—Damn everybody? Ah! But with one exception, and that's Pedro, the cook. Now thou 'rt hiccoughing, and I'm done with thee. *Adiós*, Rogelio, my lard-firkin! Good-night, my Cupid!" and Pedro stumped away.

Without loss of time Atahualpa despatched his *chasquis* to Cuzco and other

important towns, bearing orders that temples be dismantled of their gold and silver decorations, that palaces be stripped of their utensils; that, in short, the precious metals be drawn from every possible source and forwarded with all speed to Caxamalca. The report of the fabulous offer of ransom went abroad among the Spanish soldiers, received by most of them with incredulity and jeers; by a few, with riotous demonstrations of joy. The room was promptly measured. It was found to be about seventeen feet broad, by twenty-two feet long, and the height indicated by the Inca in the neighborhood of nine feet from the floor. This space was to be filled with gold in two months, and a smaller room adjoining to be twice filled with silver.

It was days before there were returns from the Inca's orders;—days of restlessness for him, for he was desperate to see the fulfilment of his terms begun. Pizarro's eagerness was hardly less, but it was tempered with much doubt of Atahualpa's ability to produce so vast a treasure.

At length, however, the first consignment arrived, borne on the backs of porters. The news spread rapidly. The Indios were halted in the square by an importunate rabble of soldiers, clamorous for a sight of their burden, and made to open their packages. As the rich booty was disclosed the soldiers stared a moment in stupefied silence, then raised a shout. Others came running, gazed for a second, and added their whoops. They went mad. They embraced one another, joined hands and danced around the glowing yellow heap, bellowing their glee. They mauled each other in heavy horse-play, roaring in uncouth laughter, without words to fit their raptures. The Indian porters looked on, wondering, as had the Inca, whether gold had not some hidden power to give madness. The soldiers seized them, whirled them into their clumsy fandango, clapped their backs and called them "*amigos*," "*hermanos*,"—friends and brothers,—and made them dizzy. Presently the treasure was gathered up and borne by the singing, yelling mob in triumph to Pizarro's headquarters in tumultuous invasion. That night no man slept.

Thereafter, the stream of gold flowed steadily into Caxamalca for weeks, fortunes in a day. But soon came the inevitable reaction. Exultancy gave place to uneasiness and discontent. The treasure did not come in fast enough! The Inca was delaying for the purpose of gaining time to prepare for hostilities! Even Pizarro became suspicious, and went to Atahualpa with the charge. The Inca met him with a dignified reminder of the distance to be traversed by the gold, and the difficulties of the road. Pizarro was half satisfied; his soldiers less. Rumors persistently arose of native uprisings to rescue the monarch and regain the treasure, which the Spaniards could not conceive to be less an object of greed to the Indios than to themselves. Pizarro bluntly accused the Inca of conspiring against him, but Atahualpa disdained the imputation. The event proved his innocence,

for a reconnaissance by Hernando Pizarro to the south not only failed to find disquiet, but was received everywhere with good-will. For a time the suspicions were allayed, only to rise again later in greater strength.

About this time an event occurred which still further strained the relations between Pizarro and his captive. Huascar, Atahualpa's half-brother, then a prisoner at Xauxa, learned of the ransom being paid the Spaniards, and sent secret emissaries offering an even greater price for his own liberty. The negotiation was terminated suddenly by Huascar's death. Whether the unfortunate prince was executed by the Inca's order is a matter of doubt, but the fact that he was drowned in the river Andamarca gives credit to the belief that he perished in an attempt to escape.

As soon as the tragedy was reported to him the Inca sent for Pizarro and informed him of Huascar's death with every expression of regret, apparently sincere.

"What!" shouted Pizarro, his face livid. "Huascar dead! What tale is this? Beware trifling with me, my Lord Inca! You will produce your brother in Caxamalca, alive and unharmed. This controversy between you shall be tried in a Christian court, as I have said to you before. Seek not to avoid it by subterfuge, my lord!"

"General Pizarro," replied the Inca, with dignity, "I have said that Huascar is dead."

"Then, by the Eternal!" flamed Pizarro, "you shall pay for it with your life!" and turning on his heel, he left the room.

CHAPTER XI

The Inca's Last Prayer

Thereafter Pizarro's interviews with the Inca were as few and brief as possible. Indeed, after the night of the banquet the captive was rarely seen by most of the Spanish officers, for, with the exception of Hernando Pizarro, De Soto, and Peralta, they were seldom invited to the palace. Now a settled melancholy had come over Atahualpa, which however disguised, did not escape Cristoval. The depression of his captivity was increased by the enmity which the Spanish commander took no further pains to conceal. The grief of the Ñusta Rava for her brother, moreover, had thrown a gloom over the palace, and deeply concerned

Atahualpa, who loved her with a brother's solicitude and felt her unhappiness more keenly than was apparent to one unable to penetrate the impassiveness of his bearing.

The princess fully returned his attachment. She had been much with him of late, and, with Toparca, had often taken part in his conversations with Cristoval—a favor seldom accorded to the other Spaniards, by whom the women of the Inca's family were rarely seen. Now she kept the seclusion of her apartments. Atahualpa missed her greatly, and Cristoval often found him profoundly gloomy and distraught. The cavalier encouraged him generously, doubtful himself, at times, of the commander's integrity, but daily more determined that the contract should be carried out.

The summer had passed its height. About the middle of February Almagro arrived with a hundred and fifty infantry and fifty horse, well equipped, and Pizarro found himself able to resume activity. He began preparations at once for the march to Cuzco. The ransom was almost made up, and it was thought best to divide it without delay and continue the campaign rather than give the Peruvians time to conceal their treasures, which, it was suspected, they were already doing. Before making the division it was necessary to reduce the whole to ingots of uniform standard, and resort was had to the Indian goldsmiths. They were set to work, but so great was the amount that a month passed before the task was finished. At last the splendid collection, representing years of work and the highest skill of native art, was a common heap of bars. These weighed, the Spaniards found themselves possessors of 1,326,539 *pesos de oro*, more than fifteen million dollars of our present currency. To this there were 413,000 ounces of silver in addition.

The division was made with solemnity. The companies were formed in the square, and after invoking the Divine blessing upon the transaction, a fifth part—the royal fifth, it was called—was deducted to be sent to the Emperor Charles. The remainder was divided among the members of the expedition according to rank.

Cristoval found himself rich. His share would be worth to-day something over one hundred and fifty thousand dollars, but the humblest pikeman was more rejoiced than he. Peralta was not more indifferent to wealth than any other normal man, but this gold!—it was befouled. It reeked with the massacre. He surveyed the yellow bars as they lay in the treasure room of the palace, and thought of the captive prince, his friend. There he left it and went away, harassed by its allurement and the ignominy of its ownership.

The treasure having thus been satisfactorily apportioned, with or without the Divine blessing, the friends of Atahualpa held that his part of the contract was fulfilled. Hernando Pizarro, whose friendship for the monarch was outspoken,

urged that he be given his promised liberty. Pizarro demurred. The time was inopportune. Word had been brought by a chief of the Cañares, a friendly tribe encamped in the valley, that an uprising was fomenting in the South. To release the Inca would be perilous for the present, but it would be done once tranquillity was assured. Meanwhile, the royal fifth must go to Spain. Would not Hernando be the bearer? It would be the most favorable of introductions at court, and if carried through with address, might lead to something,—who could tell? Three hundred thousand pesos laid gracefully at his Majesty's feet would smooth a way for the request, for example, that Peru be made a viceroyalty. A title for Hernando himself were not impossible.

The prospect was flattering, and the Inca's case easily laid aside. Hernando went forthwith.

His departure removed one embarrassment from the design which the commander secretly meditated in regard to the Inca, and which he knew Hernando would oppose with vigor. He would still have equally stanch supporters of the prisoner to deal with, but he trusted to circumstance to overcome or remove their influence. De Soto was the most formidable advocate of Atahualpa's cause. Soon after Hernando's departure, he and Cristoval went to the commander. They found Almagro there, and Riquelme, the royal treasurer, who had come with him from San Miguel. Mendoza and one or two others came in shortly afterward.

"The Inca beginneth to chafe, General," said De Soto, "over his delayed freedom. Several days have passed since the division of the ransom, but he awaiteth intimation that his captivity is near its end. May I not bear him some assurance?"

"Not now, Soto," replied Pizarro, impatiently. "Let him wait. As a matter of fact, he hath not yet made up the amount he promised. It was short, considerably, of reaching the line on the wall."

"What!" exclaimed De Soto, bluntly. "Wilt thou make excuse of that? Thou knowest that waiting would have brought the full sum; and thou knowest, besides, it will be made up tenfold when we reach Cuzco. A poor pretext, Pizarro, I'll be bound!"

Pizarro shrugged. De Soto eyed him sharply, waiting for his response. Pizarro shrugged again, and said: "*Bien*! I'll not hold the Inca for that, Soto. I'll acquit him of the rest of the obligation, but ask not his freedom now. Thou hast heard of the tribes in the South, and to-day cometh news that an army lieth at Quito, with thirty thousand Caribs ready to join. I doubt not that this Señor Inca is party to it. If it so proveth, by Heaven, he shall pay dearly for his treachery!"

"Rumors and yet more rumors!" exclaimed De Soto, contemptuously. "*Santa Madre*! How long shall we entertain these cries of wolf, Pizarro? A rising of the Indios, forsooth! A spectre to be laid daily! With five men I could ride to Cuzco. Give the order, and I will go."

Pizarro regarded him thoughtfully. "It might be well advised, Soto—not with five men, but with thy troop; and not so far as Cuzco, but to Guamachucho, whence the rumors come. The reconnaissance could be made in a week—there and return. Let us say, ten days without hard marching. Thou couldst start to-morrow? Very well.—And Peralta, thou hast knowledge of the Quichua. *Excellente*! I will think of it."

When De Soto and Cristoval had departed Pizarro swore an oath. "But for the qualms of those two and half-a-dozen others," he fumed, "we need not fash ourselves about this accursed proud heathen king. I would snuff him out, for by the faith! I had liefer trust myself with a wounded bear than set him loose to bring his hordes to our destruction. He is a mad bull held by the horns. I can neither hold him nor let him go. Were it not for him we could be on the march to Cuzco; but as 't is, we dare not leave him under such guard as we can spare, nor can safely take him with us."

"Then why shilly-shally?" demanded Almagro. "A bit of steel between his ribs, or a hitch of rope about his neck, and we are disencumbered. My life! I see no complexity in that."

"But De Soto hath his troop at his back, Almagro, and an embroglio now would put us in bad case. Many of the men would be but lukewarm for the Inca's death. Since they have his gold they shout, '*Viva el Inca!*' and affect a friendliness."

"Ah!" scoffed Riquelme. "The fleeting dim gratitude of jackals with bellies full! 'T is easily chilled. Stir up fresh rumors. Incite alarms. Put them forty-eight hours under arms on guard, then hear them yelp and snarl. When they bay in full chorus, bring charges against the Inca. Try him in court with all grave show and pertinent solemnity. When De Soto and Peralta return, show them a royal grave."

"The soul and essence of good counsel, Riquelme, and most crisply put!" exclaimed Almagro, half admiringly, half in contempt. "Thou 'rt a man of parts, my friend, and fit to intrigue with cardinals, prime ministers, and favorites of kings—or to be a barrister! Ha! Leave it to Riquelme, Pizarro."

Pizarro looked from one to another without replying. He smiled, and his smile was not pleasant to look upon. Instructing the sentinel at the door that no one should be admitted, he drew his chair close to his visitors.

The council was long. At its close Pizarro said: "Well, think upon it overnight and come again to-morrow. There are charges enough to answer our purpose, and we have only to put them into form. *Cara*! This device is luckily hit upon, Señores, and we'll perfect its members. Say not a word of it to any man. Now I'll issue an order for De Soto's march. That was a hint opportunely offered. He was in the way, and, curse him! I saw no means of being quit of his

importunities.—*Adiós*, gentlemen. I thank you for your good counsel."

De Soto received marching orders that evening, and he and Cristoval spent the greater part of the night in the preparation of the troop. In the morning, Cristoval hurried to take leave of the Inca. The hour was early, and the latter had not come from his private apartments. After a few minutes' conversation with the nobles in the anteroom of the small salon where Atahualpa received his friends informally, Cristoval entered. In a moment he saw the nobles sink to their knees. Their sovereign was approaching. Atahualpa paused for a word of greeting, and entered the room where the cavalier stood waiting. Seeing Cristoval in full armor, he asked anxiously as he advanced,—

"What is this, Viracocha Cristoval? Thou 'rt equipped as for battle! I trust nothing hath occurred, or is about to occur."

"Nothing, my lord. I have come to bid you a short farewell. I go with De Soto on a few days' journey. We ride to Guamachucho."

"To Guamachucho! Why to Guamachucho?"

"Merely to prove to Pizarro that another rumor which hath reached his ears is without foundation, my Lord Inca. He gave his promise yesterday to release you the moment he feeleth secure, and we go to hasten his assurance. We will return to see you at liberty and rejoice with you, my lord."

Atahualpa made no immediate reply, but stood with arms folded, his eyes bent gloomily upon the floor. At length he asked, "Your going is voluntary?"

"Entirely so, my Lord Inca. It was De Soto's suggestion. He offered, to prove the good will of your people, to ride to Cuzco almost alone. So long a journey being needless, we make this shorter one."

The cloud deepened upon the Inca's brow. Finally he said, half meditatively: "I fear it is unfortunate. The Viracocha Hernando, who, I believe, was my friend, hath gone. Now thou and De Soto go. I would it were otherwise, Viracocha Cristoval."

Cristoval divined the cause of his misgiving. "Nay, my lord," he said earnestly, "the circumstance hath no import, believe me. You have many other friends in the army. Yesterday I heard the soldiers shouting, 'Long live the Inca!' Moreover, Pizarro hath given you formal quittance of your ransom. Have you not heard of it?"

"I have heard."

"You will receive the paper to-day; and now nothing delayeth your liberty but Pizarro's uneasiness about the feeling among your subjects. We shall remove that uncertainty, and when we meet again, my lord, it will be on the eve of your freedom."

Atahualpa turned his dark eyes upon him. "My friend," he said gravely, "we shall not meet again!—Nay, hear me! I know what thou wouldst say, but I am

right. This is our last meeting.—Be silent!" he interrupted, with some sternness, when Cristoval essayed to speak. "I do not say this to hear thy protests; and let us not waste words, for time is fleeting. When you return, I shall be—not here. I have been forewarned. My life is near its close. Enough! I do not fear to die. I would say naught of this, but there is something I would ask of thee."

He paused, and for a moment his eyes looked searchingly into those of the cavalier. When he resumed it was as if satisfied with the scrutiny, and he spoke in the tone he might have used to a brother.

"There is something I would ask of thee. Thou hast been my friend, as I believe in my heart. Of all these unknown around me I have felt that I know thee, Viracocha Cristoval, and I know that I can entrust to thee now my dearest wish. It is this: I shall leave behind me many loved ones, and among them the Ñusta Rava. Promise me thou wilt be to her what thou wouldst wish a friend to be to thy best beloved sister. Toparca hath not his strength. None of my people can aid her as well as thou in time of need. Guard her life until thou canst convey her to safety. Above all, guard her honor. Promise me this. Nay, promise me more. She will be surrounded by a thousand perils—give thy word thou'lt be ready to lay down thy life to save her unharmed; and, should all else fail, that thou wilt, at the end of hope, plunge thy dagger to her heart, rather than surrender her to dishonor. Give me thy promise. I ask it as a soldier of a soldier, Viracocha Cristoval."

Cristoval, moved to the depths of his chivalrous soul by the earnest appeal of this splendid despot, who had never before laid aside his majesty to ask a boon of mortal man, but who now addressed him with a brother's prayer for the sanctity of his sister, offered his hand. It was taken by the monarch, and for the moment they stood regarding one another, no longer as prince and conquistador, Inca and Spaniard, but as men.

"My Lord Inca," said Cristoval, "I swear by all I hold most sacred to spare neither my blood nor my life in her defence!"

"It is enough, my friend. I thank thee. I demand much of thy friendship. How I can ask it of one who hath come with mine enemies, with full assurance that I ask it not in vain, only He who shineth into all men's hearts can say. I trust thee, Viracocha Cristoval. Now go! May the infinite and unknown Pachacamac watch over thee! Farewell. But wait—take this!—it will serve thee." He unwound the *llautu* from his head and detached a bit of its crimson fringe. "Preserve it! It

will be thy safeguard to the farthest borders of Tavantinsuyu. Farewell!"

CHAPTER XII
Vengeance Foiled

Although Cristoval could not share the Inca's mistrust of Pizarro's faith, he was profoundly impressed by his words of farewell, spoken with such firm conviction. They saddened him despite his confidence in his commander, and as he crossed the court his steps lagged while he pondered the possibility of remaining in Caxamalca. His deliberation was ended by the trumpets of his troop sounding in the plaza. It was too late now, at any rate, and he hurried on. He was arrested by hearing his name called timidly, and turning, saw one of the Princess Rava's maidens hastening toward him.

"Viracocha," she said, "my mistress sendeth greeting, and prayeth a few words."

"Most gladly," replied Cristoval. "Wilt lead me to her?"

He followed her to the garden, and a few paces brought them to the princess. She rose as they approached, and Cristoval regarded her with new interest. He noted with sympathy the traces of care and grief, wondering at the heightened womanliness they had produced, and suddenly recognizing in her that rare nature whose gentlest and fairest attributes are perfected by sorrow. Cristoval had not known many good women in his adventurous career, but he had discovered this quality with increased reverence for womankind. He observed it now in this girl of a strange and new-found race, and thought to himself, "Well, God save them, they are all sisters, whatever their blood—and the burden of sorrow worked by men's misdeeds falleth always most heavily upon them!"

As he drew near he was struck more than ever by her beauty, which had impressed him at first by its warmth and exuberance. Now, softened and chastened by sadness, the fire and pride which had once shone in her dark eyes had given way to a gentle pathos and appeal which touched his kindly heart. As he bent over the extended hand he renewed to himself the vow he had made to her brother a short while before.

"Viracocha Cristoval," she said, with hesitation, "I am sure that you will pardon my sending for you. I have just learned that you are going away."

"For a short journey, Ñusta Rava."

"I pray it may be a safe one," she answered. "I will delay you only a moment. I would ask if you can tell me aught of the fate in store for my brother, the Inca." She looked up to him with eyes deepening with anxiety, and faltered, "He will say nothing, but I can see his sadness, which hath grown upon him with every day of deferred hope since the payment of his ransom. Hath he cause for this? Do you know, Viracocha Cristoval?"

"I know nothing, Ñusta Rava, to cause him apprehension. On the contrary, General Pizarro hath renewed his promise to give him freedom, and, we trust, in a very few days. I have told him this, but he rejecteth the offered hope. He saith he hath been forewarned of pending evil. I know not how."

"Alas! Said he so?" moaned the princess, her eyes filling. "Then what I have been told is true! Ah, my unhappy brother!" and she sank sobbing upon the bench.

"What hath she been told?" demanded Cristoval, turning to the maid; but the girl, too, was in tears, and incapable of reply. He stepped to Rava's side. "Ñusta Rava," he said urgently, "pray tell me. Is it anything of evil from Pizarro regarding the Inca? If so—"

She shook her head. "No, no!" she replied, brokenly; "but a few evenings ago he beheld a falling star of unusual splendor, and called to mind that shortly before the death of our father a similar sign was given. The death of an Inca is heralded by strange portents, Viracocha."

Cristoval was relieved. "Nay, my princess!" he said consolingly, "heed it not. Such signs are but the wiles of the devil—are but chance appearances. I have seen a thousand falling stars. They are for children and old women to talk about at firesides. Oh, I beg of you, restrain your tears! Take courage! Hear me, Ñusta Rava! De Soto and myself and half-a-score of others have witnessed Pizarro's oath to set your brother free. He awaiteth only assurance that your people are at peace. A few days hence the Inca shall have his liberty. Pizarro is a man of honor."

She controlled herself with an effort, and, brushing away her tears, presently looked up. "Forgive my weakness, Viracocha Cristoval. I fear my heart is overburdened. One blow hath fallen upon another until the world is dark."

"I know what your sorrows have been," replied Cristoval, kindly, "but I believe one, at least, is near its end."

"Oh, I thank you for your words of hope!" she murmured. "I feared that a change in your leader's purpose had brought my brother's heaviness of heart. I will try to cheer him."

"Do so. Assure him that he hath other friends among Spaniards besides myself. It is true."

"He is sure of you, Viracocha Cristoval," she said gratefully. "But now, let

me keep you no longer. I heard a trumpet some minutes ago. It called you, did it not?"

"It called me, Ñusta Rava."

"Then you must go. I pray the Sun may brighten your way and give you safe return."

"Farewell, and Heaven guard you, Ñusta Rava!" He touched her fingers with his lips and hastened away.

As he passed up the avenue the trumpets were sounding the "Mount," and in his haste he failed to notice a burly figure in the shelter of a by-path. It was Mendoza. He had been waiting Pizarro's return from seeing the departure of De Soto's troop, and, presuming upon the commander's determination to make away with the Inca, whom Mendoza already considered as good as dead, he had invaded the forbidden precincts of the garden. Perceiving Cristoval and the Princess Rava, he had stepped unobserved into the shrubbery, and watched the interview with a scowling sneer.

"Aha, my conscientious buck cavalier!" he muttered, peering out as Cristoval strode away. "Stolen meetings with Her Highness? Tears and kissed hands at parting? By the fiend, that smelleth of romance!—And we have been wondering at thy continence, thou cursed sly dog, whilst thou hast been spreading thy net for the very pick of the flock! Oho! But wait!—let us see, *amigo mio*! Methinks the cards are to be dealt again, and thou'lt have no hand.—And thou dost nurse so charitable an interest in the Señorita Ñusta's brother? Hum! And I have stumbled upon its source thus unexpectedly? Even so! *Bien*! But, *adiós*, my gallant. Thou'lt find more than one change on thy return to Caxamalca,—among others, a division of spoil upon which thou 'rt not counting, whereof I see a pearl to which I'll lay claim in Pizarro's ear this very morning.—She cometh this way, now! I'll step out and give her greeting. Curse me! why have I not learned a few words of her heathen tongue? I know but three,—*curi*, gold; *collque*, silver; and *chicha*. Good words, but not suited to the present need. However, *no importa*—let it pass. Much can be said in dumb show. We'll make it answer. Now, let us see if we cannot be made to forget our Cristoval."

Giving a twirl to his mustachios and a touch to the sallow ruff around his neck, Mendoza stepped into the avenue, and made a well-feigned start of surprise when his eyes rested upon the approaching princess. Off came Mendoza's sombrero, and he bowed until its plume lay on the ground.

"Your gracious Highness," he murmured in Spanish, with his hand on his heart, "I am your slave. The devil take me if I know how to make you understand it, but 't is so, my lady bird, my chickadee, and I would swear it, could I but formulate an oath which you could grasp in your benightedness."

The princess, happily unconscious of the disrespect in the words, but in-

dignant at his intrusion, responded with a barely perceptible inclination of her head, and passed on. But Mendoza was not to be easily rebuffed. Striding after her, he gained her side.

"But stay, my haughty pagan lady!" he exclaimed, his forced smile only half concealing the wickedness in his eyes. "Not so fast, pretty one! Let us talk;—or if we cannot talk, let us make signs. *Caramba*! Let us be acquainted!" and he placed his hand upon her arm.

The princess shrank as if from a reptile, turning with a look of indignant scorn that daunted even the case-hardened Mendoza, while a scream from the maid brought him fully to his senses. He halted, and Rava went her way with burning cheeks, leaving the Spaniard staring after her discomfited.

"*Jesu!*" he exclaimed, beneath his breath. He replaced his sombrero over one ear and spread his legs wide apart, one hand upon his hip, the other depressing the hilt of his rapier until its point rose to the level of his shoulder.

"*Cara*! There is a sudden chilliness hereabouts. Did I feel a cool breeze from the mountains, or was it a freezing glance? No matter, Señorita Ñusta Rava, my dark beauty—no matter! We'll score that in the account against this Cristoval. And, withal, proud loveliness is much to my taste. There's a zest in subjugating.—*Hola*! Who the devil is this?"

Pedro, crossing the lower end of the court, had met the princess, and noticing her indignation and the trepidation of her maid, suspected that some drunken soldier had been trespassing. He stepped quickly through the shrubbery and came upon Mendoza, still in his jaunty pose. Pedro divined the situation in the instant. Halting, he tilted his toque over his ear, placed his hand upon his hip, spread his good leg wide from its fellow, and stood surveying Mendoza with concentrated insolence, in a grotesque caricature of the latter's attitude. Mendoza, in turn, regarded the cook in surprise, then colored with anger as he realized the tableau in which he was taking part. He adjusted himself hastily and opened his lips to deliver an imprecation upon the cook's head. He thought better of it, remembering Pizarro's stern order against intrusion upon the privacy of the garden, and an injunction, yet more stern, against affronting the women of the court. He swallowed the curse for discretion's sake, and in the effort produced a grimace which he hoped Pedro might accept for a smile.

"Thou 'rt a droll fellow, Pedro," he said with forced lightness, and stalked away. Pedro followed him with his eyes, his attitude unchanged.

"Ah!" he growled. "A droll fellow, am I not, thou scurvy picaroon! Had I my blade thou shouldst find me twice more droll, my dastardly rough-handler of women, for I would tickle thy ribs most humorously before thou shouldst leave this garden. Slink off, caught-dog! I'll have an eye on thee.—A droll fellow! By the faith, it must be so, for naught but drollery could wrench a smile so misbegotten,

crump, and bandy as that of thine! Thou didst grin like a kicked hat. An old boot could smile more mirthfully. Pedro must be droll, to give thee such a toad's smirk, Mendoza!" He straightened his toque and stumped back to his quarters.

Meanwhile De Soto's troop, with armor glinting, guidon and pennons fluttering, and trumpets sounding a spirited quickstep, marched out of the square on its way to Guamachucho. At the end of the second day the Spaniards entered the town. They found it a small place, unfortified, and without a sign of the reported rising of the people.

A thorough reconnaissance of the country about occupied the next two days, for De Soto was determined that no doubt concerning its quiet should remain. At midnight of the second day he was seated with Cristoval in the latter's quarters, discussing the expedition and planning for the morrow, to be spent in reconnoitring the country farther south,—then a day of rest, and the return march to Caxamalca. Cristoval rose to make his rounds when they heard a hurried step in the patio, and a soldier entered, followed by a *chasqui*. The youth was breathing heavily, and as he entered the lamplight his body glistened with perspiration.

"The Viracocha Cristoval?" panted the *chasqui*, looking from one to the other and drawing a paper from his pouch.

"Here!" said Cristoval. Taking the paper, he hastily broke the seal, reading the contents with alarm and rage. He finished and thrust it toward De Soto, who was anxiously watching his expression.

"Read that, Soto!" he shouted, "and learn the black treachery we have left behind!"

De Soto seized the paper. It was from Pedro.

"CRISTOVAL: The Inca hath been brought to trial. Return with all speed. It is said that his conviction is determined, and that he is to be burned at the stake.

"PEDRO."

De Soto looked up at his friend, their faces reflecting consternation and anger.

"'T is for this Pizarro ordered us away—curse his perfidious heart!" cried De Soto.

"A thousand times curse him!" exclaimed Cristoval. "By Heaven, if 'tis true, I'll kill him! Soto, I go to Caxamalca! Juan, have my horse saddled! *Pronto!*—quick!" he commanded, and hurried to his room. De Soto reread the message, muttered an oath, and followed him out. He met Cristoval buckling on his rapier.

"Hold, Peralta!" he exclaimed; "thou 'rt not going thus, without thy harness! Wear thy corselet, at least."

"No! I'll ride light," returned Cristoval.

"Wait! come to my room," said De Soto. Hurriedly opening his portmanteau, he drew out a package wrapped in oiled silk. He cut its fastenings with his dagger and unrolled a shirt of chain-mail. "Here! Off with thy doublet and on with this. It is Moorish, and of the best. It may serve thee, as it hath many times served me."

It was on in a moment, and Cristoval quickly resumed his doublet. His horse was already at the door, surrounded by three or four troopers, tightening buckles and rubbing his legs, for he had been under saddle since morning.

"*Adiós*, Peralta!" said the captain, grasping his lieutenant's hand. "Be not rash, and guard thyself until I come. I will follow at dawn."

Cristoval made no reply to the warning. "Farewell, Soto," he said, and swung into the saddle.

Soon he was in the open country, his horse's hoofs ringing on the pavement of the great highway in a rhythm which he knew would not vary for miles. Shadowy trees swept by, cottages and groves were dimly seen and left behind. The walls of a *chasqui*-post threw back a short chorus of reverberations, and were lost again in the darkness and silence. Presently the streets of a village clamored with the measure, and relapsed into stillness before the startled peasant could open his door. Onward he flew, the night breeze fanning his hot cheeks, the words of Pedro's message repeating themselves over and over in the cadence of the gallop: "The Inca brought to trial—Return with all speed. The Inca brought to trial—return with all speed!"—while a thousand thoughts mingled with the refrain, chasing one another through his fevered mind, with a deep undertone of purposed vengeance if evil had befallen the captive prince.

Mile after mile down the sleeping valley, and at last the gray of dawn. Another half-league brought him to a hamlet. The people were astir, and smoke was rising from their cottages. He halted at one and dismounted, the villagers staring from their doors. His horse drooped his head, nostrils wide. Cristoval surveyed him with anxiety. No help for it, he must rest. A cottager advanced from his door with a friendly morning greeting and offered his hospitality. The cavalier accepted with gratitude, found grain for his horse, and an hour later was once more in the saddle. The rest and refreshment had done much for both steed and rider, but the leagues were covered slowly, for the animal was weary and his flanks in lather. The halt had given a brief respite to Cristoval's sombre thoughts, but as he looked forward down the valley they returned with full force; and when, late in the day, he descried distant Caxamalca, the fever of his anxiety and rage came back with double strength. At last he was in the suburbs of the

town, urging his exhausted horse to fresh speed. He reined up before a sentinel. The halberdier saluted, and Cristoval demanded hoarsely:—

"What of the Inca? Am I in time—doth he live?"

With exasperating deliberation the infantryman ordered his weapon; raised his hand without a word, clutched his throat, distorted his face into a hideous grimace, and emitting a gurgle, closed his eyes and lopped his head to one side. Then he opened his eyes and resumed his position, surveying the blowing steed with critical interest. Cristoval turned pale.

"Speak, fellow!" he shouted. "What of the Inca?"

"Dead!" returned the soldier. "Garroted! Gone to join his fathers in the mansions of the Sun, say the Indios; but 't is more like," he continued, as Cristoval put spurs to his horse and galloped away with an oath, "'t is more like he hath gone to hell—and mayst thou follow him!"

With jaws set, lips compressed, and oblivious of the pedestrians, Spaniards and Indios, who barely escaped being run down, Cristoval careered madly up the narrow street and across the plaza to the palace. Reining up so sharply that his horse went back upon his haunches, he threw himself from the saddle, and ordering a soldier to look after the animal, strode into the building.

He had an indistinct impression of passing Mendoza, of an expression of surprise on the soldiers of the guard in the great hall, of a hurried salute from the sentinel in front of Pizarro's office as he crossed the anteroom, and he jerked open the door and stood before the commander. Pizarro in half-armor was seated at his table, facing the entrance. At the end of the table on his left was his sergeant-major, Dominguez. Both looked up in astonishment at Cristoval's precipitate intrusion, the surprise on Pizarro's face followed quickly by a scowl of displeasure. Surveying Cristoval coldly for a moment, he asked:—

"Well, what dost thou here, Peralta? I thought thee at Guamachucho. Where is thy troop?"

Ignoring the question, Cristoval advanced to the table and leaned forward.

"Is this report true that I have heard?" he demanded in a tense voice. "Hast slain the Inca?"

Pizarro's scowl deepened at the bluntness, but after a moment, in which he seemed to hesitate whether or not to resent it, he answered shortly, "The Inca hath expiated his crimes."

Cristoval was fully prepared for the reply, but it came, nevertheless, with a shock. His face paled, then flushed hotly. Unconsciously he hitched the hilt of his sword a trifle forward. The motion was not unnoted by Pizarro, who now watched him with the vigilance of a hawk. Cristoval's voice shook as he returned, with suppressed vehemence:—

"Hath expiated his crimes! Then it is true!—and thou hast put upon the

arms of Spain a blot which a hundred years will not efface. Great God! Was not the atrocity of the plaza enough to glut thee? I tell thee, Pizarro, thou hast done foul murder!—Hath expiated his crimes, sayst thou!—Hath received the penalty of trusting a thing so scant and beggarly as thine honor, which, by Saint Michael, did underfit thee, thou perjured and lying miscreant, when thou wast a swineherd!"

Pizarro had risen. He was silent, but the deathly pallor of his countenance and the sudden cat-like contraction of the pupils of his eyes, burning with animosity in the shadow of his scowl, spoke his rage more plainly than an outburst. And they were more dangerously significant. A scar across his forehead, which Cristoval had never noted before, now showed itself in a thin line and blue, the color of his lips. The sparse black beard seemed more than ever straggling against the sickly yellow-white of his cheeks, and the muscles about his mouth twitched in a ferocious semblance of a grin, as if to bare his teeth. But he spoke no word. He grasped for his sword. It was not at his side, and with a curse he leaped toward his chamber where it lay. Dominguez sprang to his feet with sword half drawn. Pizarro shouted to him in a voice of fury:—

"Call the guard! Kill him, Dominguez! Kill him!"

Dominguez dashed to the door and threw it open, calling: "Ho, the guard! The guard!" and turned upon Cristoval with his sword. The latter sprang forward to meet him, and engaged his blade before he had made a step. There was a second's sharp play, and Dominguez went down with a groan, senseless from a cut which laid open his head. The sentinel rushed in, and stood for an instant transfixed.

"Kill him! Kill him, dolt! Why standest thou?" bellowed Pizarro, charging from his door sword in hand. The soldier stepped back and swung his halberd. The weapon swished viciously, narrowly avoided by a sidestep, and before he could recover for another stroke Cristoval closed upon him and ran him through. Then, throwing his weight against the heavy door, he closed it with a bang and shot the bolt. Pizarro was upon him, and he sprang back barely in time to avoid a lunge. So impetuous was the commander's onslaught that Cristoval was forced several paces to the rear, put to his best to ward the rapid cuts and thrusts which followed. Pizarro, unaware of the mail beneath his adversary's doublet, and emboldened by the security in his own armor, threw caution to the winds. He crowded with dire impatience to avenge the recent insult. He attacked like a demon, pressing forward in so fierce and disorderly assault that Cristoval's defence was for a time disorganized and wild. He strove desperately to gather himself, and to feel and hold Pizarro's blade with his own, or to check his impetuosity by *riposte*; but for the last there was no time, and the savage lunges came in so swift succession that he avoided them only by giving ground, until he was driven back almost to the wall. At last Pizarro, feinting a cut at his head,

reached him with the point full in the breast, so heavily that the blade, catching in the links of the mail, bent nearly double, and Cristoval was hurled by the impact bodily against the wall. At the unlooked-for resistance encountered by his sword and its revelation of the unsuspected armor, the commander uttered a grunt of surprise, suddenly aware of the rashness of his attack. He paused for the briefest instant. It was Cristoval's opportunity, and in a second he had assumed the offensive with a vigor that caused a sudden deepening of the lines around his opponent's mouth.

Pizarro was a good swordsman, but of a school which, in Europe, was already passing. His guard was high, with point depressed, most suitable for his favorite attack, the cut. Now Cristoval, abruptly becoming the aggressor, brought into play a later skill acquired from the French. He assaulted on a lower line, with arm partly extended, hand at the height of his breast, and point on a level with the eyes. Instantly the advantage became his own, and he pressed his attack with such fierceness that Pizarro found no opportunity to regain the offensive. Compelled to lower his guard to engage Cristoval's blade, he was hampered by the unwonted position. The weight of his rapier counted against him, and he was unprepared for the lightning movements of Cristoval's more slender and swifter sword, which played before his eyes like a thin lambent tongue of pale flame.

Cristoval in his mail, and Pizarro defended by his corselet, the only vulnerable points offered were their throats and heads. Here, again, the commander was at a disadvantage. With that keen, swift point menacing and perilously near, he dared not disengage for a cut. Repeatedly he essayed a thrust, but each time a riposte came like a flash, barely guarded. Cristoval directed his attack wholly at his adversary's throat, and time after time Pizarro escaped a fatal thrust only by a hair's breadth. But at length he felt a quick sensation of burning as he was grazed, then presently another. Goaded to desperation, he cut heavily at Cristoval's head. Vainly, and again the burning sting, this time deeper, and he felt the hot blood trickling slowly to his breast. Savagely exultant, Cristoval pressed him more closely, eager to end it before his own strength gave out, for now he began to feel the effect of the long night in the saddle.

So intent was he that he failed to note the sounds of an effort to open the door, but they did not escape Pizarro. Cristoval redoubled the energy of his assaults, not free from concern regarding Dominguez, who was but slightly wounded and now showed signs of returning animation.

Pizarro had been forced back upon a corner of his table, when the door rattled again, and after a few seconds resounded with a crashing blow. There were shouts outside, and the blow was repeated. Again, and this time it was accompanied by a rending, splitting sound, and Cristoval knew that it was being battered in. He saw Pizarro's face brighten, then both redoubled the vigor of their

blood-seeking work. Cristoval was desperate at the thought of interruption. The commander was now intent only upon defence until the promised rescue should reach him. Both combatants were breathing heavily and reeking with sweat. Blow followed blow upon the door, and now a burst of splinters succeeded every impact.

The meaning of this. Mendoza was leaving the palace when Cristoval rushed in. He looked after the cavalier in astonishment, surmising at first that he had returned with important news, perhaps confirmation of the rumors of an uprising. But Mendoza passed out, intending to return as soon as practicable. As he crossed the square, however, he recalled Cristoval's expression, which was one of hot passion recently aroused, as was evident from his flushed face and blazing eyes. Half-way across the plaza he halted, considered a moment, then returned to the palace. Crossing the great hall, he hurried direct to Pizarro's anteroom and looked in. The sentinel was not at his post. He hesitated briefly, traversed the apartment, and quietly tried the door. It was fast. He listened and heard rapidly shuffling feet, no voices, and the clash of steel. He tried the door again, then rushed to the guard-room.

"*Hola*, soldiers!" he shouted. "Follow! There is trouble in the general's room!" and he dashed back, followed by the guard. At the door they halted.

"Listen!" commanded Mendoza. "Do ye hear it?—There is fighting within!" He threw himself against the heavy door. "Furies of hell! Lay on here, men! we must break through!"

Again and again they hurled themselves against the resisting wood without avail, wild now with excitement. Pikes and halberds were brought to bear, thrust into the cracks to prize it open, Mendoza urging and swearing. In vain! That door had been built by Pizarro's direction, to guard the treasure lying in the room beyond his office.

"Fetch a timber!" shouted Mendoza. "A beam—anything heavy! Go! Jump about it!" He sprang at the soldiers, waving his arms, and they went out with a rush. There were no timbers but the beams of the ceilings. They were inaccessible. Finally Mendoza cried, "A bench-top from the garden! *Veloz! Veloz!*"

It was brought by as many as could lay hands upon it. They hurried into the anteroom and charged the door, Candia had rushed in, stared for a second, and thinking a mutiny had arisen, drew his sword and collared a soldier.

"Here!" he shouted, jerking the man around, "what's to do?"

The soldier wrenched himself free, shouting back excitedly, "Hell is to do! Peralta is loco, and is murdering the general!"

"*Santa Maria!*" ejaculated Candia.

Now the door was tottering, and another blow brought it down. The crowd surged through, led by Mendoza, Candia following close. Pizarro's drawn, anx-

ious face and labored breathing showed that he was desperately hard pressed. Cristoval with merciless, silent determination upon his death, was pushing him closely, but weariness clogged his movements, and the fatal thrust was undelivered. Neither of the combatants seemed to see the inrush of the soldiers. Cristoval's back was toward them, and Mendoza drove at him without a word, putting all his strength and hate into a lunge with which he meant to settle all scores. His point caught in the links of the mail, the blade bent and snapped close at the hilt. The lunge whirled Cristoval half around and sent him full length upon the floor. Pizarro sank back against the wall in exhaustion, while Mendoza drew his dagger and with an oath sprang upon his prostrate enemy. Before he could use it Candia had seized him, hurled him back, and stood over Cristoval, facing the circle of soldiers.

Pizarro, half inarticulate with weariness and rage, found breath enough to gasp: "Kill him! Kill him!—In God's name!—will none of you put an end to that accursed mutineer?"

The circle closed a bit nearer, but Candia poised his sword, and they hesitated. Cristoval had regained his feet and placed himself back to the wall, panting, but undismayed. At this juncture Almagro hurried in and breaking through the crowd, demanded:—

"What is this? Our swords turned against one another? What meaneth it?" He was answered by an excited and unintelligible chorus. Pizarro started forward, his face distorted with frenzy.

"Kill him, I say, ye damned gawping sheep!" he bellowed again. "What!—will ye disobey? Fall upon him, or I'll flay you to the last man!"

"Nay!" interposed Almagro. "Stand back! All in good time and order. Peralta, thou 'rt a prisoner. Take him away, Candia."

"Out of the way, Almagro!" thundered Pizarro, struggling to pass him. "I'll have his life! Strike him down, ye dogs!"

"Away with him, Candia!" commanded Almagro, sturdily opposing the general and thrusting him back. "Fall in about him, men, and make him secure."

"Come!" said Candia, in a low voice, and seizing Cristoval by the arm, hurried him out, surrounded by a dozen pikes, leaving Almagro to quiet the infuriated Pizarro. In the hall outside Cristoval surrendered his sword.

Word of the affair spread rapidly over the town, and as prisoner and escort left the palace they encountered a throng already gathered at the door, held back by the crossed halberds of the sentinels, whom they besieged with questions. As Cristoval stepped out, still breathing heavily and disordered from the struggle, their clamor ceased, and they stared at him in silence, hardly able to believe they beheld the stanch Cristoval in arrest for having turned his sword against his general.

"*Insano*—gone mad!" muttered an old arquebusier, and his neighbors agreed to it as the only explanation. Cristoval saw them only vaguely, and scarcely heeded the groups passed on his march across the square. At the doors of the building at its lower end which had been put into service as a prison he halted mechanically, marched again at the command when the doors had been swung open, and only awoke to himself when, having traversed the patio, he was led into one of the rooms opening upon it and felt the oppression of its sudden chill and gloom. The old sergeant of the guard eyed him gravely for a few seconds, then shook his head and retired. The door swung heavily shut, and Cristoval was alone.

CHAPTER XIII

Cristoval a Prisoner

Cristoval stood near the door. His eyes grew accustomed to the obscurity and travelled over the room and its furnishing; but his mind, occupied by a tumultuous review of the incidents just past, received little impression. In the middle of the room stood a table, and near it two or three stools. Along the wall at the rear was a stone bench, and in a corner a small heap of straw, the bed of some former prisoner. The fragments of a water jar littered the table, with bits of mouldering corn-bread. The low, heavily timbered ceiling, with the great thickness of the walls and the little air from the two small windows, made the atmosphere chill, stifling, and oppressive as that of a cellar.

He walked to the table and stood leaning against it, the disorder of his thoughts gradually yielding to grief for the ill-fated prince whose long durance he had lightened with his companionship. He realized now that his friendship for Atahualpa had grown stronger than he had been aware, and he felt an unexpected sense of loss. Slowly his sorrow was succeeded by a storm of bitter resentment at Pizarro's perfidy, and he raged at his failure to avenge it. Every detail of the encounter presented itself to his mind—the moments when the commander's life had been almost in his hand, the interruption which had foiled him at the instant of vengeance; and he stamped fiercely, impatiently, heaping curses upon those who had baffled him, and grinding his teeth at his present helplessness. More bitter still was the memory of the sacred obligation imposed upon him by the monarch at their final interview, and his inability, now, to acquit it. The peril to

Rava foreseen by Atahualpa was upon her. She was without a defender, and at the mercy of her brother's murderers. Her fate seemed certain. Cristoval sank upon a chair: sprang to his feet again, and looked about him, this time noting every feature of his surroundings, the walls of granite, the flagged floor, the small windows, high up and recently barred by Pizarro's order, and the massive door, guarded without, as he knew, by a sentinel whose life depended upon his vigilance. He made a tour of the room with rapid steps, minutely scrutinizing every detail, driven not by the sense of his own danger, but by that of the unhappy girl entrusted to his guarding. There was not a crack between the blocks of stone into which he could have forced the point of a poniard. There was no escape.

The other phase of the situation came upon him. Not only was he a prisoner, but a prisoner under sentence of death. He knew Pizarro well enough to be sure of that. He must die. Not even De Soto's power could save him. He had sought the life of his commander. He was a mutineer.

For an instant he was seized of a sudden weakness, and sank again upon a chair with a shuddering glare at vacancy. Doomed! He sat long, motionless, his faculties numbed. The air oppressed his breathing. Darkness closed about him and bore down upon his soul as if tangible. His strength was gone, and though he sat bolt upright he had the sensation of tottering. His mind ceased to act, absorbed and fascinated by the terror called death.

He was roused, long afterward, it seemed, though but minutes had flown, by the sound of footsteps and the opening door. Two halberdiers entered, followed by the sergeant and two armorer's assistants bearing manacles and fetters, a portable forge, and an anvil. The door closed, and the group surveyed the prisoner as if he were a captured lion. Cristoval rose slowly and stood regarding them with apathy. The sergeant spoke.

"*Señor Teniente* Peralta, we have an unpleasant duty—" He hesitated, and Cristoval waited in silence.

"The armorers here," continued the sergeant, "have a few trinkets which it is ordered you are to wear—temporarily." He paused again, and Cristoval wondered vaguely why such a trifle should embarrass his speech. Fetters—what were they in the presence of the thought of death!

The sergeant resumed: "I trust you will give us no trouble, Señor. It is near supper-time, and you know what that meaneth to a man already twenty hours on guard. I had hoped this might be deferred until the new guard cometh on, but the general seemeth burdened with an anxiety to know you are secure—so here we are. Now, what say you?—shall it be done quietly, or must I have a squad of pikemen?"

For answer, Cristoval turned up his sleeves and offered his wrists.

"Ah! *Bueno!*" said the sergeant, with relief. "That is what I like to see.

When a man must take his physic, why not do so gracefully? I have observed that it marketh the distinction between a *caballero* and a yokel. You are a good soldier, Señor Cristoval: I have always said it.—Armorers, set about it.—Would you believe me, Señor—the last man I saw ironed took four to hold him! But he was a creature of base instincts. Now, men, be expeditious!"

In half an hour the irons were securely riveted to Cristoval's wrists and ankles, and the sergeant was expressing his appreciation of the prisoner's forbearance, when he broke off abruptly, clapped his hand to his forehead, and stared at a rent in Cristoval's doublet.

"Ah, *Cielo*!" he cried. "Why was I equipped with mud in the place of brains!—And you, too, ye numskulls—-where are your wits? Do ye see what we've done?—left him in his mail!—and now there's no way to have it off but to undo his wristlets. Now what do you think of that?" he appealed to Cristoval.

Cristoval shrugged, but made no comment. The others stood helplessly about while the sergeant berated them until his feelings were relieved, when he exclaimed, with regained philosophy: "Well, let it stay! 'T will keep. The prisoner will be none the better for it, nor the worse; and if it worrieth the next sergeant of the guard, let him worry, or take it off. 'T is time to eat."

He led his men out without further ado, and once more the place was quiet.

For an hour Cristoval sat in a half stupor; at last, overcome by weariness, he hobbled to the bench beside the wall. He stretched himself upon it, and his torpid mind passed insensibly into slumber. Late in the evening he was awakened by the light of a lantern in his face, and found himself confronting Pedro. The two regarded one another silently, Pedro with elevated light and profound concern in his rubicund countenance.

"'T is thou, good Pedro!" said Cristoval, at length.

"Ah!" assented Pedro. "And is it thou, Cristoval? Thou, *amigo*?—thus ignominiously pickled and shorn of liberty, hoppled like a wayward barb. I scarce know thee."

Cristoval smiled gloomily. "It is I, Pedro! Would it were some other. A prisoner!—and all to no purpose."

Pedro drew a long breath, swore a little, and seating himself, placed his lantern upon the floor and stared at it in dejection. "All to no purpose!" he echoed. "The Inca is dead."

"And Pizarro liveth!" groaned Cristoval. "Oh, San Miguel! Could I have had but a moment longer with him!" He seized the cook's arm. "But, Pedro—what of the Ñusta Rava?"

"Ah, the Ñusta Rava!" exclaimed Pedro, his face reddening in the lamplight with indignation. "What thinkst thou, Cristoval?—but thou couldst never guess! The Ñusta Rava hath been given by Pizarro to that foul bird, Mendoza, as his

share of the plunder of the Inca's palace."

Cristoval sprang up and glared at the cook with an expression which reminded him of the rumor that the cavalier had gone mad. At length Cristoval hoarsely broke the silence:—

"Hath he—is she—"

Pedro met the burning scrutiny and shook his head. "No! She is safe for the present. The plunder hath not yet been divided."

"Where is she?" demanded Cristoval.

"In the palace. She is unmolested thus far, save that Mendoza payeth an occasional visit to ogle, gloat on, and leer, whilst he croaketh a few words of Quichua. But she is never alone. Her maids are always present. One of them came to me this morning, weeping, and begged that I devise means to relieve her mistress of the monster's visits. I'll do it some fine day, Cristoval, and there will be carrion to lug out of the garden. She knoweth not her fate, poor girl."

"Kill him, Pedro!"

"I will—if thou dost not."

"I, Pedro! How in the fiend's name could I kill even a rat?" demanded the cavalier, with impatience. "Look at me! Look about thee! Is this a paper house, imbecile? Am I tied with pack-threads? Another day—perhaps two—perhaps three—and I shall share the Inca's fate. Be sure of it, friend."

Pedro shrugged and glanced about. "Keep thy courage, Cristoval. Stone walls do not always make a prison. I've learned some tricks in my career besides those of the kitchen. Thou knowest I was not always a cook."

"Thou'lt need the tricks of a thaumaturge to take me out of here, old friend," said Cristoval, "and thou canst serve me better than by losing good time in the effort. Promise thou'lt kill Mendoza if need be to save the Ñusta."

"I will!" replied Pedro, cheerfully. "But we will talk of it to-morrow—or when I come again. Now I must go. I've brought thee a small supper—bribed the sergeant of the guard to let me pass. No appetite at present? Then eat later. *Adiós, amigo mio.*"

"Wait, Pedro!" said Cristoval, urgently. "Tell me first of the Inca's death."

"Oh, an infamy of infamies!" blurted Pedro, with an oath, and reseated himself. "A devil's own deed, brought about by a devil's own device and procedure! An indictment wanting even the merit of ingenuity in its fabrication! A court presided over by Pizarro and Almagro, the Inca's prime enemies! A trial that began as a farce and ended in a quarrel over the expediency of his death—whether it would further or hinder the business of the conquest and the gathering of plunder. And it was decided on that score, Cristoval. The judgment was determined upon before the trial began. Didst know he was condemned to burn at the stake?"

"Oh, God!" gasped Cristoval. "They told me he was garroted!"

"And so he was. At the last moment, after the fagots were ablaze, Father Valverde offered him the easier death if he would accept the Faith. He assented. The fire was kicked out, and he received baptism. So he died a good Christian."

"So he died a good Christian!" repeated Cristoval, with bitterness. "He was a better man a pagan than the Christians who slew him. Well, God give him rest. But had he no defenders, Pedro? Was there no man less a criminal than Pizarro?"

"A few, but, curse me, a sparing few! Among them was José, and he the most vehement. He denounced the affair with an acrimony that stirred the wrath of Father Valverde, who helped to draw the indictment. José knoweth no discretion, Cristoval. But the Inca's friends were not many, and their protests were futile."

"How did he bear himself?"

"As a king, if ever I saw one!" returned Pedro, with emphasis. "When the sentence was made known to him he made one appeal for mercy. Pizarro feigned commiseration: turned away his head and wiped an eye—oh, accursed hypocrite!—and now he weareth mourning. Didst observe?"

"I saw it."

"But this one appeal denied," continued Pedro, "the Inca met his death like a man, begging only that his people be gently dealt with. Rest his soul in peace! He was a man!"

Both sat for a time in silence, then Pedro sighed and arose. "Well, God be with thee, Cristoval. I'll see thee to-morrow, if 't is permitted. If not, then when De Soto cometh. He will make a way. Good-night."

Cristoval pressed his hand, and leaving his lantern, the cook stumped to the door, which, after a moment's pounding, was cautiously opened from without, and he disappeared. Cristoval meditated long. Then, slowly taking up the lantern, he moved to the table and surveyed the repast left by Pedro. There was a small flask of *chicha*, and after a draught of it he attacked the supper and finished it with interest. It revived his spirits, and for the first time he examined his fetters. There was little encouragement to be found in their massiveness, and he shook his head dubiously at the recollection of Pedro's few words of reassurance. He returned to his bench, put out his light, and soon was sleeping heavily.

CHAPTER XIV

Pedro to the Rescue

When Cristoval awoke, stiffened and unrefreshed, the room was gray with feeble light. He stared at the heavy rafters, not yet fully roused to his dismal circumstances.

"'T is early," he thought sleepily, "or a dull morning. What hath the day? Let us see—where am I? Guamachucho? No. What pent up air is this?" He turned his head and blinked at the windows, then raised his manacled wrists. The history of the day before flashed over him. He looked a moment at his irons, then closed his eyes and set his lips. Presently he sat up, painfully, and bent his head upon his hands. "I thought I had dreamed. *Ay de mi*! No dream, Cristoval. To-morrow a court, a shrift, the garrote. Ah, *Madre*, it hath been a life not well spent! But it seemeth short—too short." He sighed heavily, once, twice, arose abruptly, and shook himself. "Enough, Peralta! Thou'lt be groaning in self-pity. No more of it! Let us look about."

He hobbled to the table. There was a jar of water and a loaf of coarse cornbread. "Some one hath been here—not Pedro, I'll stake my head. I wonder what the hour may be. It must be late. *Bien*! The day will be the shorter. And now we'll eat, if but to kill time. Would that hope were as faithful in our extremity as appetite! We'd ne'er despair. Two good comrades, hope and appetite, and sad to lose. Pedro would say that—though belike in Latin. Good old cook! When will he come? But he'll come, God bless him! What did he mean?—he hath 'learned a trick or two besides those of the kitchen.' Can he hope to free me? Chance slight as air! Would that De Soto were here, though I see not how he can help. But he could save the Ñusta Rava, and that he will do, I know. Poor girl! Her fate may be worse than mine. Now, we'll have another look at these fetters.—Strong enough, by the Faith, and strength to spare! But one of José's files on the rivet-heads—as well wish for the Arabian lamp!"

The day dragged slowly and wearily. He spent it in waiting, vaguely, he knew not for what, and in listening for the few slight sounds that broke upon the stillness. The steps of the sentinel, the murmur of voices when the reliefs came, the faint echo of the trumpet-calls on the plaza, were noted with painful attention. Now he sat straining his ears; now he limped haltingly round and round the apartment, filling it with the clank and scrape of his shackles, until his ankles were worn to the raw and he could walk no more. Seated on the bench, he dozed at last, and when he awoke the light was failing. This day Pedro did not come. Thrice Cristoval thought some one fumbled the bolt of the door, but it was unopened until night was on, when the new officer of the guard came in with the old. They entered in silence. A soldier held a lantern aloft while the new commander surveyed the room and the prisoner, briefly returning his nod as all went out without a word.

The night was a year, but toward dawn he slept, rousing when his food

was brought. The soldier eyed him indifferently, and departed without salutation. Soon after, two of José's artificers came in with a pikeman of the guard, inspected the windows, and strengthened the fastenings of the door. Cristoval spoke to one of them, but the guard gruffly forbade a reply, and the prisoner said no more.

The day was maddening in its length, monotony, and stillness. Why did not Pedro come? Where was De Soto? Had all friends failed? He must communicate with De Soto concerning the Ñusta, and time might be short. When should he have his trial? These questions came again and again to his tortured mind, but all remained unanswered. They troubled him more now than the thought of death, for with the loss of hope had come the blessed resignation with which the All-wise softens the approach of the inevitable hour, and he was surprised at his own indifference. His one anxiety about it was the question when it would be. He would have interrogated the soldier who brought his food, but the man did not even answer his greeting.

Another restless night, and Cristoval rose haggard and savage. Solitude had preyed upon him, and the silence even more. The taciturnity of his guards was infuriating. When the soldier entered with his breakfast he sprang up from the bench with a suddenness that caused the man to drop his burden with a crash of broken stoneware, and draw his dirk as he dashed to the door calling for help. The sentinel burst in and stood with lowered pike while Cristoval glared upon them like a madman.

"*Loco!*" whispered the attendant, with a gasp. "*Jesu Cristo!* let me out!"

"Out, then, thou knave!" bellowed Cristoval. "Who holdeth thee? And hearken! When thou comest again, speak!—say something, or by Saint Michael, thou'lt die unshriven! Is this a tomb, that ye varlets must come and go, tiptoeing and mum like undertakers' help? Pass the time of day, ask me how I like my fare, mention the weather, or blow thy nose; but break this accursed silence if thou wouldst have thy neck unbroken!"

The soldier edged toward the door. "We are forbidden to have words with you, Señor Cristoval."

"Good! Then say that! Say it over and again! Say it backward; but ware being silent. Dost hear?"

"*Muy bien—Adiós*, Señor Cristoval," and the two squeezed themselves out.

"Bring more water!" shouted Cristoval, and sat down relieved.

The day wore along. When the officers of the guard came at nightfall Cristoval was asleep. Later he was aroused and sat up. A lantern blinded him, but in a moment he recognized Pedro with a shout. He rose and clanked across the room, extending both hands.

"Pedro, thou blessed saint! Pedro at last! My life! I thought never to see thy good face again. Where hast thou been these years? Welcome, welcome as

the sun! Would these bracelets permit, I'd embrace thee, old friend." His joy was unaffected and pathetic. Pedro was for a moment overwhelmed by its demonstration. Freeing himself of a burden whose savory odors told its nature, he grasped Cristoval's hands, then dropped one to dash his own hastily across his eyes.

"God ha' mercy, Cristoval! I—I—Spit, roast, and baste my carcass!—I'm glad to see thee. Wait!"

He turned hurriedly to the basket which he had deposited upon the table, fished out a loaf, and thrust it upon the prisoner. "Here!" he whispered, with great impressiveness, looking carefully toward the door, "Chew it up fine! Chew it fine—dost hear?"

Cristoval took the loaf mechanically, surveying him with astonishment. "What thinkst thou, man—that I would swallow it whole? I am hungered, but no cormorant. I'll wait, by thy leave."

"Yes, yes! Wait till I'm gone. Hide it. Eat it when alone."

Cristoval scanned his round face, now serious, and tucked the loaf into his doublet.

"Ah!" quoth Pedro, with a nod of approval. "Now I will lay out thy supper, and whilst thou dost eat I will talk. I must not tarry over long—to-night. To-morrow night I will tarry longer. Ha, ha! Stew my tripes and giblets!" and he patted Cristoval on the back, mystifying the cavalier with his uncalled-for levity. He continued rapidly: "Sit, *amigo*, and I'll tell thee a history of late events, and briefly. I have talked with De Soto."

"Then he hath returned!" said Cristoval.

"Hath returned, and would be sharing thine imprisonment could Pizarro do his inclinations. But De Soto was more discreet than thou, Cristoval. On his arrival he paid his respects to the general in full armor, whilst his troop stood to horse in the plaza in front of the palace. 'T was a bluff and blustering parley, I've been told. The captain forced Pizarro to lame defence of his execution of the Inca, and to swallow more of his own choler than he will be through with tasting for a fortnight. But he had naught else to do, for De Soto would have killed him at a word. In the end the commander threw blame upon Riquelme, Almagro, and others—a burden unloved by any of them, it would seem, for they fell upon him in full cry and rammed the accusation down his throat. The lie was bandied among them like a shuttlecock. This one appeached that, that one the other, then all of them each one in turn. Their chorus reached to the plaza. A bag of cats were not more earnest and vociferous. Swords were out, and but for Candia and Gonzalo Pizarro's blood had been spilt. Stew me! I would they had gotten well at it. What sayst thou to 't?—a rare batch of back-clawing freebooters, not so, Cristoval? Aha! De Soto stirred them well.—But what wouldst guess was the outcome of the wrangle? Scorch me if Pizarro did not shift the blame upon that

scamp, Felipillo, whom he accuseth of having falsified to incriminate the Inca!"

Cristoval's comment was a laugh of disgust. Pedro added an imprecation, and resumed.

"And now to thine own business, *amigo*. De Soto spoke for thee, but with ill success. Thine offence was flagrant, dost see?—black, grave, and most flagitious! For the sake of discipline thou must come to trial. The most Pizarro would grant is a delay until the day after the morrow. But for De Soto it would have been yesterday. The moment was unfavorable for intercession."

Cristoval had ceased eating and sat gloomily regarding the cook. "Useless to intercede," he said at last, "then, or at any time. My campaign is ended, Pedro. But I must see De Soto. Thou and he must save that unhappy girl."

"We will do so, Cristoval. But now hear me. I have talked with De Soto. Today he went to the general and insisted thou must have Christian fare, and that I be allowed admittance. Pizarro demurred, but when De Soto came away I went to the general, saying that I had been told I should have to be thy commissary—to lug offal to the bear, as Rogelio hath put it—and I swore a great protest that I'd not do it. Vowed that if I was forced to it I'd put poison in thy food."

"Ho!" exclaimed Cristoval.

"I declared thou 'rt mad, as 't is said by the men, and that I feared for my life."

"San Miguel!" growled Cristoval. "Is not my case bad enough without thy slander?"

Pedro shrugged. "I painted thee well, *amigo*, and the general knoweth my fears. As a consequence—"

"—I've lived on corn-bread and water, Pedro. Continue."

"—As a consequence, I'm ordered to feed thee or be thumbscrewed, and Pizarro more than half believeth the latter would please me as well. He knoweth, therefore, thou'lt have scant sympathy from me, thou'lt not be overfed, and that I'll be carrying no messages from thee to friends outside. He knoweth that I take my life in my hands in coming—I am armed, as thou see'st, Cristoval. It is thy sword, by the way."

Cristoval looked at it with a sigh. "I would rather thou shouldst have it than any other man. It is a good blade, Pedro. Let it keep me in thy memory."

Pedro regarded him intently. After a pause he said in a low voice, "Cristoval, thou'lt find a file in that loaf."

Cristoval started, and his face slowly flushed.

"José sent it thee," whispered Pedro, "encased thus in the loaf lest I be searched by the guard. A wise precaution, for they did search me. And now," Pedro hitched his stool nearer, "dost think thou canst free thyself by to-morrow night? Good! Then listen: File the rivet-heads nearly off—not quite—so that a

moment's work will finish it. Mould a bit of the bread in shape to simulate the bolt-heads in case thy fetters should be inspected. Be ready to-morrow night."

Cristoval seized the cook's hand and pressed it without a word.

"Be ready," repeated Pedro. "I'll tell thee a plan when I come again. Now, good-night."

"Hold, Pedro!—will it endanger thee? If so, I'll none of it, by—"

"It will not. I swear it. *Adiós*."

Pedro pounded on the door, which was opened presently by the sentinel. He went through with a snort and an oath, and looking back, addressed the prisoner with well affected wrath:—

"Burnt, is it? Underdone, is it? Too salt, is it? Not warm enough, isn't it? Thou croaking, leather-cropped kennel-forager! Thy feed will be served hot enough presently, and not underdone, I'll take my oath on't! Thou'lt have the devil for a cook, and he'll do things to a turn. Bear him the compliments of Pedro with the hope that his draughts are good, and firewood and sulphur plentiful. Underdone! Thou'lt be done brown, my head on 't, thou—"

The door slammed, and Cristoval could hear him grumbling and swearing to the sentinel. He smiled, sat listening for a time, then cautiously drew out the loaf and broke it. The point of a file protruded, and in a second it was hidden in his bosom. Shortly he extinguished the light, sought the bench, and waiting for a period with ears alert, took out the precious bit of steel and set to work in the darkness, first on his shackles. But despite his utmost care his manacles rattled at every stroke, and he spent half an hour wrapping the links with his torn-up kerchief. At last he could work in comparative silence, though the grating of the file seemed to cry aloud to heaven, and he paused momentarily, breathless, to listen for an alarm. But the tool bit gratefully, and before midnight he judged from the feeling that little work remained.

Now for the manacles. This was another matter. Twist and strain as he might, he could not reach the rivets with the file,—could not have done so had his soul been at stake, as well as liberty and life. He groaned, sweat, and raged, tried holding the tool between his teeth, and strove ineffectually until his jaws ached. He sat near to despair. Now he sought carefully along the wall for a crevice into which to wedge the butt of the implement, and cursed the skill of the masons. For ages he searched, until his finger nails were worn to the quick. Useless! He must wait for Pedro.

Another possibility. He groped until he found a chair. Over and over it travelled his eager fingers, and at last found a crevice into which the file would go. In his fever he dropped the steel, and it clanged on the pavement like a tocsin. He caught breath with a sob and knelt long with straining ears, mouth and eyes wide open. *Gracias á Dios*, it was unheard! Cautiously, now! The file enters and

is forced to solidity by a few gentle blows from his manacles. Now he works—awkwardly, but in a delirium of interestedness. "Gods! The Inca had longing for freedom. Had he such longing as this which hath come with renewed hope? Poor devil, 'tis even likely. God rest his soul."

It seemed but a moment before he noticed with a shock that the two high windows were staring at him with pallid light, like a pair of accusing eyes. The morning had come. He ceased and rose from his stiffened knees. Now to hide the evidence. A few crumbs from the loaf, water from the jar, soot from the inside of Pedro's lantern, and the rivet-heads were counterfeited with the loving care of an artist. Next, the filings. They were invisible, but he did not rest until they had been scattered to the four corners of the room. At length he lay down, weary but sleepless, staring at the beams which already wore the familiarity of lifelong acquaintance. After an hour the sentinel looked in, and Cristoval snored. The door closed again.—*Madre de Dios*! Was that a blunder—to feign sleep? Would not the soldier suspect that he had been awake all night—working with a file—and now slept from weariness? He sat up, pale and shaking. No! Impossible! But he would not venture it again. After a time his breakfast came—corn-bread. Pedro did not bring it. Was there significance in that? Had the night's work been detected and his accessory seized? The soldier had looked at him with suspicion—at least, with feigned indifference! Holy Mother! What a torture of multiplied fears, now that hope had come!

And so throughout the day. Every sound startled his heart to his mouth, clamored discovery, the plot revealed. At midday he was sleepy, and dared not sleep,—or only in snatches, sitting up. Ten thousand times he examined his counterfeit rivet-heads. Palpably, palpably false! To be detected at a glance through a crack in the door! He hardly ventured to move lest the bits of paste fall off. Ah, torment upon torment! It was easier to be sure of death, as he had been the day before.

By nightfall his head was fevered, his hands clammily cold. At the usual hour the officer of the guard came in. The new one was Zapato. He was surly and irritable from a debauch of the previous night, and said loudly as he entered the door:—

"Is this our ogre? Bah! For a *maravedi* I would pull his teeth. Let us have a look at his fastenings."

The other officer spoke a word in a low tone, evidently of warning, and laid his hand upon his companion's arm. Zapato shook him off roughly. "Furies!" he retorted. "Dost think to frighten me? *Loco* or not, I'll see to his irons. Here, guard, the lantern."

Cristoval's nervousness left him in an instant, and he set his teeth. *Por Dios!* the man who should discover his work with the file should never live to announce

it. As Zapato approached, holding the lantern aloft, scowling with swollen eyes, Cristoval rose slowly and stood watching his advance with still alertness. The unsteady lantern cast a fitful light over his rugged features, and the officer looked into a face whose haggardness was intensified by the uncertain shadows,—cheeks sunken and drawn by confinement and anxiety, and from their dark orbits a pair of eyes gleaming with menacing steadiness into Zapato's. The latter hesitated, peering uncertainly through the gloom, then stepped back a pace, his hand on his sword. The other officer seized him by the arm and drew him without much resistance toward the door. Zapato looked back over his shoulder.

"The man *is* mad for a surety! We'll let some one else look after his fetters," and he laughed uneasily and went out. Cristoval smiled grimly and seated himself to wait for Pedro.

Four long hours,—he knew from the change of sentinels outside the door, which was made twice. At last, the welcome voice. Pedro was apparently in unusual spirits, for his words were pitched high and he talked volubly, now rapidly in Spanish, now with dignity in Latin. Would he never be done? Presently he was singing. Fiends! Will he not hurry? But listen! His words sound thick, with pauses suspiciously like hiccoughs. At length the door opens.

"Is—is—the (hic)—man mad, sayst thou? Say, rather, '*Faenum habet in cornu!*' Lat—Latin, *compadre*. Meaneth, he hath hay on (hic) his horns—P—p—(hic) Pliny. M—more stately way of expressing it, my dear (hic). Let us—see!"

Cristoval's heart sank in black despair as Pedro stumbled into the room, basket in one hand and lantern in the other, and stood swaying in the doorway, smiling idiotically at the darkness. The prisoner could have wept in his sudden revulsion from hope to disappointment and disgust. The sentinel seemed to hesitate about closing the door, and Pedro blinked at him a moment, then said to Cristoval in a voice of maudlin sympathy:—

"*Loco!* (hic) *loco*, Cristoval? My commiseration! Sad state. *Animi affectionem lumine mentis carentem nominaverunt* (hic) *amentiam, eandemque dementiam. Amentiam* or *dementiam*, Cristoval—have thy choice. Cicer—(hic) Cicero, my friend. Grand old man, Cicero, and safe authority. But—art mad, Cristoval? Outrage! *Quos Deus perdere vult prius dementat.* Whom God wisheth to destroy—thou knowest, Cris(hic)toval. More Latin! Sh—shut the door, guard. I'll sit down with Cristoval. *Loco*, Cristoval? S-s-(hic)scandalous!"

The guard closed the door with a grin, Pedro regarding him with profound drunken wisdom. Cristoval's head was bowed upon his hands. As the bolts were shot the cook's manner underwent a transformation. He listened a moment, then stepped briskly to the table, deposited basket and lantern, and when the prisoner looked up dejectedly he met seriousness from which all ebriety had vanished.

Cristoval sprang to his feet. "San Miguel, Pedro, I thought thou hadst failed

me! Thou'rt really sober?" He studied the cook's genial face earnestly. "*Gracias á Dios*! But 'twas well played! What news? Am I to go?"

"*Seguramente*! Now, quickly, for we have scant time for words. That little play was a part of our affair and will aid us later. What of thine irons? Hast used the file? Ah, good! Now attend. This is the plot. Pedro cometh to thee in his cups. He bringeth a bottle—here it is. We drink. Presently Pedro sleepeth. What more simple, then, than to bind his arms, unstrap his poor wooden leg, strap it to one of thy good ones,—first cutting away the back of the leather socket to admit thy bent knee,—don his cloak, sombrero, and sword, and sally forth when the door is opened to thy knocking? The cloak hitched up by thy rapier will conceal thy bent leg. Thine intoxication will account for thine awkward gait on the unaccustomed peg, will excuse thy tilted sombrero to hide thy face, and thy silence if addressed. The sentinel at the door will be drunk shortly, for I've left him a bottle. With the one at the entrance thou must take thy chances, but if accosted, hiccough and tender this flask. It will be eloquent enough. Then—make the best of thy way to the mountains, and *Dominas vobiscum*! Now, first, we must take off that beard. Here are scissors. Sit, whilst I play the barber. No time for words. Do as I say!"

He was at the beard in a moment. Cristoval raised his hand.

"Well, what now?" demanded Pedro, pausing.

"The Ñusta Rava," said Cristoval.

"Thou must leave her to me."

"She goeth with me, Pedro. I have sworn to the Inca—"

"Oh, Murder of the Innocents! Man, 't is impossible! Thy life may pay for it. Save thy neck if thou canst. It is thy one chance. Thy trial is for the morrow. Encumbered with her—"

"She goeth with me, Pedro, or I go not at all."

Pedro swore vigorously, but Cristoval was obdurate. They wrangled hotly in fierce undertone. Pedro yielded.

"Be it as thou sayst, Cristoval. Holy Mother! Why must a good man sometimes be a fool? Well, stew me, thou 'rt not the first to be undone by a petticoat, nor wilt be the last. As thou sayst. Tilt thy head back."

"Good Pedro, I have given my sacred word. Should I break it, and she come to harm,—it were dastardly, my friend, as thou knowest. By to-morrow I can have her in the hands of her people."

Pedro clipped rapidly. "Well, I pray Heaven the effort may not cost too dear. But—damn my kettles, Cristoval!—thou'rt a man in a million. Now, I'll tell thee how to find her. Thou knowest the little gate in the wall just back of the left wing of the palace. Thou'lt find it unfastened. Go in when the sentinel is not too near. Thou canst find the women's court? Enter it and knock at the third door on the right. Her maids sleep there. They will know thee. Ask for Nuyalla. She

will lead thee to the Princess, who will go with thee, I doubt not, for she knoweth now the fate in store for her. Heaven be with thee, Cristoval! Now thou'rt done."

As he arose Cristoval demanded once more, searching the countenance of the cook, "Pedro, dost swear this will not endanger thee?"

"On my oath, it will not. De Soto is party to it. If it is needed, I'll have his protection."

Cristoval was satisfied. The remaining preparations were quickly made. A few minutes' work removed the fetters. Pedro's peg was unstrapped and fitted to Cristoval's bent leg. Then the cavalier bound his friend securely with strips torn from his doublet. He buckled on his rapier, threw the cloak over his shoulders, pulled the sombrero well down over his eyes, and was ready to depart.

"Now walk across the room that I may see thy gait," said Pedro. "Ah! Good! But stagger widely when thou 'rt outside. Tilt not thy rapier too much, lest it disclose thy leg. The peg would spoil thy swordsmanship, but once inside the palace walls thou canst take it off. Thou'lt answer. Now go!"

"Farewell, Pedro, my good friend," said Cristoval, embracing him warmly. "Heaven grant that we may meet again!"

"Farewell, Cristoval. God preserve thee!" returned Pedro, his voice unsteady. "Curse it, I'll miss thee sorely! Take the basket—and remember, thou 'rt drunk. Do not spare thy sword if any one hindereth; only—avoid killing José, Candia, or De Soto. They're friends—almost the only ones thou hast now, save Pedro."

"Is it so?" asked Cristoval, with surprise. "I thought there were others."

"They are few. Pizarro hath done for that. He promiseth a division of thy share of the plunder, and hath given out that the Inca enriched thee for thy friendship. Not ten men in the army but would see thee roasted with right goodwill. A murrain seize them all! Now go! But hold! I had almost forgotten. In the basket thou'lt find a pouch. Sling it over thy shoulder. It containeth provisions. *Adiós*! *Adiós*, Cristoval!"

Cristoval embraced him again, and in a second was pounding on the door. His nerves were steady, now, as steel.

CHAPTER XV

The Flight

There was no response to Cristoval's blows on the door. He waited a moment, then renewed his knocking. Still no reply but the reverberations within the room. He pounded again and again. Silence. Drawing his sword, he laid on with its hilt, but with no effect upon the guard, and he turned toward Pedro who sat staring in stupefaction. Each felt the other's dismay. Here was a condition of matters to send hearts into boots.

"*Sanctissima Maria!*" gasped the cook. "I've been over liberal with the *chicha*. Pound again. That accursed sentinel hath gone dead over the bottle."

Cristoval battered with the sword hilt until the room was aroar with the echoes. No sign without.

"They will hear it in the guard-room," muttered Pedro, "and then we shall have the whole stew of them about, with Zapato in the middle."

"No help for it, Pedro. I must be out at once if out at all," and Cristoval assaulted with redoubled vigor. Pedro's surmise was right enough, for after another storm of blows a distant voice called:—

"Ho there, guard! What is doing? What is that uproar?"

The sentinel was silent, and Cristoval pounded again. Presently there were voices and footsteps outside, the wavering light of a lantern shone beneath the door, and some one demanded: "What is wanted within there? Be done, prisoner! Give over thy din, and to bed."

"Let me answer," whispered Pedro, and he shouted: "Open up! Open up! Let me out, ye blockheads. D' ye think I'm playing this door for a kettle-drum to amuse the owls? Unbar before I raise the town."

"It is Pedro," said the voice. "Unbolt and let him out."

The door was unfastened and swung open, revealing to the group outside the similitude of Pedro, swaying unsteadily in the gloom, sword and basket in hand, with sombrero cocked very drunkenly over one eye. Cristoval hiccoughed once, then lurched suddenly forward, jostling the sergeant and extinguishing his lantern with a blow from the basket; reeled away from him with his point describing erratic curves near the belts of the soldiers, and broke through the circle. By good fortune Zapato was not there. The guard scattered before the uncertain sweep of his sword, and he zigzagged across the court toward the outer doors. The sentinel lowered his halberd at his approach and called to the sergeant:—

"*Hola, Sargento!* shall I stop him?"

"No! Pass him out. He's drunk. If hindered he'll have the general, staff, and clergy about us with his uproar. Let him go, and the fiend take him!"

The sentinel threw open the door, and Cristoval pegged a wavering trail out into the plaza, muttering fervent thanks to the Virgin for the smell of the blessed air of heaven. Now he noticed a chill, driving rain, but the coolness was grateful, and he filled his lungs, tingling to his marrow with the sudden joy of freedom.

Across the square the dark walls of the buildings loomed through the mist, and to the right, the dim mass of the palace with a solitary lantern glimmering faintly, its rays reflected on the wet pavement. The hour was late, and the place deserted. But notwithstanding its vacancy the square was uncomfortably open, and he at once sought the nearest street leading from it. At the second crossing from the plaza he turned to the right. This would bring him close to the postern in the garden wall. He had but three blocks to go, but they were long and seemed interminable.

He had gone half the length of the first when a door opened a few yards in his front. A broad ray of light shot across the way, and he ceased to breathe as half-a-dozen soldiers came out, laughing, and shouting good-night to those within. They stood in the street after the door closed, and Cristoval slunk hastily into a doorway. They were so near that he recognized their voices. All were of the cavalry but one, and he an officer of the foot. They had been gaming, and one was recounting the story of his success. He finished at last and seemed about to leave the group, starting in the direction of the prison-breaker, who now heartily regretted the impulse which had led him to take shelter. Had he gone forward he might have staggered past unnoticed, but discovered lurking in a doorway he was sure to be questioned, and his first words would reveal the masquerade, for Pedro's voice was too well known to admit the possibility of his own passing for it without detection. Should this man accost him he would have to be killed, and that, perhaps, before the others were out of ear-shot. In that event they would all be back, and handicapped by the wooden leg Cristoval's thoughts were broken upon by the words of one of the cavaliers.

"A moment, Pablo! Hast heard of the game between Mendoza and Rogelio? No? Then 'tis worth thy standing in the rain to listen to the story. It is like a romance out of Italy. They played last night until the first call this morning, Mendoza losing steadily. That greasy, whimpering *veedor* hath a dexterity acquired only of the foul fiend himself—thou knowest it, I surmise, Pablo. Ha, ha! Well, Mendoza staked and lost his last duro, then his horse, then his share in the division of the goods of our hot-brained friend, Peralta, and was about to quit a bankrupt. But, would Rogelio take his note of promise? Saith Rogelio, 'Impossible, my dear comrade! He, he!'—ye know his laugh, Señores—'I've a family at home, Mendoza. 'T is impossible!'

"'Then go to the devil!' saith Mendoza; 'thou and thy family, thy family's family, thy posterity, and theirs!'

"'He, he!' squeaketh the *veedor*. 'Be not hasty, my dear brother-in-arms. Wait a moment. Thou hast—he, he!—thou hast thy honeysuckle, the Princess—or shalt have her soon. What sayst to a thousand ducats against her? Eh, Mendoza? A thousand ducats! They are thine if thou dost win: she is mine if thou dost lose.'

"'Done!' saith Mendoza, and they play again."

"*Santo Sacramento!*" exclaimed one of the group. "How did it end?"

"Mendoza lost," replied the cavalier. "The Señorita Ñusta is a chattel of Rogelio, and with her goeth wealth untold, for she is as rich as a sultana. But Mendoza sweareth to win her back, or kill the *veedor*. He hath been out all day, borrowing money to play again."

The tale was greeted with a shout of laughter, and after a few more words the party separated. The infantryman drew his cloak about his face against the rain and hurried toward Cristoval, the others going in the direction of the palace. The fugitive set down the basket and gripped his sword.

But fate and the rain were with him, for the man passed with bowed head. In a moment Cristoval would have breathed freely but for the choking rage stirred by the story to which he had just been listening. But now the way was clear, and spurred to mad impatience, he pressed on. The peg hindered his speed, and he was of half a mind to risk its removal, but thought more wisely of it and stumbled along. At last he was at the end of the street, and the gate was nearly opposite. He listened for the footfalls of the sentinel and presently heard them approaching. The soldier paced leisurely and in a moment had passed, going in the direction of the square, which Cristoval guessed would be the end of his post. Now for it; and he crossed the street toward the wall, moving quietly as possible. In a moment he was in the garden and had closed the gate.

"God bless thee, good Pedro!" he whispered, hurriedly unstrapping the peg. He laid it down gently, picked up his sword, and hastened along the path to the palace.

The low buildings were quite dark save for a light in the guard-room, but he knew the way and was soon groping along the passage which led to the women's court. Its fountain plashed quietly, and he paused for a drink, then counted the doors and stopped at the third. He returned his sword, rapped gently twice or thrice, and presently heard a movement within with the voices of the women, evidently in trepidation. Then one asked:—

"Who is there?"

Cristoval put his mouth to the crack of the door. "It is I—the Viracocha Cristoval. I would say a word to Nuyalla. Be quick! It is important."

"Stars of heaven!" he heard her exclaim. "The Viracocha Cristoval! Nuyalla, Nuyalla! He would speak with thee."

A moment, then the door was unfastened and opened a finger's breadth. "I am Nuyalla," said a low voice, trembling. "What would you, Viracocha Cristoval?"

"Lead me to the Ñusta Rava. Quickly! Quickly! Hear'st thou?"

"But, Viracocha—I will ask her."

"Then haste, Nuyalla! There is danger."

The door was closed, and he heard it barred. It seemed hours before it was reopened, and he chafed and swore to himself in the darkness. At last Nuyalla peered out with a lamp above her head. Cristoval had forgotten the removal of his beard, and stepped forward that he might be recognized. At the first glimpse the girl recoiled, and Cristoval saw that she did not know him. She made a frantic effort to close the door, calling to the others to assist.

"Oh, *Madre*!" groaned Cristoval, in desperation as he remembered his disguise. He threw his weight against the door, forced it open, and stepped inside, closing it behind him. The movement was greeted by a scream from the frightened maids.

"Silence!" he commanded, sternly. "I am Cristoval, I tell you. Lead me to your mistress. There is danger, and no moment to lose. Where is the Ñusta Rava?"

His only answer was a chorus of shrieks from the women, who had stampeded into a corner. Nuyalla had dropped her lamp, leaving the room in complete darkness, and adding to the panic. Their cries would inevitably bring the guard, as Cristoval knew. He was stupefied as he realized the danger of the situation and felt his own impotence to cope with it; but at the crisis a door was suddenly flung open, and he beheld, to his unspeakable relief, the Princess, a lamp in hand, and pallid to her lips.

Cristoval sank upon his knee, removing his sombrero and speaking with bowed head in the hope that his voice might be recognized before she should behold his altered appearance.

"Will the Ñusta Rava forgive a rough intrusion—and in the name of Heaven, still these women before the guard is roused?"

She raised her hand for silence to the maids who had already crowded about her, then turned to him with imperious dark eyes demanding explanation.

"I have come to offer my aid, Ñusta Rava," said the cavalier.

She found voice with an effort, beginning thrice before she was able to steady it sufficiently to say, somewhat at random, in her perturbation, "They told me you were a prisoner, Viracocha Cristoval."

"I was a prisoner an hour ago. I have broken my bonds."

He looked up, and she started, scrutinizing his face with anxiety. But she recovered quickly, and he arose. After this no ceremony, and he went on, speaking directly and as rapidly as his knowledge of the Quichua would allow:—

"I am a fugitive, Ñusta Rava. My aid may avail you little, but I know your danger. There is a hope to escape it. Once clear of this unhappy town you will be among your own people. Are you ready to flee? Will you trust me? You must say quickly, for seconds are worth hours, and we must lose not one."

She made no reply, but stood regarding him intently, her clenched hand pressed to her heart. He saw that she was violently trembling, and said quietly: "Before the dawn we can be well away. It is not yet midnight, but we must hasten."

"Oh, Viracocha Cristoval!" she murmured, looking at him piteously, struggling in agony between fear and hope. Should she trust him? Could she trust one of these terrible strangers? Were they not all beasts of prey? Yet this one seemed to have a human heart, and had been her brother's friend. She sought the depths of his soul through his eyes. Their expression was intensely earnest, but frank and solicitous, and they met her own with un-reserve and quiet steadiness. Still—like the others he was a Viracocha.

Cristoval read her thoughts. "Ñusta Rava," he said gently, "I promised to your brother that with the aid of Heaven I would guard you from harm. I am ready to do so at the cost of life. But we are wasting precious moments—"

He paused abruptly. The faint, quick notes of a trumpet were sounding in the distance.

"What is that?" whispered the Ñusta, turning her head.

"The alarm," replied Cristoval, quietly. "My flight is discovered." He strode forward, and taking her by the hand, turned her toward her door. "Go! Robe yourself warmly—and make haste!"

He urged her gently forward, but she turned, crying in anguish: "Fly, oh, fly, while there is yet time! You have risked your life in coming hither. Go! Save yourself!"

Cristoval turned to Nuyalla with authority: "Quick! Her cloak!"

It was brought in a second, and he threw it over Rava's shoulders. The maids were kneeling about her, weeping, clasping her knees, frantically pressing her hands, their lamentations threatening to rise again to the danger point. She stood like a statue, seeing none of them nor hearing their words.

"Come!" said Cristoval. "We have yet time."

She cast a glance at his masterful, serious face, extended her hands impulsively to her women, then tore herself from their embraces with a sob, and followed him to the door. The cavalier turned.

"If you value the life of your Princess, see that you be silent. Make fast behind us, and open to no one before the morning." He stepped out into the darkness, followed by his ward.

He led rapidly across the patio, sword in hand. They felt their way through the blackness of the corridor, and halted at its entrance upon the outer court while Cristoval listened. There was a confusion of men's voices in the guard-room, but the great court was vacant, and save for the drip and patter of the rain, was silent.

Cristoval took her hand, and they hurried toward the garden. Here he drew

her from the walk into the shrubbery, picking his way under the low branches of the trees, which showered them with icy drops at every step. They were a few paces from the postern when the heavy report of one of the falconets on the redoubt stopped them with a shock, and startled a faint scream from the girl. The alarm gun! Rava pressed the folds of her cloak over her lips, and Cristoval shook her hand warningly, then hastened on in silence.

They reached the postern, and with the utmost caution he set it ajar and looked out. From the direction of the square came the tread of the sentinel, moving away. Cristoval turned to Rava. "Now, we go. Courage!" he whispered, and led her faltering into the street.

Sounds came from the square; lights were flitting, horsemen galloping. They hurried across to the nearest corner, turned into the side-street, then again to the right in the direction of the suburbs.

"Can you run?" he whispered. "Then we must do so." At every corner he halted, listening. The town was up. Several parties passed on nearby streets, hurrying toward the outskirts. "They will guard the ways," muttered Cristoval. "*Bien*! We shall see!" A door opened—but behind them—and a belated soldier hastened toward the square, buckling as he ran, while the two stood against a wall until he was well away. They pressed on.

At a corner they almost ran upon a squad of soldiers just entering the street they were following. But the party was going toward the suburbs, and the fugitives shrank back into the shadow unobserved, starting on again warily when the footfalls had died away. Soon the houses grew meaner, with vacant spaces between, fences of rough wicker enclosing gardens, and here and there a quinuar tree. They were in the purlieus of the town, and presently turned into a lane which wound among the scattered cottages and led off somewhat to the right, less directly toward the fields. Here they left the pavement and travelled with greater difficulty, splashing into puddles and occasionally stumbling into a fence or wall at a turn in the way, but evidently getting into a more and more thinly peopled quarter. It was an obscure thoroughfare, and as Cristoval surmised, not so likely to be guarded, so they went with less caution. Suddenly his feet struck a pavement, and he knew they were on another street.

"Halt!"

The command burst fiercely through the gloom, from what direction the startled cavalier could not tell, and he dashed forward, dragging the Ñusta, vainly hoping to evade the challenger.

"Halt!" was shouted again, more sharply, this time almost in his face, and he staggered back from a terrific thrust of a pike full in the chest. Rava's shriek answered the rough summons, and Cristoval lost her hand. The soldier sprang forward, thrust again, and missed. Down the street toward the town was a shout,

the quick, confused uproar of the hoofs of horses suddenly spurred, then the rhythm of the gallop. The soldier lunged wildly in the darkness, and now Cristoval's blade engaged his pike. It was over in a second. The fellow thrust a few times with ferocity, instantly aware of dangerous skill in front of him, ceased abruptly, and went down with a choking cry. Cristoval whirled away from him.

"Rava!" he shouted.

An answer came faintly from the roadside, and striding in the direction of her voice, Cristoval found her leaning, half swooning, against the wall. "Quick!" he cried, seizing her hand. "We must run. For your life, run!"

The fierce energy of his tone gave her vigor. Behind was the clamor of horsemen, and fear winged her feet. Cristoval's strength seemed to lift her from the ground, and as she sped beside him, seeing nothing, barely touching the earth, and blindly confident of his guidance, there were a few brief minutes of exhilaration.

They ran until Cristoval heard the horses reined up at the wounded soldier, then he turned to the right of the road. Here was a low wall, surmounted in a moment, and the cavalry roared past outside.

They found themselves surrounded by shrubbery and trees which rendered the night more inky black than it had been in the streets. A few paces, however, brought them to an open of some extent, and beyond rose another shadowy mass of foliage. They were in the garden of one of the numerous villas by which the town was surrounded, and they crossed the sward at a run. A few yards farther, and they came to the villa, quite deserted and dark. They passed it close and saw the doors were down. Cristoval remembered that it had been plundered months ago by the soldiery. The place served to give him his bearings, and he knew they were not far from the fields. As they stumbled through the garden in the rear they heard shouts and the gallop of the horsemen returning. They had lost the scent.

A few hundred yards brought them to the rear wall of the garden. They were as quickly over as at the other, and in the open. Now they paused a moment to listen, but save for the wind and rain the night was silent. There was no sign of pursuit, though once they heard a shout and answer, far in the rear, probably on the road where they had encountered the sentinel.

They pushed on. Vacant, sodden fields were all about, very low and level, as if the land had once been the bed of an ancient lake. This was the ground

swept by the enclosing lines of the Inca's army on the day of the massacre.

CHAPTER XVI

Pedro in the Thumbscrews

Cristoval's escape was promptly uncovered in this wise. After he had staggered away, the guard found the sentinel in a corner, comfortably asleep with Pedro's bottle. Half an hour's work and several bucketfuls of water brought him on his feet and aware of his transgression, impressed upon him by the sergeant by a vigorous train of invective. He was taken to the guard-room and put in irons.

When Zapato returned the sergeant reported a man drunk, and the need for a substitute. He promptly received his quota of invective for having a man drunk, and Zapato went to his office to meditate upon the circumstance of having a sergeant who had a man drunk on guard, and on the raking-over which he in turn would receive. He had settled himself to reflect upon the hardships and chagrins in the life of a soldier, when he was assailed by a thought. He threw open the door, and demanded:—

"Sergeant, where was this man when he became drunk?"

"On his post, *Señor Teniente*."

"What post?"

"In front of Peralta's door."

Zapato paled, seized a lantern, and rushed across the patio to Cristoval's door, followed by the sergeant. Two or three of the guard rose and sauntered after. Zapato entered the hastily opened door, raising his lantern and glancing about. He muttered his relief. On the bench lay a form, apparently sleeping. Pedro moved slightly, clinking the manacles, and Zapato was satisfied. He turned to go; was at the door when a fresh doubt seized him, and he went back. Pedro lay quite still, face to the wall; but Zapato espied his pinioned hands. He looked closer, swinging the light upon the face, and raised a howl of rage and consternation.

"Furies! This is not Peralta! It's Pedro! Look, Sergeant—look, thou idiot! Oh, thou doubly, triply accursed model of witlings! Thou unspeakable effigy of imbecility! It's Pedro, dost hear? Pedro! Oh, saints and devils, we're skinned alive already!"

He rolled the cook over while the sergeant stood silently making crosses. Others hurried in and gathered round the cook, who snored, bulky and peaceful.

They hauled him off the bench, every man shouting, but Pedro slept calmly on, gurgling gently when some one prodded his ribs, but giving no other sign of consciousness. There was his stump of a leg, its peg gone, vanished, evaporated. But Peralta—alas, no Peralta!

"Ho, the trumpeter!—the alarm!" roared Zapato, collaring the sergeant and running him to the door. The sergeant disappeared, and in a moment the call sounded which Cristoval had heard in the Ñusta's apartment. Its first notes were ragged and discordant, telling the musician's disorder of mind. Then it rose clear and stirring, startling many a Spaniard out of dreams. A soldier scurried across the plaza to the redoubt, carrying a lighted gunner's match, and presently the flash and bang of the falconet split the mist. Now individuals and groups came running to the square, some half-dressed, others buckling and buttoning, all pale, tousled, and breathless.

Pizarro was one of the first out of doors. A messenger stammered the news, and withered in the general's blast of fury. Commands followed quickly. Guards to every exit from the town. Patrols for every street. Cavalry for the suburbs and roads. A thousand *castellanos* reward for the recapture. Squads formed and went flying down dark streets, halting every moving man and woman. Soon, horsemen in twos, fours, and half-dozens left the square at the gallop in all directions. Groups of natives gathered, silent and wondering, their impassive faces dimly seen in the light of passing lanterns. Caxamalca had no more sleep—unless Pedro's. He apparently slept on, untroubled, under the eyes of one of the guard who swore ever afterward that he had seen him disembodied on that gusty Peruvian night.

Toward the eighth hour of the morning Pizarro, accompanied by his secretary, with Almagro, Riquelme, Rogelio, and Father Valverde, entered the prison. Pedro heard the clatter of thumbscrews as they were set upon the floor by the squad of halberdiers who followed. The cook was sitting with bowed head, absorbed in misery. He glanced up as the party came in, saw that De Soto was not with it, and his heart sank. The captain had been ordered out with the rest in search of the fugitive. He had gone willingly enough, and had succeeded in tactfully reducing the chances of discovery by leading his men in what he guessed was the wrong direction. But at that moment he would have been a welcome sight to Pedro. The cook, however, gave no sign, but invoked the aid of the Virgin in consuming time until De Soto might return.

The court—for it was a court, duly organized and sworn, albeit summarily—first examined the apartment with minuteness and deliberation. The secretary recorded its findings. The fetters were inspected, and the conclusion was arrived at, agreed to, and set down, that they had been undone by a file or similar instrument. Thereupon the tribunal proceeded to interrogate those suspected of

complicity. First came Pedro. After him would come the sentinel found drunk on post, the two artificers who had been at work on the fastenings of the door, and others. Thus far the process had been carried on with dignity and order. Now Rogelio, who, with Riquelme, was to conduct the examination, prepared to begin, swelling himself pompously, pursing his lips, puffing his cheeks, and rolling his eyes from one to another of the court, until Riquelme exclaimed impatiently: "*Infierno*! Commence, *Veedor*, before the morning is spent!"

Rogelio opened his mouth at him, then turned to Pedro. "Prisoner," he piped. Pedro made no sign of hearing him.

"Prisoner!" he repeated, and Pedro looked up, scowling.

"Ho! Art addressing me, *Veedor*? Then change my title. I am a cook. A cook, look thou! A cook bereft, plundered, despoiled, and ravished of a leg! Pray, hast seen it—my missing member?"

Rogelio hesitated, snuffled, and with dignity began again.

"Prisoner—"

"Cook, I tell thee!" Pedro interrupted, explosively. "Thy prisoner hath flown—flown with three legs, one a stolen, and that one mine—not my best, in truth, only my second best; but nevertheless most grievously wanted. Hast seen it, Veedor?"

Rogelio's mind was not alert. It could pursue a single line of thought with a sort of porcine tenacity, but the intrusion of a second idea produced derangement requiring time to readjust. His attention, now drawn to Pedro's lost peg and his uncanny-looking stump, was not readily disengaged. He stood surveying the cook's maimed member with fascination until in the slow revolution of his thoughts they should come back to their former connection. This achieved, he began again.

"Prisoner—"

"Cook!" shouted Pedro, jerking himself erect and glaring at the *veedor*. The latter stopped, and Pizarro interfered.

"Be done, Pedro!" he commanded, angrily. "Cease interruptions and allow the *veedor* to proceed. Continue, *Veedor*."

"Prisoner!" squeaked the *veedor*.

"Cook!" roared Pedro, savagely.

"Oh, in the devil's name, let him have his way!" Almagro broke in. "Call him cook—anything—but begin, Rogelio!"

"Well—cook," said Rogelio, wiping his forehead, "thou art charged with having guilty knowledge of the means whereby the late prisoner, Cristoval de Peralta, hath effected his escape."

Pedro nodded gloomily. "So I have!" he assented. "'T is, alas, true! Unhappily I have such knowledge, *Veedor*. I know that he effected his escape on three

legs, as I have said. May the third help him into hell! It was mine, I tell thee, and I want it back. What! Am I a centipede, thinkest thou, to go sloughing legs here and yon, all my days on earth? I've lost three, already—one of them mine inheritance of flesh and bone, the other twain hewn from good oak of Aragon. All gone! Stew me, I sicken of losing legs!"

The response produced a new tangle in Rogelio's thread, and before he had it straightened Riquelme growled and took up the questioning.

"Here, Pedro," he said sternly, "Peralta had a file wherewith he filed his fetters. Thou wast the only man save the guard and the artificers who had access to him. How came he by it?"

"Ah, a file had he!" returned Pedro, with irritation. "Well, curse it! let him have his file—or files, or rasps, or grindstones! May he chew them! But he filed not my leg off, I tell thee that, Señor Treasurer! He took it all—peg, socket, straps, and buckles. May it stick in his gullet! But look at me, thou who hast two good legs! Am I in a condition of mind or legs to sing to thee of files? Am I a newsmonger of files? A murrain on all files and filers! I want my leg!"

Riquelme grew red, and Almagro grinned maliciously; but Pizarro was angry. "Answer the question, thou eternal babbler!" he commanded. "How came Peralta by that file? Thou knowest, and we'll have it out of thee. Answer!"

Pedro turned from him. "Oh, a curse upon Peralta and his file! What care I who gave him his file? Have I not mine own peculiar grief? And is it not grief enough but that I must be assailed with scare-devil bellowings by madmen who have lost a file? A surceasance of it! Ye have talked enough to grow me another leg. Ye rasp my nerves with your bully-ragging about a file. I've lost a leg!"

Pizarro stamped with fury and ordered the screws. Almagro protested, and was ignored. The instrument was brought forward, and the general demanded: "Once more, cook, and finally—wilt give information?"

Pedro had braced himself for what he had known was inevitable, though he had hoped that delay might bring De Soto. No word escaped him. He took the torture, a hero, with hardly a groan. Thrice he fainted, and at the end of an atrocious hour, Almagro interfered.

"Faugh, Pizarro! Enough! Enough! For the sake of Heaven, give over! It groweth sickening. Pass him and take another. Curse me! he is entitled to be let go for his fortitude, whether he knoweth aught or naught! Put it to the drunken sentinel. He is the man to be squeezed, if any—and the two artificers. If thou canst narrow the matter down to this crackle-pated cook, then come back to him and rack him, or hang him if 't is worth thy while. But now, have done. Off with those screws, men! I'm a thief if I'll see more of it! Off with them!"

Pedro had fainted for the third time. The soldiers looked to Pizarro. He glanced surlily at his partner, whose single eye met his own with an expression

which he had seen it wear before. It promised a quarrel. Father Valverde joined Almagro's protest. The *veedor* alone yelped an objection, and it decided the question in Pedro's favor. Pizarro hesitated and said coldly:—

"*Bien*! So be it! Release him, soldiers. We can come to him again; and by the Eternal, do we find him guilty I'll draw-and-quarter him in the square! Take off the screws."

Within the hour the sentinel was haled before the court, followed by the two artificers and several of the guard. All swore willingly against Pedro,—too willingly, said Almagro, with vehemence; but for the cook the affair looked grave.

He was left in prison, horribly sick from the ordeal, but determined not to betray the man who had sent the file,—the rack, fire itself, could not have forced it from him.

De Soto returned late in the afternoon. José sought him while he was disarming, and shocked him with the news that Pedro had been tortured, and was in danger of worse. The captain had taken off his helmet, but he replaced it, buckled on his sword, and started toward the door. The old Morisco halted him with a hand upon his arm.

"Hold, Soto!" he said. "What dost intend?"

"To have Pedro released. I promised to protect him, and by my soul, I will do so! Pizarro hath gotten ahead of me, but he shall go no farther, or I'll—"

"Wait!" urged José, detaining him. "Be not rash, young man, or thou'lt draw suspicion upon thyself. Hear me! I will claim the blame if need be, and flee into the mountains. But first, do thou see Almagro. He did not favor the torture, and together you may be able to prevent by persuasion what thou canst easily precipitate by heat and defiance. If you fail, then accuse me, who sent the file."

"No sooner thee than myself, who am equally involved, José!" responded De Soto, stoutly. "I'll make no accusation."

"Then see Almagro, and keep me informed."

"Very well. I will do so." De Soto hurried out. He found the bluff Almagro a ready ally. Pedro had won his soldierly admiration, and he swore that the cook was far too good a man to be sacrificed for a matter largely personal with the commander. He went straightway with De Soto to Pizarro.

The interview was prolonged. At times it grew stormy, even threatened the division in the army which the general dreaded more than external foes; but in the end he permitted the cook's release on De Soto's responsibility, with the latter's promise to produce him for trial when called upon. Pedro was removed at once to De Soto's quarters to be nursed back to himself and guarded against Pizarro until, in the preparations for the march to Cuzco, his suspected offence was overlooked. But the General was fairly satisfied of the cook's guilt, and only the resolute and avowed interest of Almagro and De Soto prevented summary

vengeance. Pizarro raged under the necessity of biding his time.

The day following Cristoval's flight had passed without discovery of his trail, though every soldier not on other duty joined the search, stimulated by the offered reward. It was exhilarating sport, this man-hunt with so much in store for the captor, and the zest was heightened by bets whether he would be taken; if so, whether alive; or whether he would be compelled by hunger or native hostility to surrender. The sole trace of the escape was with the sentinel run through by Cristoval's sword. Brought in unconscious, he was still too weak to impart such information as he might possess. Rain had obliterated every footprint, and the flight was as clean as if made on wings. The Ñusta Rava's absence had not been discovered. The report that a woman's scream had been heard when the sentinel was assaulted received no attention.

Early in the evening, however, it was recalled, and the excitement freshened. Pizarro sat with Almagro, Riquelme, and others, receiving officers as they straggled in from the day's ineffectual hunt. Mendoza, most indefatigable of all and last to give it up, had just been talking. He was leaning against the table, weary, rain-soaked, mud-spattered from head to foot, his corselet streaked with rust, and his face begrimed and surly. He had just finished when the door flung open abruptly, and the *veedor*, blowing as if from a run, his face purple and perspiring, burst into the room. He halted, gasped, strove to speak, and choked, stared wildly about, bolted to a chair, and sat down. Riquelme rose, aghast at his colleague's grotesque symptoms of distress.

"What the devil is the matter with the man?" he cried. "Holy Mother, he hath a fit coming! Bleed him, somebody!"

Rogelio rolled his eyes at him and raised his hand, shaking his head in violent negation. Twice he gasped again, then managed to pipe faintly, "Oh—my stars!—the Ñusta!"

"The Ñusta!" repeated Riquelme. "Well, what of the Ñusta? Speak, thou puffing symbol of calamities unknown! What of her?"

"Flown!" whispered the *veedor*, grasping the arms of his chair in the effort to catch breath.

"What sayst thou? Hath flown!" shouted Mendoza, jerking him backward to see his face. "The Ñusta hath flown! Whither? Whither, I say!" and Mendoza shook out of him his little remaining breath.

"Come, Mendoza, unhand him," said Almagro. "Let him have his wind or he'll perish undelivered of his information."

Mendoza scowled about the room and dashed out, leaving Rogelio with his eyes rolled to the rafters, swinging his head slowly from side to side and waving his arms, apparently in the last stage of asphyxiation. Pizarro ordered his secretary to investigate. Xerez soon returned with confirmation. Shortly

Mendoza strode in, his black looks leaving no doubt. The Ñusta had vanished.

"Hath the garden been searched?" asked Pizarro.

"The guard hath hunted every nook of grounds and buildings," replied the secretary. "Doubtless she went last night with Peralta."

"When didst learn of it, Rogelio?" demanded Pizarro, after a moment of silence.

The *veedor* passed his sleeve across his forehead and snuffled, "Just now—just came from her room."

Mendoza was upon him again. "Just came from her room!" he thundered. "What devil's business hadst thou in her room? Didst not swear to keep away until we had played once more? What business, thou lizard?"

Rogelio sidled from his seat precipitately and took refuge behind Pizarro before replying. "She's mine!" he squeaked. "I won her at dice. Pizarro, I claim your protection as a civil officer of the Crown."

"With a wife and five small children at home!" added Almagro, with a disagreeable laugh. "Fie, Rogelio!"

Rogelio blinked at him viciously, and Pizarro ended the discussion. "You will settle your affairs elsewhere, Señores. This is no place for it." He bowed significantly, and both left the room, the *veedor* tarrying uncomfortably until Mendoza should be out of the palace.

The *veedor* was quartered with Riquelme a few squares from the plaza.

Leaving the palace, he went directly to his house, half expecting Mendoza's blade between his civil-official ribs at almost any moment. He reached it safely, and sat the greater part of the evening blinking at the light, laboring with a thought. He heard Riquelme come in with companions, and going to the rear of the patio later, roused one of his servants and beckoned him out.

"Vilpalca," he said, "dost know Felipillo? Good! Go fetch him."

He returned and sat again blinking at the light, slowly rubbing his hands, now chuckling without mirth, now communing with himself in emphatic whispers with many a sniffle interspersed. Within an hour his servant returned, leading Felipillo. The young renegade entered sulkily, twirling his plumed cap and looking shiftily at Rogelio, who greeted him with effusive condescension.

"Ah, Felipillo," he twittered; "I am glad to see thee, Felipillo. How hath it gone with thee? Sit, boy, and I'll pour thee a bit of *chicha*. Here."

Felipillo seated himself on the edge of a chair, glanced contemptuously at the very small drink, and tossed it off at a gulp.

"Well, how hast prospered?" continued the *veedor*. "Hast played in luck? Not in excessive luck, eh, chico! Thou 'rt a bit seedy, not so? He, he! But we all have varied fortunes at play, Felipillo, now high, now low. But I would rejoice to see thee in better feather, my young friend. I would, on my soul!"

Felipillo regarded him with suspicious surprise, and the *veedor* went on: "I've sent for thee on a little matter of business, my boy. A matter, in fact, of—he, he!—diplomacy. We Spaniards, as thou knowest, are great in diplomacy. I hope thy coming did not incommode thee!"

"I was going to bed," grunted Felipillo, with bad grace.

"To bed so early? Wise boy! But 'tis a sign of a thin purse, is it not?—or want of favor among the ladies—or both, eh? Sometimes they go together. Too bad, too bad!"

The *veedor* grinned upon him, meeting a sour glance in reply, then resumed.

"Now, Felipillo, what dost think I had in mind in sending for thee? Eh, boy? What dost imagine? Suppose I should say it was to offer thee—say, a hundred *castellanos*!"

Felipillo looked as if he would consider the statement a lie if made, but did not say so.

"A hundred *castellanos*, or maybe a hundred and fifty," continued Rogelio, rubbing his hands and peering into the face of the interpreter. The youth gave him a brief, searching glance, and looked away.

"I really think of it," said the *veedor*. "Upon my honor I do! A hundred and fifty *castellanos*—but not more, understand—not more. Of course, my young friend, thou wouldst naturally hope to make some return for it, now wouldst thou not? He, he! Beyond a doubt, beyond a doubt! I see it in thy generous eye. *Bien*! Now, this is what I have to say. The Ñusta Rava—my Ñusta Rava!—hath fled, as thou knowest, with that bullying, swearing, blood-drinking scoundrel, Peralta. I want her back. Mendoza wants her back. I won her fairly at play, and she is mine; but I see that it grateth him to give her up. If he taketh her, he may not give her up. May the plague torture him a thousand years! Now, seest thou, I am not a man of arms. If I were, I would pursue her myself. But I am a civilian—an officer of the Crown, with a wife and—that is to say, Felipillo, I must not endanger myself in the hardship of a pursuit. I am not inured to it. I am too old—at least, my life and services are too valuable." The *veedor* paused here to inflate his cheeks while he leaned back and surveyed the youth with dignity. But the dignity was marred somewhat by the snuffle with which he ended.

"Dost follow me? Good! Now, what I want of thee is this. Go to the camp of the Cañares, over the river, and set a pack of them on the scent of the runaways. What sayst thou? Mind thee—a hundred and fifty *castellanos*, good yellow gold!"

Felipillo had kept his eyes upon him with unusual steadiness. Now he looked aside, weighed the proposition, and shook his head. "Impossible, Señor."

"Impossible! Why impossible?" demanded the *veedor*; leaning eagerly forward. "One hundred and fifty *castellanos* for thine own purse, boy! Why not?"

"Because one hundred and fifty *castellanos* would not pay me and hire them.

A thousand *castellanos* would not hire them, Señor, for they care not for gold. They know not its worth."

"H'm! True!" said Rogelio, his jaw suddenly dropping in disappointment. "But—well, what would hire them? *Chicha*?"

"*Chicha* might, but they can get it more easily."

"Then what would?" snapped the *veedor*. "Beastly savages, not to know the worth of money!"

Felipillo was silent. Rogelio watched him anxiously for a time, then sat in a study. Finally he exclaimed: "Boy, I have it! These Cañares chafe under the yoke of Tavantinsuyu, not so?"

Felipillo nodded.

"Aha! *Bueno*! *Bueno*!" said the *veedor*, rubbing his hands. "We'll offer them freedom."

"We, Señor?"

"I, dolt; I, myself! I'll promise it them."

"Thou, Señor! They will know better."

"Bah! We can lie a little. But why not I?" Rogelio became suddenly pompous. "Thou knowest not my standing at home, boy. A letter from me to the Colonial Council, or to his Majesty, would have weight, let me tell thee. But as I say, we can promise."

"It will not answer," said Felipillo, positively. "Moreover, they are like to be free, now, without anybody's leave."

The *veedor's* jaw sagged again. He studied heavily, and presently looked up. "Felipillo, I'll tell thee what will effect it,—license of rapine!—liberty to plunder the natives hereabouts after we have marched! By the sacrament, I can promise them they shall have that, for a surety!"

"They will have it anyway," replied Felipillo.

"*Demonio!*" retorted Rogelio, testily. "But they will value a formal permit. I'll give it. Bring hither their chiefs to-morrow night. Smuggle them in, dost understand? and I'll wag a parchment before their eyes with a seal and ribbons on it. Thou'lt see! A liberality with *chicha* will make the bargain easy. What sayst thou? Wilt deal with them for me? I know not the language."

Felipillo considered long, to the *veedor's* impatience, and said at last, "It would do it, Señor, that is certain, but—"

"Well, but what?" demanded Rogelio.

The youth shook his head. "One hundred and fifty *castellanos*, Señor—"

The *veedor* wrenched himself about in his chair. "Oh, *infierno*! 'T is princely—princely, I tell thee! It would brush thee up, stake thy games, reinstate thee among the ladies! It might be thy making."

Again Felipillo shook his head.

"Murder and arson!" yelped the *veedor*, beginning to perspire. "Thou 'rt grasping, boy! One hundred and fifty *castellanos*! Oh, *Madre*! Then make it two hundred."

Felipillo arose with a shrug, one of his acquirements from the Spaniards. It enraged the *veedor*.

"Then go to the devil!" he piped. "'T is all thou'lt get. Two hundred not enough! Oh, my stars!"

Felipillo moved toward the door. Rogelio mopped his neck and jowls vigorously. "Wait, thou varlet!—say two hundred and fifty! Two hundred and fifty, gold!"

Felipillo shrugged again, still moving, and the *veedor* broke into a stream of squeaky oaths. When the youth reached the door he sprang up.

"Hold, thou tanned son of Belial! Here! Wait! Three hundred, and not a *maravedi* more!"

"*Buenos noches!*" said Felipillo, with a grin, and went out. Rogelio stood for a second, choking, then rushed after, collared him in the patio, and dragged him back. He thrust him into a chair, hurried to a chest, unlocked it feverishly, whispering curses the while, and drew out a bag. Waddling to the table, he thrust in his hand, withdrew it full of coin, and counted. Another handful counted, and he cried: "There, knave, three hundred! Wilt do it?"

Felipillo hesitated, and Rogelio swept them together to return them to the bag.

"*Si, Señor*," said the youth.

The *veedor* sank into his chair, scrubbing his reddened countenance, while Felipillo gathered up the gold. "I will go to-morrow, Señor," said the boy.

"See thou dost!" returned the *veedor* with a snarl. "Fool me now, and it will be the worse for thee."

He watched the youth to the door, saw it closed, and sprang to his feet, shaking his two fists after him. "Aha! Thou wouldst jew me, thou renegade imp!" he shrilled. "Thou wouldst, thou terra cotta rascal! By the Crucifix, thou shalt hang for thy cunning, so help me Saint Peter! Thou shalt hang for it—hang—hang—*hang*! Three hundred good *castellanos*! Oh, my soul and body!"

But three days later a band of half a hundred of the fierce mountain Cañares were nosing for the trail of Cristoval and his *protégée*.

CHAPTER XVII

The Fugitives in the Wilderness

Once more to the fugitives. The town left well behind, and the immediate danger of pursuit now past, the stimulus of live fear was removed, and Rava's spirit began to flag. She was feeling the weary length of the night with its never-ending plash, plash, plash, through the darkness, pelted by the rain, belabored by the wind, and seemingly going nowhere. There were few landmarks but ghostly trees and the innumerable small ditches, each, in the murk, so like those left behind that there seemed to her distressed and overwrought mind but a single one, presenting itself over and over again by some enchantment, to be crossed and recrossed until despair should bring them to earth. Her sodden garments clung to her, impeding every step. Her cloak, weighted by the rain, thrashed about by the gale, bore upon her as if made of lead, staggering her with its buffetings. The struggle was exhausting, and she already felt its effects. They rested frequently, Cristoval striving to stay the ebbing of her courage, but noting with grave concern her waning strength. At last, to his complete dismay, she gave up, weeping.

"Oh, Viracocha Cristoval," she sobbed, "I can go no farther! Leave me and save yourself. Alone, you can escape, but I can only be a fatal hindrance. Go, I pray you!"

The cavalier would have been less disturbed had a dozen soldiers sprung up before him, and would have known better what to do. "Oh, Holy Mother!" he groaned to himself, "look upon a helpless sinner and aid him now! A weeping girl in the middle of a heathen cornfield in the middle of a heathen rainy night, and not another woman within a league to run for!" He contemplated the dim, quivering form with an embarrassment exceeded only by his compassion.

"Go, Viracocha!" she urged, with a moan whose piteousness brought him to his senses.

"Why, God help me, child!" he exclaimed, impetuously. "I would as quickly think of leaving thee as of pulling the nose of the Pope! Come, now, *chiquita mia*, do not weep! Thou 'rt weary, I know—and cold. Well, I'll tell thee—we must be moving, thou knowest—and I'll carry thee for a space. Presently thou'lt be rested, then we'll walk again. Hush, now, little one!"

Without heeding her protests he lifted her and strode on with her in his arms. For some distance the girl wept quietly on his shoulder while he strove to soothe. The good Cristoval was as fatherly as if she had been his own, and before long her tears had subsided. But he was less cheerful than his words were cheering. There was importunate need of speed, and speed was impossible.

They kept on to the southward until an hour before the dawn. Their halts were infrequent now, but often the cavalier took his ward into his arms and car-

ried her until she was able to struggle along beside him, half supported. At last they turned to the west, and within an hour were on the great road, going toward Guamachucho. They pushed on more rapidly and in silence, Cristoval preoccupied with the immediate future. He was debating, in the main, the policy of at once making themselves and the situation known to the natives of the valley, to secure their aid. He finally decided against it. He had no doubt of their willingness and loyalty, but danger lay in the nearness of Caxamalca. A suspicion on the part of the Spaniards that these people had knowledge of the fugitives would be warrant for an effort to extort it, and Cristoval was too well acquainted with Spanish methods to feel sure that the effort would be unsuccessful. Pizarro would not hesitate at any cruelty to gain the information, and the safest plan would be to leave no traces. Before twenty-four hours he had reason to be thankful for that decision.

The morning was now so near that the highway was no longer safe, and he had resolved to gain the foothills, when he became aware of a small group of buildings. The principal one, he observed, was a small *tambo* for herdsmen. They passed it cautiously, and were again in the open, unconscious of having been seen by an early riser. The man, a Spaniard, peered through the darkness at their shadowy forms, stood listening for a moment, then stepped after them on tiptoe. Shortly he paused and hearkened again. The sound of their steps ceased as they left the roadway, and with a grunt and grin he returned to the *tambo*.

Here several comrades were moving about, and he told his tale, remarking that the pair had left the road for the fields. His account brought slight comment, and he dropped the matter until, later in the morning, he found an audience with a pronounced interest in his observations, the significance of which his absence from Caxamalca for a few days had made him unable to measure. He was informed by the first search party met coming from the town, and the squad left him at a gallop.

By the first gray of daybreak the fugitives had gained the crest of a range of foothills. The ridge stretched away to the south with many a rise and dip, finally dropping into a distant valley. In front, almost at their feet, but with two or three smaller ranges between, lay the plain of Caxamalca, half veiled by the morning mist and nearly a thousand feet below. Just over the farthest of the foothills they could descry the road with its fringe of trees, and the group of flat-looking buildings of the *tambo*. Nearer was a cottage and garden, close to their path into the hills, but which they had not seen. To the west was a ridge higher than theirs, backed by the gray silhouette of the Cordillera. They saw in the fair valley nothing of hostility, to be revealed perhaps at any moment, and strained their eyes to the northward for signs of pursuit. The only life, however, was in a few specks of figures moving about the *tambo*, the cottager already at work in

his garden, and a solitary wayfarer on the road to Caxamalca.

The cavalier turned away satisfied from his scrutiny, and spread his cloak at the foot of an outcropping rock. Soon they were busy with a frugal breakfast, Cristoval eating sparingly, talking little, and keeping a vigilant eye on the valley. Rava, too weary to talk, was quite ready to stretch herself upon his cloak under the sheltering ledge. He wrapped her well in its folds, and had hardly turned away before she was sleeping.

How long she slept she could not have said, but it seemed only a moment before she was roused by Cristoval's touch. She looked up with bewildered eyes. "What is it, Viracocha Cristoval? Oh, where am I? I dreamed—but, are we pursued?" Terrified by his expression, her voice sank into a whisper.

"We must go," he replied, giving her his hand. She rose painfully, and he drew her back from the crest of the hill. A misty rain was falling, obscuring all but the fields immediately below. As she looked, she gasped and clutched his arm. Towering before her, seemingly but a few yards away, was a white, curling column of smoke, writhing heavily as it rose, and drifting off down the valley.

"Oh, what is that, Viracocha?" she cried, cowering at his side. "What is it—what is it?"

"Nothing to fear," said Cristoval, drawing her farther away. "The cottage hath been fired. They have found our trail, Heaven only knoweth how!"

Cristoval threw her cloak around her, secured his own, and hurried her away. The thatch of the cottage was blazing fiercely. Outside of the garden wall stood a group of horses, and trotting in the direction of the hills, a squad of three troopers, one of them in the lead, bending over his saddle-bow in scrutiny of the ground.

Cristoval had seen the cavalcade nearly an hour before; saw them halt at the *tambo*, leave the road, gallop to the cottage, and surround it. Not long afterward it burst into flames, and he had little doubt that the unfortunate native, and perhaps his family, were being put to torture. He watched until the three troopers left the others and started toward the hills. Then he had awakened Rava.

As they left the spot she was weeping and frantically wringing her hands. "Oh, Viracocha Cristoval," she sobbed; "are they burning and killing because of our flight? Let me go back! Oh, let me go back! My return may stay their cruelty."

"No, no!" he replied, quickly. "They are not killing, and now that they have found our traces they will probably burn no more. Your return would not help, Ñusta Rava. Compose yourself, I pray you."

"Ah, my poor people!" she wailed. "My unhappy country! The Sun hath indeed turned away his face! Ah me, ah me!"

Cristoval crossed himself at the mention of her pagan deity, and whispered a prayer for her soul. She turned to him earnestly.

"Viracocha, we will not seek aid until beyond the reach of those cruel men. We must endanger none of my father's children. We will flee alone—die alone, if need be."

Cristoval nodded assent, but thought of Pedro's pouch, which was none too heavy. How to replenish it without the help of men would be a question. "By the saints!" he thought; "this lady's escape is attended by difficulties, and now she setteth up problems of generalship that are unfamiliar. Ah, well, we'll see what can be done." Then he said aloud, "We will consider it later, Ñusta Rava. For the present, it is better not to talk, for breath may grow precious later on."

They pressed forward. The cottage was smouldering now, and left by the soldiery, who had apparently gone into the lower hills, for none was in sight. The top of the ridge was fairly smooth, though occasionally strewn with rock; but toward midday it developed into a succession of deep gullies, and their progress became labored, with halts of growing frequency. Before the afternoon was half gone Rava showed serious exhaustion, and they stopped in a thicket. Cristoval again spread his cloak, and once more she slept. In an hour he regretfully awakened her, and they took up their march. The sky was clearing, and presently Cristoval saw the expected. Far to the eastward, creeping over the first foothills, was a small, dark column of horsemen, sparkling here and there as the afternoon sun struck upon burnished helm and corselet, and deploying at last into a widely-extended line. Another column was moving to the southward along the highway, almost imperceptibly, as it appeared to Rava, but in reality at a gallop, as Cristoval knew. He watched for a time without comment, then led on. When darkness fell they rested again; then up with the rising moon and wearily onward.

The night was far spent when they were brought to a halt at the verge of a cliff, and looked into a valley half a league in breadth, roughly semicircular, and opening to the east. Its floor held many a hillock and hollow, and here and there the white walls of a cottage glimmered in the moonlight. At the foot of the declivity flowed a stream, showing silvery where it rippled past a shoal, black in the quiet pools, finally losing itself in the distant plain to which the vale descended. To the west the hills closed in gradually, forming the head of the amphitheatre and softening into the semiluminous mist which filled a great rift in the wall of the Cordillera looming beyond. Through this dim moonlit canyon the stream found its way into the valley from the fastnesses of its source.

The dale was one of those rare spots of the arid Sierra made fertile by an ample supply of water, and every available foot, as Cristoval could see, was under cultivation. From the edge of the cliff the long sinuous lines of terraces on the opposite hills were distinctly visible in the moonlight, following the contour of the valley-wall far to the east and west.

They stood for several minutes, Rava gazing longingly upon the peace-

ful cottages of her people, their shelter so near, yet denied. Cristoval, strongly tempted to take the risk of entrusting themselves to some of the denizens, was about to make the suggestion when both were startled by the neighing of a horse. It came, apparently, from a point just below, and was answered immediately by another, more remote. Rava clutched his arm with a quick catching of breath.

"*Santa Maria!*" interjected he, in an undertone. "So they are here before us!" His faint hope of aid was dashed. While Rava clung, trembling, to his arm, he debated. The plain was occupied. To cross it in this brilliant moonlight would be fatal. Even the hills were no longer safe; parties would be scouring them with the earliest dawn, and in their last march darkness had made it impossible not to leave traces. Cristoval glanced at the dark eyes turned anxiously to his.

"There is but one thing left for us to do, Ñusta Rava. We must trust ourselves to yonder mountains."

"Oh, my good friend," she whispered, in terror; "in those mountains we are lost! We shall starve—go mad! They are most dreadful. You know not, Viracocha."

"Less to be dreaded than the wolves around us," he replied, sombrely. "There is naught else. We can hide there until the hunt is given over. How is your strength. Are you very tired?"

"I can go," she said, with a brave effort to conceal the tremor in her voice.

"Then come. If need be, I can carry you; but we must make speed."

They followed the encircling hills, and descried presently the smouldering fire of a bivouac, far out in the valley. An hour late, nearing the mouth of the canyon, they found new danger. It was picketed. Fortunately they were warned by the live embers of the campfire left by an indiscretion for which Cristoval returned fervent thanks, and they passed by a detour well up the mountainside. Safely beyond, they crept down to the bank of the torrent foaming noisily through the gulch, and while Rava waited Cristoval went on his knees in search of the trail which he knew instinctively would be there. He found it presently, a mere trace left by herdsmen in years of going and coming to and from the mountain pastures, and to be followed with difficulty in the shadow of the canyon. It was rough, and grew rougher as they proceeded, but in its rockiness lay safety, for it held no tell-tale tracks. They stumbled on in fevered haste, Rava heedless of weariness and the bruising stones alike. Cristoval gave what aid he could, supporting her weight when possible, guiding her steps among the bowlders, and she struggled on without complaint.

Momentarily the stream grew wilder, plunging and tearing over the rocks and filling the canyon with its roar. Now they blundered along its brink, now toiled up a steep ascent to pass a spur, then down, slipping, floundering, and lacerating their hands on the thorny bushes clutched to save a fatal pitch head-

long into the howling waters below. The pace could not endure. Again and again Rava fell, to be raised gently by the cavalier and carried in his arms until he staggered,—but on and on, though he groaned at the torture she endured at every step.

Morning came, and revealed such a scene of savage grandeur as he had never before beheld. They were well within the mountains. On either hand they rose in ragged slope or dizzy precipice, buttressed, pinnacled, piled crag upon crag until their heights pierced the heavens. In front loomed greater steeps, with gloomy malevolence in every seam and scar. Around them, a madness of shattered rock, strewn and riven as if hurled down by an angry god. Over these raged and thundered the stream, here a white, leaping cataract, there a black, whirling pool, and sinister everywhere.

They labored onward, in their stupendous surroundings mere pygmies on a threadlike trail, bending beneath exhaustion as if crushed by the enmity of the wilderness. Often, turning to lift the half-fainting girl, Cristoval found the tears streaming over her pallid cheeks, and at last he saw her sandals were stained with blood. In his arms she clung in the complete abandonment of weariness, and when he was compelled to lower her to her feet she reeled, too benumbed to follow. But he pressed forward, relentless under the driving necessity, though with aching heart for every evidence of her suffering. No halt possible now, for day had come, and he knew they would be followed. At the first light he scrutinized the trail in the hope of finding marks of horses' hoofs in indication that the canyon had been explored the day before. The signs were absent, and he knew the hunt would soon be upon them. From time to time he left Rava to rest while he clambered up the mountain-side for a cautious look back down the valley, returning to rouse and gently urge her forward. Frequently she pleaded, begging to be left to die; but his face was stern, and his words, though kindly, grew peremptory in answer to her tears. More often he took her in his arms and strode on without a word.

Thus through hours which seemed to Rava to be life-long; over a path of eternal length; driven by a being who at one moment was a monster of cruelty, urging her on to endless torture, at the next, a spirit of benevolence, on whose shoulder she wept her anguish. And the poor cavalier, wrung by every fresh pang he forced her to undergo, cruciated even by his conscience for bringing such torment upon her, could only toil onward, reeling with fatigue and harrowed by uncertainty while he muttered incoherencies vainly meant to cheer.

At last, having left her beside the path, a mere bedraggled, almost inanimate heap, he returned from a reconnaissance in mad haste.

"Quick!" he whispered, as he bent to raise her from the ground. "Up—up! They are upon us! We must hide—God knoweth where!"

His urgency gave her life, and she staggered to her feet, clinging to him and looking back in terror. A few paces forward, her pain forgotten; then down toward the stream, from rock to rock, to a bowlder behind which they crouched at the edge of a pool. He pressed her down and knelt, his hand one of iron upon her arm.

It seemed an hour before her ears caught the sound of hoofs, and she closed her eyes. They neared slowly, until she heard the subdued voices of the riders. They halted a moment, scanning the mountain-sides, and moved on. They were opposite the bowlder, so close that she could hear the creaking saddles; an age in passing; finally past. Cristoval relaxed his grip upon her arm, and she heard his deep-drawn breath. He half arose and looked warily after them. A gallant party, surely, with the sunlight glancing from their steel, but Cristoval whispered a fervent curse upon them as they wound along the trail—upon each by name, for they were near enough for easy recognition. They rode slowly, searching the sides of the defile with careful scrutiny; halted at a point a hundred yards up the canyon, and dismounted to lead their horses, over the narrow path where an outcropping ledge crowded toward a dangerous slope, falling away abruptly to the stream twenty feet below. Beyond this they mounted again and shortly disappeared beyond a jutting crag.

Cristoval turned to Rava. She was crouched with half-closed eyes, her hands tight-pressed upon her bosom. Startled by her pallor and the drawn lines about her mouth, he hastily opened the pouch and drew forth the flask of *chicha*. "Here!" he whispered, unstopping it and pressing it to her lips. "Swallow this. It will help thy strength. They have gone.—Rava! Dost hear? Swallow!"

She obeyed mechanically. He bathed her forehead with the icy water, and presently she revived.

"Ah! *Gracias á Dios*!" he murmured, as she opened her eyes. "Thou'rt better? Another sip, and thou'lt be thyself. They have gone, but we must find better shelter before they return.—Poor little one, thou 'rt worn to death—and, *Madre*!—thy feet! Oh, *miserere Domine*!"

He looked cautiously about. Beyond was a larger bowlder, rising almost from the water's edge, a few small bushes growing near. It would afford better hiding—the only one as far as he could see. He bore her thither. Seating her against the rock with his folded cloak for cushion, he hastened to unlace her sandals and bathe and bandage her cuts. Her head was drooping, and he quickly cleared the narrow strip of sand, and eased her upon it. She was sleeping heavily almost before he had drawn her cloak around her.

Cristoval seated himself to await the return of the cavalcade, lines of anxiety on his face as he looked upon the motionless form, wan cheeks, and darkened eyelids, and pondered the gloomy prospects. She was at the limit of her strength.

"Ah, *miserere nobis, Domine*!"

It was late afternoon when he was roused by sounds of the returning horsemen. He rose to his knees, silently unsheathing his sword. The movement awakened Rava, and he raised a warning hand. He heard them halt to dismount, and soon they were passing, riding carelessly, the search of the canyon evidently given over. He looked furtively out as they straggled by.

"Curses, a thousand curses upon you, Gutiero, De Vera, Almar, Cueva—but wait! One is wanting! There were nine, or I miscounted. Ah!—De Valera!"

At that moment he heard a shout, faint and distant, up the canyon, and saw Cueva draw rein. "Shall we wait for him?" Cristoval heard him ask.

"No!" replied one, with an oath. "Let him follow as he can. He's always behind, the pig, and we've wasted time enough for his lagging. He'll not wander far off this highway, I'll venture a peso. Give him an answer, then come."

"Give him answer with thine own wind, if thou hast wind to spare, I'll not," retorted the other, and gave spur. They moved on. Another distant hallo, and Cristoval's eyes suddenly fired. He glanced at Rava, and his resolution formed. There was one chance, and only one, of saving her. She could never survive another day of torture. Maimed and exhausted, a league farther would be beyond her powers. They must have a horse.

Cristoval unbuckled his belt. His lips were compressed, and there was a light in his eyes which Rava had never seen. Laying down belt and scabbard, he picked up his naked blade, gave it quick scrutiny, and looked after the retreating cavalcade. It moved slowly, and it was long before he turned from scowling down the valley. From the other direction came shouts, growing more distinct. He looked again at Rava, who had risen upon her elbow and was watching his eyes in alarm.

"Make no sound!" he whispered, gently touched her hand, and was gone.

A rapid climb brought him to the trail. He glanced once more down the canyon. The horsemen had disappeared beyond a turn, and he ran to the abutting rock where they had dismounted. Here he stepped off the path, and placed himself against the rock. The shouts from the upper valley were near enough now to betray De Valera's anxiety. Minutes passed, then came the ring of the horse's hoofs. They ceased, and a grunt close by told him the laggard trooper had dismounted. De Valera emitted another bellowing wail, and Cristoval heard his puffing approach.

"Come along, thou lazy—ambling—lop-eared—bedeviled—misbegotten—and wholly damned son—of a cow!" De Valera was addressing his languid steed.

Cristoval grinned and laid aside his sword. "Bah! Why kill the wretch?" he thought, but loosed his dagger and gathered for a spring, his alert eyes upon the trail. De Valera appeared, lance over his shoulder, his face purple with irri-

tation and shouting, tugging his reluctant horse. Cristoval was upon him like an avalanche.

"Whoof!" blurted De Valera, with sudden aspiration as he received the charge. Cristoval grappled, and he dropped his lance, slipped, clutched the neck of his assailant's mail, and both rolled down the face of the rock. The horse reared and turned, lost his footing and regained it, and tore back up the canyon at a run.

Rava heard the brief struggle with palpitating heart: the crash of the fall of the armored man, the mad gallop of the horse, and then only the roaring of the torrent. She rose from her knees. There was no sign of Cristoval or his adversary, and only distant hoof-beats to vary the monotonous din of the stream. She leaned against the rock, weak and shaking. For a moment she stood with straining ears. The gallop had died away, and she was alone. Minute after minute fled, and at last she could endure no longer. Unheeding the pain of every step, she sped to the trail. No slightest evidence of life. She ran a few steps down the canyon, halted trembling, and turned to the jutting rock. Here she stopped and looked down, transfixed. There lay a man in armor, inanimate; beside him the form of Cristoval, face upward and marred by a stream of blood from his forehead. She tottered, and parted her lips to scream, but her voice failed. How she descended from the path she never knew; but in a moment she was kneeling with his head in her lap, calling his name in agony, and wiping away the crimson stream. She thought of the water, and in a second was carrying it in her hands and bathing his face, praying, praying for a sign of animation. Tears blinded her while she worked, hurrying to and from the edge of the torrent, dashing the too meagre handfuls into the still face, chafing his wrists, beating the nerveless hands, sobbing and moaning his name. He lay without a quiver. She thought she looked upon death, and her fear became wild, frenzied despair. She cast a shuddering look of horror at the grim desolation surrounding her, and threw herself upon him, her hands at his throat, on his cheeks, in his hair, wailing his name in the extremity of mortal anguish.

He sighed. Ah, merciful Sun!—most beneficent Inti! She stifled her sobs and brushed away her tears that she might see. His eyelids trembled, and now a moan, most faint, barely audible, but—he lived! More water, and more, and when she came again his eyes were open, blankly at the sky at first, then at her. She wept for joy, pressing his hands to her bosom, while he regarded her vaguely, striving to arrange his muddled thoughts.

"Courage!" murmured Cristoval, and closed his eyes again, to be startled to his senses by a shriek from the girl. De Valera had moved, and was feebly groaning. Cristoval turned his head at the sound, and the sight of his fallen enemy aroused him.

"*Cielo!*" he gasped. "He had slipped my mind." He crawled to the trooper,

found his dagger, and tossed it out of reach. De Valera moved again, but Cristoval rose unsteadily and seated himself upon his adversary's chest. "Water, *carita*!" he whispered, and bowed his reeling head upon his hands. Rava brought her hands full and dashed it into his face. "Ah! *Bueno*!" he muttered, and looked down upon De Valera. The visor of the helmet was thrown back, and the prostrate soldier was staring up at him. Cristoval glowered, rubbing an aching head, and the two Spaniards regarded one another for a time in silence, neither in full possession of his faculties. At last De Valera moaned faintly, "Mercy, Cristoval!"

Cristoval made no reply, scowling blackly at the pallid face and wiping away the blood which still trickled into his own eyes from the gash in his forehead.

"Mercy, Cristoval! Give me time for a prayer."

The words brought Cristoval more fully to consciousness, and he replied, angrily: "Time for a prayer! Time for a prayer! What dost think?—that I will murder thee, lying on thy back and hands down? If thou hast the thought, dismiss it, or I'll have it out of thee roughly."

The soldier faltered weakly: "What! Thou wilt spare me, good Cristoval? Oh, blessed Virgin!" and tears of gratitude filled his eyes. "But I might have known it of thee, Cristoval."

"Ah!" replied Cristoval, scornfully. "But see thou liest still, lest I lose the whim." He rubbed his head again, struggling to order his thoughts. De Valera lay motionless, and at length Cristoval said sternly:—

"Now attend, thou unfortunate—I am going to plunder thee. I've need of thy horse, which is up yonder—and of thy harness. Thou'lt be wise to make no hindrance. Dost comprehend? *Bien*! Then sit up whilst I unhelm thee. Ware, now!—no sudden movement!"

Cristoval rose to his feet, still giddy, and set to work, De Valera submitting quietly, while Rava looked on in wonder.

"*Alli!*" quoth Cristoval, as he tossed the last piece upon the heap of armor. "Now, Ñusta Rava, thy girdle, I pray thee, to bind him. No groaning, Señor! It doth misbecome thee. Now, thy hands behind thy back. So! Now for thy feet.—Good! Hast a kerchief? Then we'll have a choke-pear.—Silence! Dost think I'll have thee waking mournful echoes through the night? Thou hast shouted more than is good for thee already. And next, whilst I make the choke-pear I'll question thee—and see thou makest cheerful response, or— First, hast cherished against me any peculiar animosity? I mean before this solemn afternoon."

"No, good Cristoval," replied De Valera, with candor.

"Then why partaking this hunting holiday?" demanded Cristoval, eying him severely.

"The reward, *amigo*. A thousand *castellanos* to a poor man—"

"A thousand!" exclaimed Cristoval, with contempt. "Is that all Pizarro hath offered? By the saints, he'll double it before I have done! Well, *bastante*! Thou didst seek reward! *Bien*! But now thou 'rt unhorsed thou canst hope for reward no longer and canst answer freely. How many are in pursuit?"

"Nearly all have been, saving Juan and Gonzalo Pizarro, De Soto, José, and a few more.—But hold, Cristoval, the Cañares are out and after thee. I give thee warning."

Cristoval drew a long breath, his face darkened, and he stood in reflection. He threw down the choke-pear with which he had purposed gagging his captive. "We'll not trouble thee with it. Thy news is not welcome, Valera, but thy warning is. We will go, Ñusta Rava."

"First, I will attend to your wound," she said, and tearing a strip from her robe, soon had it bandaged. In a few minutes Cristoval was in his enemy's armor, and taking up the lance he said: "*Adiós*, Valera! Thy comrades will find thee in the morning." He assisted Rava to the trail, secured his sword and belt, and once more they were on their way, leaving De Valera leaning mournfully against a rock, a prey to varied fears.

A mile up the canyon Cristoval captured the horse, and found De Valera's mace and buckler hanging on the saddle. The first care was to examine the contents of the saddlebags.

"Ah!" exclaimed the cavalier, with satisfaction. "Praise Heaven, they are well stocked. Here is *charqui*, bread, and parched maize, and grain for our steed in the other—with discretion, some days' supply. But I was more sure of De Valera's providence than of his honesty. Now, we're equipped, Ñusta Rava, and now we'll mount."

It was a trial of her courage, but soon she was seated upon the horse's croup, holding her place with the aid of the cavalier's belt.

CHAPTER XVIII

The Vale of Xilcala

In Rava's memory, afterward, the toil, suffering, and peril of the succeeding days remained as fragments of an anguished dream. There were dim recollections of unmeasured hours of weariness, of journeying upward through huge defiles, along the verge of precipices, and out upon barren stretches of tableland which

seemed, in their desolation, the abode of Despair and Death: the moaning of the wind, their voices. Here was infinite loneliness, the dreary solitude of a world forgotten of God. Over these lofty wastes, gasping and dizzy in the rarified air, their brains pierced by the fierce rays of a sun which gave no warmth, their lips split and bleeding, their faces raw and smarting in the eager wind, they labored on. Cristoval, silent, walked and led, his eyes rarely lifted from the faint trail left by herdsmen and their flocks of llamas. This once lost, there would be slight hope. Followed, it might lead to safety.

But through all her recollections of hunger, exhaustion, and torture, was that of the dauntless spirit who shared them with her, ever watchful, ever solicitous, and of unfailing gentleness in the most desperate hours. A memory of a brave, kindly face, growing haggard as one day of struggle followed another, but with never a sign of failing courage or resolution, never a shadow of impatience at her plaints, her tears, or when her weakness compelled the loss of precious time. Often she had been delirious, or in a half stupor, but never unconscious of his presence and tender guardianship. She had a memory, too, of a tempest, of snow and deadly cold, when they had sought shelter among the drifts of a gorge and he had held her in his arms through the night, wrapped in his cloak, his armor removed that she might have his warmth. But she only half remembered the long battle through the snow of a pass to which Providence had led their steps when they had finally lost the trail.

After this, a descending valley, a lonely hut at last, and she came to her senses surrounded by the warmth and frugal comforts of a herdsmen's lodge. Here Cristoval learned from the two occupants of the hut that a village called Xilcala lay within three days' journey through the mountains. The younger of the herders, named Mati, would guide them; and after tarrying for some days until food and rest should fit them to resume their way, they set out.

In the late afternoon of the third day of travel from the hut they were descending into the Vale of Xilcala. Since morning they had been creeping down a canyon which broadened at last at its junction with another, and their haven lay before them. A turn in the trail brought it into sudden view, and they halted, struck by a scene of so rare and tranquil beauty that even Cristoval, not easily impressed, muttered an exclamation. Assisting Rava to dismount, he led her out upon an overhanging ledge. Hundreds of feet below spread a rolling plain surrounding an alpine lake of limpid emerald and blue which gleamed in its setting of spring verdure like some fair jewel. From the water the shores gently rose to the encircling mountains, traceried with walls and hedges, and sparkling with the silver inlay of numberless rivulets and miniature canals. Far up the slopes of the sheltering masses of the Cordillera clung cultivated terraces, the *andenes*, the lines of their retaining walls sweeping in and out with the contour of the rugged

scarp until they broke at a distant cleft in the rampart, through which flowed the outlet of the lake. Half-way down the western shore was the village, crowning a rocky promontory, its white walls reflected on the placid water, and to the weary eyes of the refugees hardly more real or permanent, in its quiet beauty, than the inverted and blended image at its feet. Nearer were scattered cottages, a villa with its park, and shaded lanes and groves of trees just breaking into leafage or blossom.

Over all was an atmosphere of peace that went to the heart of the girl standing with cheeks pale and eyes darkened by the sorrow, hardship, and dangers through which she had come. She gazed long with clasped hands. At length in a whisper, as if loath to break the silence which like the evening haze brooded over the tranquillity below, she said to Cristoval, who stood leaning upon his lance beside her, "Ah, my friend, is it not beautiful? Oh, Viracocha Cristoval, is it not too beautiful to be real?"

"Why, God bless thee, child!" answered the cavalier, "not too beautiful to be real, surely; but fair enough for a dream, no less! and welcome as 't is alluring."

"Most welcome! Most welcome!" she exclaimed; and after a pause, "And now—our cares and dangers are over."

He did not reply at once, and she glanced at him inquiringly. "Thy cares and dangers are over, Ñusta Rava," he said. "I pray 'tis so."

"But," she said, with concern, "I said ours, Viracocha. Are not yours as well?"

"No doubt, no doubt!" he replied, hastily. "The most immediate of them, assuredly." He looked away toward the distant mountains, as if unwilling to pursue the subject. She studied his eyes for a moment, observing their cloud, and said gently, "The most immediate of them, but not all?"

"Oh, belike all!—But shall we not move again? We have yet some distance, and thou 'rt a-weary."

"Presently," she answered, with decision; "when you have told me what you reserve in your thoughts. Why may not your care and danger be past, as well as mine?"

He smiled at her persistence. "Why, Ñusta Rava, thou dost forget! I am a renegade from my countrymen—a traitor—with a price upon my head. And to thine own people, what can I be but one of a band of plunderers—an enemy?"

"Something far different, Viracocha Cristoval," she replied, earnestly. "You are my friend." He inclined his head, but made no reply, and Rava continued: "You have been my preserver; and that meaneth, doth it not, that you are a friend of Tavantinsuyu? Surely, you cannot think we are without gratitude! Not one of my people—not one! but will share mine with me."

"Nay!" replied Cristoval, gravely, "it is not that I would doubt their gen-

erosity, Ñusta Rava; but I am a Spaniard, and Spaniards have done your country wrongs that will not be forgotten whilst there lives a father in Tavantinsuyu to tell them to his sons. They will do more grievous ones, for I know them well. Their deeds will breed a hatred for my race that will not die in a thousand years. Think not that my blood can be overlooked."

Rava was pale. "But, Viracocha," she said faintly, after a moment, "you had no part in those deeds—nor will have."

"I had no part in the massacre, and strove to save thy brother—but failed."

She touched his arm timidly. "Your friendship for him, as well as for me, shall be remembered. Be sure of it."

Cristoval shook his head. "It may be so, Ñusta Rava; but to thy people I shall always be one of the race accursed."

She looked long toward the lake and beyond. He resumed with his kindly smile: "And now, child, I shall presently give thee into the hands of thy friends, and thou'lt be 'child' no longer, but a Daughter of the Sun, surrounded by a court, inaccessible to thy rusty cavalier, and with thousands ready to do for thee more than he hath done—though not more gladly, upon my heart!"

She turned to him quickly, her lips parted. No words were uttered, but Cristoval saw a depth and strange lustre in her eyes that haunted his memory. The look was brief and unfathomable. She extended her hand—quite cold, he noted—and faltered, "Let us go, Viracocha." He bent over it, and led her to the horse.

Cristoval walked on beside the head of the steed, striving to divine what she had been about to say, and the meaning of the fleeting expression. He looked back at her, but she seemed lost in reverie, and gave him but a brief downward glance half hidden beneath the veil of her lashes, with the faintest trace of a smile. But, he thought, the smile had more of sadness than her expression of repose.

They had covered half the distance to the town when their guide, who was some paces in advance, halted, faced about, and went upon his knees, bending until his forehead touched the ground.

"Ah!" growled Cristoval to himself, "there goeth that benighted varlet nosing the dust once more. The ten thousandth time since we left his hut! Well, doubtless he hath, with our gracious permission, some humble matter of information." He led up to the prostrate Peruvian and stopped, waiting patiently for the development.

"Rise, Mati," said Rava, gently. "What wouldst thou say?"

Pointing toward the lower valley, he said diffidently: "Most illustrious Daughter of Inti, if you will permit, yonder villa on the hill between this and Xilcala is the home of the Palla[1] Maytalca."

[1] Palla = married woman of the blood-royal.

"Oh! Is it so, Mati?" cried Rava, eagerly. "Then, Viracocha Cristoval, it will be ours. The Palla Maytalca is a kinswoman and was one of my royal father's household. In my childhood I loved her well. We shall be most welcome. Mati, do thou go forward and prepare her for our coming."

The youth dropped to the ground again, rose, and backed away for a dozen yards, then turned and sped down the trail. They followed, and the path shortly entered a lane between rows of willows around the margin of the lake. Night was coming rapidly, and it was almost dark when they arrived at the gateway of the villa. Mati met them, and Rava having dismounted, Cristoval removed his helmet, tethered his horse, and they followed the herdsman down an avenue of trees toward the residence. It was a rambling building, or a group of several, and of a size comporting with the rank of its occupant. As they drew near torches flashed toward them, and they were presently met by the Palla Maytalca, advancing with perturbation, attended by excited young women and torch-bearers. Rava uttered a cry of joy and threw herself into the Palla's arms, and the two mingled their broken exclamations of delight. Cristoval halted a few paces back.

"Rava, Rava, my best beloved!" at last exclaimed the Palla, holding the girl at arm's length, surveying her in surprise and fondness. "I cannot believe it is thou. Hast come from the clouds? By what miracle of the great Inti art thou here?"

"Oh, I hardly know, dearest Maytalca!" answered Rava, smiling and sobbing, "and can make it seem real no more easily than thou. Nor can I tell thee the thousand perils in our coming. Had it not been for the bravest and best of friends—oh, Viracocha Cristoval, I pray you come nearer!—This is he, Maytalca: my deliverer and defender—the Viracocha Cristoval."

The lady started as his grim, warlike figure clanked out of the obscurity and the light fell upon his steel. Observing her trepidation the cavalier halted, saying as he bowed: "Palla Maytalca, you do not know my joy in seeing the Ñusta Rava at last in safety, and in witnessing her affectionate welcome."

His voice and manner were reassuring, and she conquered her fears sufficiently to extend a trembling hand and say, timidly: "One who hath befriended the Ñusta Rava, Viracocha, hath no need to be assured of a welcome to the home of Maytalca. It is yours."

"Be sure of my gratitude," said Cristoval, as with Rava he followed their hostess to the villa. As the Princess passed, the kneeling attendants rose and went after, dumb with awe of the royal maiden and her mysterious companion.

The Palla led across a terrace into a large hall, brightly lighted and strewn

with rugs. A pair of braziers were burning, for the evening was growing chill, and Rava was soon established among the cushions of a divan, giving a hurried though unconnected narrative of her late adventures to the wondering Maytalca. The Palla, who, as her title indicated, was of royal blood, though not of the reigning family, was the widow of one of the princes of the realm. She was a stately woman, just past middle age, with hair slightly touched with gray, and robed in the rich costume of the women of the nobility. Her bearing was that of a gentlewoman, and whatever disquietude she felt at her steel-clad guest it was effectually concealed. As a matter of fact he gave an impression of formidableness with his rust-streaked armor, his half-grown beard, eyes burning in sockets made deep by hardship, and cheeks hollowed by the recent toil and hunger, which his gentle comportment could only half dispel. When he excused himself some minutes later and left the room with a servant to look after his horse, the Palla turned to Rava and seized her hands.

"Rava, my child," she exclaimed, in a low voice, "how hadst thou courage to trust thyself with that terrible-appearing man? I tremble to look at him! I shall never sleep while he is beneath the shelter of this roof."

Rava smiled up at her from her cushions. "Ah, Maytalca, thou dost not know him! Had I been a child he could not have been more gentle. Indeed," and the slightest pout came into her expression, "he seemeth to hold me but a child! But oh, my dear, he is brave as he is kind! The god Viracocha himself were not more terrible when he meeteth an enemy: nor thou more tender than he hath been to me. He is invincible; yet hath the heart of a woman. Sleep as thou wouldst with Inti guarding, dearest Maytalca. Thou'lt love him."

The Palla seated herself beside the girl and placed an arm about her, gravely studying her eyes. "Hast thou found, Rava, such traits in thy protector?"

Rava turned her eyes upon her for an instant with a half-frightened look, then dropped them with sudden reserve. "He was the Inca's trusted friend, Maytalca," she replied, with womanly art, "and hath been mine. I believe him most worthy."

The entrance of the cavalier interrupted. He tarried but a moment for a brief but ceremonious leave-taking for the night, then followed a servant to the apartment which the Palla said he should regard as his own. It was in a wing forming one side of a rear court which opened toward the lake, and he found the chamber one which might have suited a Moorish prince. It was decorated with the richness of style which had already become familiar, furnished with the usual cushioned chairs, tables of polished stone, and a divan which looked more inviting than any the weary soldier had laid eyes upon for many days. The attendant opened a door and showed him a small court with a pool fed by a running stream for bathing, then aided him to disarm, and with the announcement that

his supper would be sent presently, backed out with a profound reverence. By the time Cristoval had finished his bath the repast was served, and an hour later he was asleep.

He was aroused in the morning by a persistent rapping. Calling a summons to enter, a youth presented himself, dropping immediately upon his knees and bending to the floor. Weariness came into the face of the cavalier at the obeisance, and he directed the boy to rise. He did so, backed out of the door, and reappeared with a goblet and an armful of apparel. The latter he laid over a chair, and approaching the couch, knelt to tender the cup.

"Viracocha," he said, humbly, "my mistress sendeth her morning greeting with the prayer that the Sun have you in his protection."

"It is most kind of her," said Cristoval, rising upon his elbow. "Bear mine in return to her, and thank her for me. What is this? Ah! Hot *chicha* and water. It is thoughtful, boy."

"Viracocha," said the youth again, "it hath pleased my mistress to honor me with the command to serve you."

"She is very gracious," returned Cristoval, looking the boy over with favor. "Thank her also for this. But what was thine other burden—that on the chair?"

"Fresh garments for you, Viracocha."

"Surely?" said the cavalier. "I thank her again, sincerely, for I had sore need. I will rise at once."

The youth retreated backward to the door, and started to go once more upon his knees.

"Stay!" said Cristoval, quickly interrupting the movement. "There is one matter whereof I would speak—but what is thy name, lad? Markumi? Good! Well, Markumi, there is, as I say, one thing I would mention—a trifle, but as we may be thrown together for a time, it may concern our peace of mind. It is this: I am not an Inca, Markumi, nor an idol, nor an altar, nor yet a heathen god, nor a saint; and may never be any one of them, though I have a namesake who is the last—San Cristoval, of blessed memory, of whom thou mayst some day learn. But, being neither one nor another, this excessive reverence doth not relish me. I am a plain soldier, and love naught better than to see a man upright on his two legs. Reserve, therefore, thy homage for the ladies, who have full claim and title to it; and thy cramps for the Inca, who may be wonted to it—as I am not. Dost comprehend, Markumi?"

"Not clearly, Viracocha," replied Markumi, with embarrassment.

"Why, what I mean is this. Keep off thy knees. Bow to me with moderation, temperately, and without extravagance, and I'll like it better. Is it plain?"

"Yes, Viracocha."

"That is a good lad. And now, is there a man in thy village who can trim

hair? Ah! Then fetch him. And Markumi—"

"Yes, Viracocha."

"Advise him about the manner of his approach." And he added to himself: "I'll have no barber coming before me in the attitude of a cow just rising from her bed. I weary of it."

Cristoval arose quite himself. He hummed through his bath and was cheerful until he confronted the chair holding the apparel sent by the Palla. Then his face grew sombre.

"*Santa Maria!*" he whispered. "Do I face the need of donning this infidel caparison? Must I forswear the guise and earmarks of a Christian? On my soul, 'twill stick sorely in my conscience!" He lifted one piece after another from the pile, surveying them at arm's length, then turned to his own sadly worn garments. "No help for it, Cristoval," he said, as he overhauled them. "They are rent, torn, ripped, and decrepit, to say naught of the stains of hard travel. Well, may Heaven overlook my heathen masquerade!" He returned to the others and gloomily began to dress.

The costume was that of a Peruvian noble: a shirt of white cotton, another of white wool, and a loose, sleeveless tunic, handsomely woven in rich colors and conventional design, to be belted in at the waist, leaving its skirts falling as a kilt almost to the knees. There was a girdle—a broad band, highly ornamental in its woven pattern, heavily fringed with flat braids of cord, each of half the breadth of a hand, and reaching to the bottom of the tunic. Over this was worn a belt, and Cristoval lifted it with an exclamation. It was of soft leather, and mounted with heavily embossed plates of alternate gold and silver.

"By the saints!" quoth he. "Should Pizarro rest his eye upon this he'd raise my price."

A cloak, or poncho, and a pouch to be hung from the belt, equally rich in design and color with the tunic, completed the apparel for the body. A pair of sandals, or buskins, with broad straps highly ornate, and provided with protecting toe-pieces and side-pieces, were beside the chair. These laced half-way up to the knees. The costume was picturesque, thoroughly graceful and masculine, and revealed his strength of arm and symmetry of leg; but as he glanced downward his eyes rested upon his bare knees and half-bare calves.

"Oh, the fighting saint!" he exclaimed, in dismay. "My knees! Stark, gleaming, barefaced, preëminent knees! Gods! I'm *all* knees! O, San Miguel, clap thine eyes upon them! Didst ever see so many knees, and knees so braggart in their nakedness? Name of a fiend!"

He tugged at the kilt to bring it lower, but vainly, and he sat down.

"A thousand curses!" he groaned, as he contemplated them. "Thrice more flagrant in repose!" He rose and moved about, watching them narrowly. "Flash-

ing like the beacons of Tarragona when I walk! Ah, Blessed Mother, can I ever lug their effrontery into the gaze of women's eyes? Oh, would that I were Pedro! then this immodesty were reduced by half. Blood and Misery!"

He was standing helpless when Markumi entered with his breakfast. Cristoval eyed him closely, but the boy observed nothing unusual, merely announcing as he set to work to arrange the table that the man would come presently to trim his hair. His knees were bare too, of course, and Cristoval envied their brown. *Bien*! He would sun his own assiduously—and he sat down with a gradually returning feeling of composure.

By the time he had breakfasted the barber arrived. Cristoval hoped to be shaved; but learning that the Peruvians used only tweezers, gave it up, forced to be content with the closest possible trimming. Even this he would have forgone but for Rava, who disliked, and more than half feared, the Viracocha beard. An hour later, with head and face reduced to order, Cristoval strolled out in search of his hostess.

The court in the rear, as he had observed the night before, was open toward the lake and guarded on that side by a low parapet from which steps descended to a broad avenue through the trees, from terrace to terrace to the shore, a few hundred yards distant. In the middle of the patio was the usual fountain, and on each side a parterre, at one of which a venerable servant was at work on the budding plants. Before Cristoval could prevent, the old man prostrated himself; on being asked for the Palla, he rose painfully and led Cristoval to the steps, saying, "She walked toward the lake a moment ago, Viracocha, with two young friends. No doubt you will find her on the shore."

The cavalier thanked him and looked about. The building was of the customary massiveness and severity of style, modified somewhat by numerous windows and niches, and by the sculptured border surrounding each doorway. This decoration struck Cristoval forcibly as being identical with the simpler forms of Grecian frets seen in European architecture. Among the trees on either side were smaller buildings for the accommodation of the Palla's servants. The site had been chosen with the fine appreciation of natural beauty of surroundings characteristic of the ancient Peruvians. From the foot of the hill the lake spread out like a mirror, reflecting in perfect detail every rugged feature of the opposite mountains, with here and there a streak of silver where its surface was ruffled by the morning breeze. To the right was the village of Xilcala, and ten miles or more beyond, the narrow gorge through which the waters of the lake found exit on their way to the distant sierra. On his left, toward the canyon he had descended the day before, was a stretch of rolling fields with groups of men at work, and he caught the plaintive melody of a ploughing-song. He listened, impressed by the sense of peace which pervaded the valley, and descended the steps to the

avenue. The bank was terraced to the water's edge, each terrace with its trees, shrubbery, winding paths, and nooks with benches inviting idleness. At the margin of the lake was a sunny space, or hemicycle, from which opened a charming panorama of the lake; and surrounding it were broad, high-backed stone seats, shaded by overhanging foliage. One bench was covered with rugs and cushions, and bits of half-finished embroidery indicated the recent presence of the ladies.

The cavalier turned into the path along the shore. He had not gone far before he heard voices, and another step brought him face to face with his hostess. She was advancing slowly, her arms encircling a maiden on each side. They walked with hands resting affectionately on her shoulders, bending forward and listening, the attention of all so engaged in conversation that Cristoval had been unheard. The Palla started slightly when she perceived her guest, but disengaged herself and came to greet him.

"May the Sun shine kindly upon you this morning, Viracocha Cristoval," she said, offering her hand. "I rejoice to see that your recent hardships have left few traces."

Her cordiality and freedom from constraint, due in part to his altered appearance, but in a great degree also to Rava's influence, placed the cavalier at ease, and he forgot his knees.

"The traces must be deep indeed," he replied, "not to be banished by the gracious hospitality of the Palla Maytalca. The hardships are no longer remembered."

"I fear you belittle them," she said, with a smile and a slight flush. "The Ñusta Rava hath already told me much of your terrible journey, and my wonder that she endured it is only less than my thankfulness that she had so good a guardian."

Cristoval bowed again. "The Ñusta Rava hath rare spirit. I trust she will quickly regain her strength, Palla Maytalca."

Cristoval showed his anxiety, and the lady hastened to assure him that his ward needed only rest. "But now," she said, "let me make you known to my young companions," and she called to the damsels a few steps away. Their timidity at approaching a Viracocha, to them a fabulous and dreaded being, was dissipated by his simple kindliness of manner, and when the quartet reached the hemicycle the first reserve had gone. The maidens were the daughters of the *curaca* of Xilcala, the Palla explained, and spent much of their time with her, acquiring what accomplishments she could impart, and affording her welcome companionship in return. They were handsome, graceful girls, and compared favorably, Cristoval thought, with the señoritas of Castile.

All three were soon engaged with their embroidery, Maytalca often pausing to listen breathlessly to the cavalier's details of the flight from Caxamalca. He

gave them simply, passing over incidents that involved his own courage, and dwelling with quiet enthusiasm upon Rava's fortitude. But his hostess had heard from the Ñusta more of the former than of the latter, and she was rapidly coming to share the estimate of him held by his grateful *protégée*. At his mention of the Cañares her face became grave.

"I fear them, Viracocha Cristoval," she said, seriously. "They are as wolves on the track of a wounded deer. It is a tribe which hath cost the Incas most heavily to subdue, and their subjection hath never been complete. They were conquered first by the Inca Tupac Yupanqui, but revolted some years ago and were repressed at terrible sacrifice of life. The tribe hath never taken kindly to our laws and institutions, and hath always resisted the benevolent efforts of the Incas to lift them from savagery. It is true, they fought with our unhappy Huascar against Atahualpa, but they were influenced, I have always thought, less by loyalty to Tavantinsuyu than by their native treachery, for they were once subject to Quito. Now they hate Quito and Cuzco alike, and I wonder not at their traitorous alliance with the invaders.—Pardon me, Viracocha Cristoval!"

"You are not talking to an enemy of Tavantinsuyu, Palla Maytalca," said Cristoval, quietly.

"I believe it," she returned, with a quick glance. "I think it hath been proven. But," she resumed, after a pause, "I dread the thought of the Cañares following."

Cristoval was silent for a moment. "I should think it impossible that we could be traced by any living creature," he said, at length.

"They will search every crevice of these mountains; and the distance from here to Caxamalca is not great, Viracocha."

CHAPTER XIX

Hearts Perplexed

The ensuing days were such as had rarely entered into Peralta's adventurous and somewhat reckless life. The enclosing mountains seemed jealous of the intrusion even of thoughts of the outside world, and the soft air and prevailing sense of peace cast a spell to which he fell a willing subject. Save for a rumor that Pizarro had placed the imperial *llautu* upon the head of Toparca and had begun his advance upon Cuzco, attended by his allies the Cañares, ravaging as they moved, the vale was without tidings. The last of these told of the arrival of

the Spaniards at Xauxa, some fifty leagues to the south, and of increasing resistance from native warriors, led, it was said, by Prince Manco, Rava's full brother and rightful heir to the throne. The devastating march of the conquistadors had passed far to the eastward, leaving a demoralization which interrupted all regular communication, and the secluded valley seemed forgotten of the world.

At first Cristoval bore the inaction with uneasiness. Until he should have placed the Ñusta Rava in the protection of her brother Manco, his duty would be unfulfilled; and although he looked forward to the ultimate surrender of his guardianship with a reluctance only half confessed to himself, yet his vow to Atahualpa was paramount. Very soon, however, the impossibility of reaching Cuzco with Pizarro in the way became apparent. For the present they must remain at Xilcala, and the cavalier was forced to admit a feeling of relief.

So he surrendered to the dreamy quiet of Xilcala, growing daily more compliant. Nevertheless, the unwelcome prospective forced itself upon him with an insistence he could not always put aside. One morning he was sitting with Rava and their hostess in the hemicycle where they usually passed the warmer hours of the day, and the conversation turned, as often, upon far-away Cuzco, and their prospects of reaching it. Something called Maytalca away, and the two were left to themselves, lapsing at once into the silence without constraint privileged to close friendship and sympathy. Rava, engaged upon an embroidered trifle, glanced from time to time toward the vacant lake, or at her ruminating companion as he sat watching the intricacies of her work. At length she spoke, using the more familiar form, and having dropped, at his request, the appellation of Viracocha.

"Thou art thoughtful, Cristoval," she said, looking up from her work. "I fear idleness beginneth to burden thee."

Cristoval smiled at her genially. "To burden me, child! I would I might always bear so light a burden as this soft sunshine and thy companionship. No, I've lived through weightier cares and kept my spirits. I was but thinking of the day when it must end."

He was looking away when he concluded, and failed to see the tremor of her fingers as she resumed her task. He was silent for a moment, then continued, with a ring of sadness, "No, Ñusta Rava, I could not weary of this. But it cannot last forever. When I see thee in safety, then I must go. I have thought of a friend whom I may trust to take me back to Panama—whence we sailed for thy shores. Once there," he went on, talking rather to himself than to her, "I can make my way to Spain—for I swear never again to draw sword against the people of this western world. There is no glory in it, and there are wars enough at home where honor may be won as becometh a Christian."

Rava was very still, her head bent over her work, her face colorless and dull.

Alas! she thought with sudden heaviness of heart, he is but a Viracocha, and can be naught else. No thought of love but for his sword, no passion but for war. He is like his kind—less men than gods of destruction; gifted with power and wisdom, but cursed with heartlessness. But no! Surely he was not without a heart, for had he not guarded her with a tenderness unvarying and almost womanly? Assuredly not heartless in that sense at least! And there was affection of some nature in every look and intonation. She was conscious of that, for he had never striven to conceal it, and could not have done so from her had he so striven. But, ah me! it must be that his was not a human heart like hers. He was of another world, as her people said—inscrutable, unknowable. She looked up once more, searching his eyes this time with strange inquiry, and quite unconscious of her intentness. The kindliness of Cristoval's face faded into surprise.

"Why, Heaven bless thee, child!" he exclaimed. "What is in thy thoughts? Hast a question thou wouldst ask?"

She looked away, saying with a sigh, "Thou art a Viracocha, Cristoval!" and left him pondering a riddle as insoluble to him as he was to her.

Soon afterward she arose to go. He escorted her to the head of the avenue, and turned slowly back. "I am a Viracocha!" he repeated to himself a dozen times, revolving it in perplexity. "A Viracocha! Now, in the name of a saint, what meaneth she by that? Of course I'm a Viracocha—to her unlettered people; but none, in saying it, ever looked me through and through with eyes as big as if I were a genie out of a bottle in some tale of Araby! A Viracocha, quoth she! Who was this Viracocha? Ha! a heathen god, I've heard; which is to say, a devil! *Madre*! Meaneth she that I am a devil? No, bless her heart, that is far from it, I'll stake my head! H'm! I'll ask Markumi. No, I'll not! He may give this Viracocha deity a reputation that will make me repent the asking. These pagan gods are oft unsavory, the best of them. 'T is better to be in doubt. But, *ay de mi*, Cristoval, thou 'rt beyond thy depth in this business with women. It hath more of unexpectedness than a bee-stung colt."

He wandered and pondered for an hour, then gave it up, saddled his horse, and rode off down the valley.

However inscrutable Cristoval was to Rava, or however perplexing she was at times to him, their separate problems did not mar the harmony of the days in the Vale of Xilcala. They were much together, for they had neither occupation nor preoccupation to keep them apart. There were long walks along the lake or among the hills; and visits to the cottagers, to whom their beloved Ñusta came as a gentle spirit of sympathy in their sorrows, or a sharer of their simple joys. There were quiet hours in the garden, often with Maytalca and the daughters of the *curaca*, Huallampo; but much of the time the Princess and Cristoval were alone, strolling the shaded paths, or sitting in the hemicycle, where Rava busied herself

with some dainty fabric while Cristoval watched and mused in the intervals of fitful conversation.

Under these conditions it is less than strange that Rava should wonder, not without disappointment, that the cavalier should turn his thoughts to war and its cruel glory. And it is not more than strange that his thoughts should take this bent with growing infrequency, or that he should look forward with more and more reluctance to the time when his role of guardian must be resigned, and the days in Xilcala be of the past. For, if the difference of race, of age, of culture, combined with the brevity of their association to make difficult to each the real nature of the other, yet the circumstances and the sentiment consequent upon their lately shared dangers were favorable for a live and romantic sympathy. Upon the heart of the girl, indeed, such incidents could have but one effect.

And assuredly, if Rava was disposed to endow her champion with attributes above the human, he was little behind in his exalted estimate of her. He had been bred a soldier, and as such his experience with women had been largely limited to those of the sophisticated type accessible to men of his wandering career. His youth had been passed at the court of the Marques of Cadiz, where he had learned more of intrigue and feminine flexibility than of maidenly traits; and the rigid seclusion of the unmarried daughters of Castilian families of the better classes had inhibited anything more than contemplation of dueña-fended innocence at a distance. He had passed through his callow period of fevers and deliriums engendered by stolen glances from señoritas' eyes; had sighed and sung and thrummed o' nights beneath half-open lattices and dim balconies, not always without catastrophe—once or twice with spilt blood of his own or a rival's, and usually without better reward. But his youth had flown with only uncertain notions of the charms of maidenhood, and he carried these to the wars and forgot them. He had been in love, so he had thought, many times and in many lands; but it was love that had faded to mere memories of names, fondly enough recalled, no doubt, but each dismissed with a sigh for one as deep as for another. And that is to say that he had never been in love.

It is conceivable, therefore, that Rava's delicacy, ingenuousness, and gentleness of nature, together with his consciousness of protectorship, and of her implicit faith in him, should have stirred in his strong heart the affection whose many evidences she had not failed to read. The sense of guardianship alone, to a man of his stalwart and generous temperament, would have gone far toward creating the sentiment; more than that, in addition to the attraction of her youth and beauty, he felt the charm of a graceful and high-bred mind. Her culture was not Christian, but it was culture, nevertheless. The Inca civilization was refined; more so, in many respects, than that of Spain at the period, and the children of the sovereigns and nobles were scrupulously trained in such knowledge and ac-

complishments as their rank demanded. And so, although Rava was unaware that the earth was round, that her continent had been discovered by one Cristoval Colon, and that Charles the Fifth was emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, until she had been informed by Cristoval, yet he found her a gentlewoman and quite the intellectual equal of any he had known across the sea. She was, in fact, as he discovered, better versed in the lore of her people than were most Christian girls in the scanty knowledge then afloat in Europe. Learning was not deemed an entirely desirable possession for women in the Old World, nor were there many avenues open to them for its acquirement. Rava's lack of information in matters familiar to the cavalier was therefore not disturbing.

Of infinitely more concern was her paganism, and this Cristoval set about to correct. He found her a willing and grateful listener. Her unquestioning faith in him was broad enough to cover every word he spoke. If she accepted the fact that the earth was a sphere, she would have believed it flat again had he said so the next moment—or that it was a cube, or upside-down, or inside-out. Ah, Cristoval, it was well for this trusting heart that thine was true and chivalrous! Hadst been the Antichrist thou wouldst have had a gentle votary ready for martyrdom for her faith in thee!

Rava renounced her gods. She learned her Aves, Paternosters, and Credo, and accepted Cristoval's rosary and crucifix, nevermore to be laid aside.

"Cristoval," she said one day, "dost think my soul is saved?"

"Thy soul saved!" he replied, looking fondly down into the soft eyes. "I would that the souls of half the Christians, or mine own, were near as sure of Heaven as thine. Some day we must have thee baptized. If I could but lay hands upon the good Father Tendilla! However, that will come about. Meantime, be diligent with thy prayers, and we shall have no fear."

As we may be sure, a new bond was thus created; and Cristoval, as spiritual preceptor, took on new lustre for his grateful proselyte. The good cavalier, now relieved of fear for her soul's welfare, returned earnest thanks to the Virgin, and looked upon his ward with affection growing perilously fast.

But, alas! Rava was paying dearly for their idyl in Xilcala. At night she knelt with tears, his crucifix tight-clasped, and with a hundred prayers for every one he enjoined. And her prayers were not the litanies prescribed, but supplications such as many a maiden, borne down by the sense of love unreturned, has made before and since. Thus, through long hours she knelt, until weariness drove her to her pillow.

In the mornings the swollen eyelids were excused to the solicitous Maytalca with pleas of sleeplessness. But the settled sadness was not explained. It vanished momentarily in Cristoval's presence, to return and be noted by him in silence. He asked no question, but there was often questioning in his eyes,

and asked thus it was hardest to bear. Many times when she read it she turned from him with quivering lips, and then his impulse to take her again in his arms was dangerously strong. But he forced it down relentlessly, with a whispered prayer to San Antonio of transcendent continence. Only once he took her hand, tremulous and unresisting; but the quick rising of color to her cheeks and the deepening of her eyes warned him of the frail barrier between them and peril, and he relinquished it with the faintest pressure. But that night Rava prayed without tears!

Stout-hearted Cristoval! It cost sorely to turn away from the light half veiled by those drooping lashes, but the inevitable parting was always before him. Soon he must fly Tavantinsuyu—if, by the grace of Heaven, the way should be open. If not flight, then death in the attempt; and in either event what would be left behind? The gentlest breast that ever sheltered a womanly heart torn by lifelong grief. No; he would give no further sign. The dearer the happiness now, the deeper the wound for each to carry to the grave. And what was his vow to Atahualpa? Ah, Blessed Virgin, lend thy strength!

So, while Rava wept and offered midnight prayer, Cristoval paced his room and offered none. The sunlight of Xilcala had grown dim for both. The cloud was not unnoticed by Maytalca; with a woman's intuition she divined the cause, with a woman's delicacy forbore to speak; and pressed the desolate girl in tacit sympathy, longing, but not daring to bid them both to hope. They were more constantly together than before, driven by the impulse that would not accept defeat. But alone, they walked or sat in silence seldom broken by words.

One evening, just after sunset, they were standing on the shore of the lake, watching the afterglow on the mountains. The valley was already shrouded in twilight, but the distant peaks gleamed brilliant rose against the darkening blue of the eastern sky. Alone, Cristoval would have swept the prospect with a glance and turned away; but now, as his eyes followed her guidance, he grew conscious of the beauty of creeping shadows and dying light, and echoed her quiet admiration.

They turned away at length, and walked slowly toward the villa, unconscious of the evil lurking in the growing dusk. They passed up the avenue, and a dark form rose stealthily from the shadow, parting the branches and leaning forward with the tense alertness of a cat to watch their receding steps. They disappeared, and after a moment's listening the half-naked figure skulked along the terrace, crouching to avoid the overhanging boughs, reached the enclosing wall of the garden, and was over, speeding away in the darkness like an apparition.

An hour later two Cañares rose from their lair in a ravine half-way up the mountain-side to receive him. He spoke a dozen words, answered by a grunt from his companions; groped in the obscurity for his cloak, threw it over his

shoulders, and the three filed out from their concealment, heading toward the lower end of the valley. Six days afterward they entered Xauxa.

Spring was now well advanced, and Xilcala grew daily more fair in fresh verdure and blossoming orchards. Stray, fragmentary rumors began to float in, borne by herdsmen on their way to pasturage in the higher Cordilleras. But the tales had reached them from mouth to mouth, and so far as they concerned the Spaniards, were tangled and over-colored. One day, however, there came news of a different order, brought by a *chasqui*, the first to enter the valley in many weeks. The first item was the death at Xauxa of the young Inca Toparca, and the burning at the stake by Pizarro of Challicuchima, the Quitoan general, on the suspicion of having poisoned the Inca. The second item, heard with greater grief by the Xilcalans, was Pizarro's advance upon Cuzco, and the defeat of the Auqui Manco in the Pass of Vilcaconga, where he had opposed the invaders. The Spaniards, it was thought by the *chasqui*, were doubtless in possession of the capital. Pizarro had left Xauxa garrisoned by a small force of infantry and several hundred Cañares to serve as a base upon which to fall back if forced to retreat from Cuzco.

With the exception of Toparca's death there was nothing in the news which occasioned surprise to Cristoval. He was too familiar with Spanish prowess to doubt that Pizarro would take Cuzco. He mourned the young prince, but there was more than the intelligence itself to cause him uneasiness and depression. The seclusion of the valley seemed violated by its intrusion, and he awakened to reluctant thought of the end which must come to the half-dreamlike days, bringing uncertainties, dangers, and the parting which had grown more and more unwelcome.

The day of the arrival of the evil tidings Rava and Maytalca spent in retirement, and Cristoval was condemned to solitary wandering. His rambling did not take him far from the hemicycle, and he returned thither frequently, lingering with many a glance up the avenue; then strolled again, or lounged where he could view a certain favored seat. He often turned at fancied footfalls; a distant flutter of the garments of some maid of the Palla's household was strangely suggestive of Rava; and more than once he was deceived by a glint of bright sunlight on the foliage. Curiously, the garden seemed haunted by dim phantasms of that familiar, graceful form, and after the hundredth illusion he took himself to task: "What, Cristoval! Art a boy, to go mooning along these paths, starting at thine own conjurings? What aileth thee? Once thou wast good companion for thyself. Now thou goest about peering and stretching thy neck into the bushes like an unmated cock-pheasant. Come! Go saddle up and ride. Thou 'rt in sore need of exercise, *camarada*."

He started back with resolution. As he approached the hemicycle his steps slowed, and he halted in front of the seat where Rava had worked. There lay a forgotten skein of thread. He picked it up, contemplating it with an interest disproportionate to its importance or value. Useless to try to follow his thoughts. It was intrinsically feminine, that trifle, and the soldier succumbed to its femininity. He drew a small pouch from his bosom and placed the skein beside the half-dozen other precious trinkets it contained. He closed the pouch; reopened it hastily, removed the thread, and replaced it upon the seat where he had found it; then sprang to his feet and walked rapidly away. A half-hour later he was galloping along the lane toward the canyon by which they had approached Xilcala weeks ago.

Now the valley, stirred for a moment by the *chasqui's* tidings, sank again into its repose. The mourning for the defeat at Vilcaconga was mitigated by confidence in ultimate victory. What enemy of Tavantinsuyu had ever triumphed? Soon a call to arms would come, and the nation would respond with overwhelming potency. All in good time.

At the villa of Maytalca the days went as before. But—were they days of growing happiness, or of more rapidly growing pain? Cristoval could not have said, nor could Rava. He had learned to interpret the evanescent light in the brown eyes that so often sought his own, but the joy it gave him was for the instant, and followed at once by a deeper pang. He turned away from the gentle face whose beauty, waxing daily more alluring under the tender burning of the soul within, would have shaken the knees of the resolution of one thrice more saintly than Cristoval. But though he told himself that the parting must be only a question of weeks, though he rode hard and invoked the good San Antonio, Cristoval found little peace.

CHAPTER XX

Hearts Revealed and Sundered

Now, when two human hearts are throbbing under the mysterious influence of the spell called Love, be it noted that the universe pauses in its majestic routine to take a part. Our good Mother Nature lends a more benevolent smile. The

breeze touches with softer caress and gentler whispering. The trees and herbage are greener, the flowers yield a sweeter fragrance and wear an added loveliness. The Sun himself shines with brighter effulgence and more generous warmth; at his setting, paints the heavens and gray old earth in hues of unwonted brilliancy, and gives way to twilights more tender than twilights seen at other times. And the Moon—what splendor in her radiance then! and in the stars! The world—the non-human part of it, for our fellowmen are often less benignant and sometimes roughen love's pathway most lamentably—the world takes on new charms and promises things untold; conspiring with the insistent young archer and with a thousand circumstances to lure the lovers on to their silently coveted happiness. Let all mankind unite in a commanding "Nay!" yet the two hear a still voice in more urgent "Yea, yea!" and read approval in Nature's kindly face. Be their resistance never so strong in the beginning, it must surely be overcome by a fatal languor at a fatal moment, and the archer triumphs.

Often, when Cristoval sat beside her in the hemicycle in meditative silence, Rava would take up Maytalca's *tinya*[1] and sing to its accompaniment. The melodies were simple, soft, and plaintive, and she sang with the sympathy and sweetness of her nature, her voice quivering from the fulness of her heart. The music was the one thing needful to complete the agony of Cristoval's self-denial. He heard her at first with wonder, then with unaffected ravishment.

[1] Tinya = a stringed instrument something like the guitar.

One moonlight evening—alas, a moonlight evening!—Rava had been telling him the great Peruvian classic, "Apu-Ollanta." Ollanta, the hero of the drama, born in obscurity, had risen by bravery and soldierly skill to the command of the armies of the Inca Pachacutec Yupanqui, and was his most trusted and beloved lieutenant. In an unfortunate hour he had loved and gained the love of Cusi-Coyllur, the Inca's daughter. The attachment, forbidden by the laws of Tavantinsuyu because of Ollanta's ignoble birth, was punishable with death. It was the story which has furnished a theme for poets through the ages. They loved in secret, and when at length concealment became no longer possible, Ollanta braved the laws and the Inca's wrath, and demanded Cusi-Coyllur in marriage. He was denied and banished from Cuzco, and when a child was born to the unhappy princess she was cast into prison. Ollanta hurried to his army in one of the provinces, raised his soldiers in rebellion, and led them to rescue his love. The war raged through ten long years, and after the death of Pachacutec Yupanqui, was carried on by his son. At last Ollanta, vanquished and a captive, was taken in chains to Cuzco; but the

young Inca, more generous than his father, and moved by the rebel's constancy, pardoned him and led him to the dungeon of the princess. Years of confinement and sorrow had aged her prematurely, but Ollanta saw only the long-lost adored one of his youth and their child, and—well, they were married and restored to happiness and honor.

The story was long, and Rava told it with the simple candor of innocence, repeating with feeling and expression quite without consciousness of self, those passages whose beauty most appealed to her, from time to time taking up her instrument for the songs in the play. She finished, and sat with hands clasped, looking out upon the moon-lit lake, preoccupied and musing, apparently expecting no comment from Cristoval. He had listened with rapt attention, leaning forward with cheek upon his hand, less mindful of the story itself than of her low voice and the emotion on her sensitive features. He sat contemplating the calm beauty of the dark eyes, until, conscious of his gaze, she turned toward him. He roused from his reverie.

"It is a beautiful story, Ñusta Rava," he said, gently drawing the *tinya* from her lap.

There was a shadow of doubt in her look as she replied, "Didst find it so, Cristoval? It telleth little of war."

"Little of war, to be sure," he answered, failing to notice her tone; "but perhaps the better for that. I have heard its like before," he went on, fingering the strings.

"Yes?" she asked, with slight surprise.

"Yes, Ñusta Rava. Why not?" responded Cristoval, in turn surprised at the slight incredulity in her voice. "Stories of hopeless love and happy endings? Why not, my dear?"

"But do you have love-stories in Castile? I thought—"

"What didst think? We have love-stories and love-songs a-many."

"Thou hast never told me one," she said, with a shade of reproach; "nor have I ever heard thee sing except of soldiers and horrid battles."

"Why, mayhap 't is true," said Cristoval, reflectively. "But I know more of such than of the other, though once—" He paused, then added with more of suppressed emphasis and resolution than seemed to be required, "I will sing thee one now, Ñusta Rava!"

He was familiar with the guitar, and the *tinya* was therefore not so strange that he could not, without difficulty, find the chords. He had, moreover, taken it up when Rava was not by, and so made its acquaintance; so that after retuning he picked out a fair accompaniment and began. His song was one of those sweet Spanish airs which breathe passion in every line, and he sang with true feeling, with the richness of voice native to his race.

Rava listened to a song utterly strange and in an unknown tongue. But music, said to be the universal language, surely is the universal language of love, and her heart beat in response to every measure. Had she been indifferent to the singer she could not have been unmoved; but her unspoken longing made her doubly vibrant to his emotion, and the close left her pale and strangely quiet.

Cristoval laid aside the *tinya*. The moon was shining full in Rava's face as she leaned back, and he glanced into eyes from which the deep melancholy had gone. They were no longer doubtful, but swimming with happiness that struggled with timidity. The song was a revelation. It had solved the riddle of this good, brave Viracocha, and had shown him a man. He was no longer the demigod, reserved, with breast invulnerable, but of flesh and blood. She did not need to know the meaning of his words. Every inflection had said more than words. Her own voice was tremulous and almost inaudible.

"It was a love-song, Cristoval?"

"A love-song," he replied, looking away.

"Then thou—then the Viracochas can love?" she faltered, after a pause.

Cristoval turned quickly. "Can love, child!" he exclaimed. "Why, what dost think us? Men without souls?"

"But I mean *love*, Cristoval," she said, with timid earnestness. "The love that is not cruel, and merciless, and savage, like that of the Viracochas at Caxamalca; nor yet—" She hesitated, and dropped her eyes.

"Nor yet?" asked Cristoval, bending forward.

She looked at him again waveringly.

"Nor yet?" he persisted. "What wouldst say?"

Her eyes fell once more. "Nor yet," she murmured, "the love that is all unselfishness, like that of a father for his child. Oh, Cristoval, I know not what I would say, but there was in the song what I thought the Viracochas could not feel."

He replied impetuously: "Thou hast thought that? Thou hast dreamed we could not love? Shall I tell thee how we can love? We can worship, Ñusta Rava, and yet, hopeless, be silent until death were happiness."

She regarded him in wonder. "Hopeless, Cristoval?" she asked, in a voice so low that he barely heard it, and the question threw him off his guard. He answered it quickly and desperately, and in giving voice to the torture of his soul for weeks, forgot to be impersonal.

"Hopeless!" he repeated, turning away again. "How else? What art thou?—a princess. And I?—" He stopped. When he looked again his eyes met that in hers which a lover should be willing to give his life to see. Darkened by the moonlight, they regarded him with strange, intent abstraction, serious, gentle, and ineffably fond. This time Cristoval did not turn away. He must have been more than

human—or less—to have turned away.

For an instant, as a drowning man reviews a lifetime, he had a hundred thoughts of deprecation, each a stab. He spurned them. The dross of common things faded into due perspective. The world's cares and dangers grew shadowy. His hands sought hers. As they yielded, the deep eyes deepened, and her lips parted with a sigh, almost a sob.

The *tinya* had slipped to the ground at their feet. Rava unclasped her hands from his neck and drew back her head to look into his eyes. "Ah, Cristoval, then thou canst love?—truly, thou canst love, and dost love me?"

Cristoval kissed the upturned lips and eyes and brow. "God knoweth I love thee, Rava, and have loved thee long. I had not purposed to tell thee."

"That would have been wrong and cruel," said Rava. "Why wouldst thou not have told me?"

"I thought we must part, my own, and would have spared thee an aching heart."

"Thou wouldst have denied me the only solace for a broken heart," she sighed, clinging more closely. "But now, we shall never part, Cristoval."

"Never! Never, with the help of Heaven!" he whispered.

But at length, the leave-taking for the night. A score of leave-takings before the last wafted kiss from her doorway, and the beloved form vanished in its shadow. Then Cristoval, alone, sought to realize his happiness. In his room he raised his sword, and kissed its hilt—the soldier's cross.

Ware happiness complete! Evil hath no harbinger more sure. Their glimpse of it was fleeting, as always. Even while they dreamed it would endure, the blow was falling. One day, a second, and a third—days with hours like minutes, speeding on so quickly to the evening, the evening so quickly into night, that the lovers seemed hardly met before it was time to part again and lie in fevered longing for the dawn, each with a thousand thoughts untold. Ah, Time! Capricious, perverse and always cruel; swift as light when the moments are of joy; grudging and niggardly in their measure when mortals would have them long; but unsparing, lavish, prodigal, when thou metest hours of sorrow!

Again a moonlit evening. They had said good-night and parted. Hours had passed; Cristoval was sitting beside his lamp, whose waning light drew his thoughts back to earth; even while he contemplated its struggles it sputtered and died, leaving the room in darkness. He sighed, loath to lay aside his reverie, and stepped to the window. The moon was nearly at the full, and he leaned against

the casement, looking across the placid lake to the silvered peaks beyond. He stood long, enjoying the fresh beauty of the night, his eyes among the shadows of the garden where he had crowned his life. While he mused a cloud drifted across the moon, leaving the garden a moment in obscurity. When it passed and the light returned, he was startled out of his dreaming. The details of shade and illumination had come back, but now there was something more. Near the edge of the shrubbery, half a hundred yards below, was a formless shadow not there before. Cristoval leaned forward, studying intently a curious blot on the sward, suggestive of some lurking beast, yet different. It moved, ever so slightly, and the confused outline became suddenly clear. There was the head of a warrior, stretched alertly forward, and wearing the high, conical helm of a Cañare. There was the line of his crouched back. One hand and a knee were on the ground. Now there was a sparkle just above—a javelin head!—and at the same instant an arm was raised in signal. At once other shadows appeared here and there, and they slunk, half running, toward the villa.

Cristoval watched no longer. In a second he was groping for his armor. His hands were shaking, but soon corselet was on, and helmet: no time for more. Now, sword and buckler. He threw the empty scabbard on the couch as he rushed to the door. In the anteroom slept Markumi.

"Markumi! Markumi!" Cristoval whispered, shaking him.

"Yes, Viracocha," said the youth, sleepily.

"Up, Markumi! Make no sound. Quick—thy weapons, and follow!"

Markumi needed no second word. Electrified by the cavalier's voice, he was on his feet at a bound. Cristoval had not reached the door leading into the court, which he must cross to gain Rava's apartment, before the boy was beside him, grunting as he slipped the loop of the bow-string into its notch. Cristoval halted, listening. Without were movement and suppressed voices. As he put hand to the bar to open, the fastenings creaked with the weight of some one trying. Across the court came the crash of blows upon another door.

Markumi gasped, "What is it, Viracocha?"

"Devilry!" answered Cristoval. "The house is surrounded. Cañares, I think." The words were not uttered before the room reverberated with a rain of strokes upon the panels before them.

"Set an arrow!" said Cristoval, in Markumi's ear. "Stand clear of the door when I throw it open. Do not follow. Keep in the darkness, and shoot low."

Markumi hurriedly set his arrow, grateful that the darkness hid his shaking legs. The cavalier released the bar and sprang back. The door flew wide, letting in a sudden flare of torches, and two half-naked forms plunged in headlong. The first ran full upon Cristoval's point. The second was shot through by Markumi. With a shout a throng filled the doorway. A javelin whizzed past Cristoval's ear;

another, and another. Markumi's bow twanged, a *Cañare* fell, and the cavalier dashed forward, his buckler ringing with the quick thrusts of spears, his sword playing swift and deadly. A gasp or moan followed every lunge at the unarmored bodies. Shielding his head he pressed close upon the group, cut through, and was in the open. A pause of half a second, and he found himself the centre of a confused surging of warriors, their limbs and dark, ferocious faces illumined by the dancing light of torches. The court seemed full, resounding with the uproar from savage throats. Now a fiercer yell, and they closed. So dense the mass none dared hurl his javelin, but they pressed from all sides, and for an instant Cristoval staggered under the impact of their weapons upon his shield and mail. As they rushed, shriek upon shriek, half smothered by the walls of the opposite wing of the villa, cut to his heart with a sudden deadly chill—Rava!

The chill was followed by a flame more quick, and Cristoval became a demon. He charged into the thickest, thrusting from beneath his upraised buckler, the thin, glimmering steel finding flesh at every stroke. It flashed low, reaching its mark under lifted arms: a dull ray of light, with the velocity of light itself; a chameleon's tongue, its gleam barely seen for its fatal quickness. For a moment he seemed to struggle hopelessly. Hedged about, he labored heavily, impeded by mere weight of numbers, lacerated from elbow to shoulder by their spears, the grip of his weapon slippery with his own blood. Hands clutched to wrench his buckler from his grasp. Once it was swept aside, and he looked into the eyes of a Cañare in the head-gear of a chieftain: saw the glitter of a falling axe. It fell, glanced from his helmet, and struck with stunning force upon his shoulder—by the grace of Heaven, not upon his right! The chief went down, his naked body run through, and the circle widened. A javelin glanced from the shield, and impaled a Cañare beyond. Another, thrown with terrific force, shivered against his breastplate.

But for his mail the cavalier would not have lived through a dozen paces. He was breathing in gasps, his arm stiffening with its wounds. Warriors whirled around him, yielding here before the lightning blade; closing there and forcing him to fight to the rear. From the doorway Markumi had sped his last arrow and fled. Every shaft had carried death. Cristoval fought, not with hope, not in despair, but in madness to reach and save his love; in a frenzy to kill, kill, kill, while a man lived to interpose. All at once he became conscious of a growing light. The villa was afire! A torch had been set to the roof of the main building, and the thatch blazed high, a column of rosy smoke curling toward the quiet stars. Half across the court his eye caught the gleam of a morion. A Spaniard dashed from a door, followed by two others bearing a senseless form. For the first time Cristoval gave voice, and his roar overtopped the din. The first Spaniard stopped, glanced toward the struggle, then rushed forward with a shout, followed by one

of the others, leaving their burden to the third. Straight to thy doom, Juan Lopez!

He sprang through the mob, sweeping the Cañares from his path, and whirling aloft his halberd. Cristoval rushed upon him. The axe fell, was caught upon the buckler, and Cristoval drove his sword into the Spaniard's throat, jerked it out, and while the other tottered, drove it home again with all the force lent his arm by hate.

It was the end. While he strove to disengage his blade the Cañares swept upon him. He was down. On his knees he still fought, creeping a few inches toward his beloved, then sank beneath a war club whose force even his helmet could not ward. While his brain reeled he heard the yell of triumph, growing distant to his ears, and the world ceased to be. A score of hands clutched to tear him to pieces, struck back by the second halberdier.

"Off, dogs! He is mine.—*Hola*, Duero! We have him!—A thousand *castellanos*!"

He stopped. A Cañare reeled against him in a spasm of coughing, tugging at the shaft of an arrow in his chest. In another moment the Spaniard had been forced away from Cristoval by a rush of the tribesmen, and arrows and javelins whistled about him from the darkness outside the court. He heard Duero calling and swearing, a fierce yell from the gloom surrounding the villa, and a storm of missiles swept the court, whose tumult became a pandemonium.

Xilcala had been roused. One of the household had given alarm, and the flames brought the villagers on wings. The conflagration wrought its own punishment: every Cañare in the court revealed by the mounting flames, the garden in blackness. A merciless hail assailed the ravagers from the obscurity, and they were seized with panic—a mere tossing herd, stampeded by a foe unseen, dropping by twos and threes beneath the deadly rain. Yells, the crackling flames, and the shouts of the invisible assailants made the garden a horror.

The halberdier fought his way to Duero's side, and they stood in consternation. The still unconscious Rava had been drawn into the doorway. With a motion to his companion Duero picked her up, and they groped through the smoke-filled building into the shrubbery in front, and were away.

Clear of the garden, they made a detour to pass the village, halting once to bind and gag the Ñusta as they hurried toward the gorge. A mile beyond the town they joined a small party of Spaniards and Cañares in concealment beside the road. Duero replied to their questions with a comprehensive curse. "Move, blockheads!" he roared. "Fetch the litter. Before ye finish gawping they will be upon us. Hell is uncovered, d' ye hear? Fetch the litter."

A *hamaca* was brought, Rava thrust into it, and the curtains drawn. Two Cañares took it up, and the party hurried away.

At the entrance of the gorge they crossed the stream by a bridge of twisted

osiers. On the farther side they hacked with their halberds until the structure hung, a wreck, from its opposite anchorage. It would cut off the retreat of their allies, but would delay pursuit, for the torrent was unfordable. Their route was down the gorge. Toward morning they crossed and destroyed another bridge, then proceeded in security.

The conflict raged about the villa until the Cañares retreated to the mountains, leaving their wounded and dead. The villagers turned to the flames, tore away the thatch, and saved the wings of the house, but of the main portion only blackened walls remained. Until Maytalca was found, imprisoned with her maids in a room remote from the flames, the capture of Rava was unknown, and Duero's party had gained several miles the start. Pursuit, delayed at the first bridge, was balked completely at the second, and forced into a circuitous mountain path before it could come again upon the raiders' trail. The flight was toward Xauxa, but by the third day the pursuers found themselves impeded by prowling Cañares. Forced again to the mountain trails, the chase was hopeless.

Markumi found Cristoval, and with assistance bore him, almost lifeless, to Huallampo's villa. For the second time he was hovering upon the brink, and for days the aged healer summoned by the *curaca* answered the villagers with a dubious shake of his head.

CHAPTER XXI

The Señora Descends upon Pedro

We go forward to find ourselves at Xauxa, a week subsequent to the catastrophe at Xilcala, months after Pizarro's march to Cuzco.

The town lies on the river Xauxa, a branch of the great Apurimac, in one of the many fertile valleys, or *bolsons*, that break the arid desolation of the Sierra. Pizarro had found it well defended by the immense fortress on the steeps of an adjacent mountain. He left it with a small garrison, as has appeared. With this remained the sick and incapacitated, and most of the non-combatants. Among these were Pedro, who, since the escape of Peralta, was no longer *persona grata*, and felt more secure away from the commander; José remained invalided by an attack of the fever; Father Tendilla, as missionary to the natives; and Rogelio, the *veedor*, who tarried for reasons best known to himself. Rogelio, however, pleaded an indisposition which, as a civil officer of the Crown and a man with a family, he

could not conscientiously neglect; and from his couch in his quarters within the fortress, bade farewell in a voice of feebleness and suffering. When assured that the last company had marched he rolled out of bed and dressed in time to watch the command from the rampart as it trailed down to the town below. He shook a fist at the distant figure he knew to be Mendoza's, rubbed his hands, snuffled, and emitted a chuckle of mingled glee, triumph, and malice. An hour afterward he was haggling with Duero and Mani-mani, a sub-chief of the Cañares.

For several days the garrison remained within the fortress. A fortnight later word came that Prince Manco had met Pizarro peaceably at Xaquixaguana, and had presented his claim to the throne. His right had been formally recognized, and the prince was proceeding with the Spaniards to Cuzco, where the coronation would take place straightway. Accompanying the news was his command that all hostility should cease, and soon natives and garrison were on friendly terms. Those Spaniards privileged to do so took quarters in the town, and among them was Pedro.

Pedro established his *cantina* near the square. One afternoon he was leaning idly beside his door, watching the passers-by, with an occasional glance down the thoroughfare toward the north. A *chasqui* had announced the day before that a small company of Viracochas was approaching, newly arrived from Panama, on the way to join Pizarro. The *cantina* was prepared, and a roast of llama on Pedrillo's spit divided the attention which the proprietor paid to the street. The latter was interesting, for the day was a festival of some sort and the town was full of the country people, gayly clad, and notwithstanding recent calamities, in full holiday spirits. As Pedro stood he noted that the crowd was growing. By and by he observed that his establishment was drawing a deal of persistent attention. No one had stopped in front of it, but a number had passed and repassed, and one Indio, conspicuous for his dignity of bearing, had already grown familiar. He was a tall old man, wrapped in a long, colored poncho of unusual elegance, its heavy folds falling to his knees and decorated with a profusion of conventionalized forms of birds and beasts. The object of particular interest to Pedro, however, was his suite. Following close as he stalked past for the sixth or seventh time, was his wife; and in her train a numerous family ranging in age from five to eighteen years or thereabout, the eldest a maiden of comely face and figure who glanced at the cook with shy but unmistakable curiosity. The old man seemed never to see him, apparently disdaining show of interest; but his family were less scrupulous, and favored him with stares undisguised. This group was but one of many, but it was notable to Pedro by the presence of the shy though curious eighteen-year-old of the comeliness mentioned. Pedro was not unsusceptible. Having once or twice caught her eyes, he straightway experienced a responding interest.

"Ho!" thought he. "How now? Have thy charms survived thy years, Pedro, my boy? Are there yet lines of grace in thy portliness? That was a wistful, surreptitious, yearning contemplation, or there's some mistake. It swept thy traits and fair proportions most lingeringly.—Ha! She cometh again! Stew me if she cometh not again! Hold! Guard thine eyes, admired cook. Bank their fires, lest they startle with too much ardour. I'll look at the sky till she is near. Ah! Fair sky! Ample, roomy, easy-fitting vault of blue! Large, capacious dome! Dome with space enough for stars to knock about in, and space to spare— But she is here! Now look! Oh, hot kettles, Pedro, how comfortable thou art! Was there not warmth in that stolen glance? O, my patron saint!— But who is she—and where abideth? That patrolling image in her lead must be her papa. I'll inquire."

With his jovial countenance glowing pleasantly he cast about for a possible source of information, and his eyes lighted upon a youth across the street who was surveying him with unmitigated wonder, his eyes and mouth equally broad open. Pedro motioned him, and the boy started hesitatingly across the street. At once the interest of the crowd was fixed, and they formed a respectful circle, across which the lad advanced with evident trepidation. Pedro had acquaintance with the Quichua, and hailed him cordially.

"May the day bring thee good fortune, and the night better, my lad. Come hither. There is something I would ask. This seemeth a gala day, is it not?

"The Feast of the Full Moon, Viracocha," replied the boy, respectfully.

"The Feast of the Full Moon! Good! Dost live in Xauxa?"

"No, Viracocha. I am here but for the day. I live yonder, up the valley," indicating the direction by turning and pursing out his lips, a gesture habitual with the Peruvians, and surviving to this day.

"Yonder, up the valley!" said Pedro, imitating his grimace. "Hum! Thou 'rt a good boy, I take it from thy face. Sleepest at home, and early?"

"Why, where else, Viracocha?" asked the other innocently.

"Ah! Where else, to be sure! But in my country o' nights, the boys oft go chasing nightingales—a bird which I have not yet seen in Tavantinsuyu. 'T is quite as well. But what I would ask is this: The folks seem curious. Now, what draweth their attention hereabout? What held thy lower jaw away from its fellow a moment since?"

"Viracocha?" asked the boy, puzzled.

"I observed thee looking this way. What is the interest which hath brought this crowd?"

"Oh!" exclaimed the youth, enlightened. "Why, you are one of the Viracochas—your pardon."

"No offence," answered Pedro. "A mere chance which hath befallen others of my race. Is that all?"

The boy hesitated. "No, not all. The bare bone of your leg, Viracocha—"

"Oho!" shouted Pedro. "The bare bone of my leg! God bless my soul! The bare bone of my leg, for a surety! Why, stew me! Now, 't is a sight, is it not—to see a man with a part of his skeleton sticking out into the glare of day! But, lad, what if I were to show thee my ribs? Nay!" he added, as the boy drew back aghast. "I'll not do it in the presence of ladies, never fear. Ha! The bare bone of— But is that all?" He lowered his voice. "Yonder damsel, for instance, just now passing—do not look too quickly—hath she been drawn by my leg, thinkst thou?"

The boy looked round cautiously at the girl lingering at the edge of the circle. "I cannot say for her," he said, "but if the Viracocha wisheth, I will ask her," and full of accommodation, he started in her direction.

"Stay!" cried Pedro, seizing him. "*Santa Maria*, no! Let it pass. I'll endure the doubt.—The bare bone of my leg, saith he! Oh, pots and skillets!" Pedro exhibited some symptoms of a coming laugh, but the attack did not develop, and he went on: "A marvel, in truth! But if it hath merited so much attention I'll show it worthy of more."

Steadying himself upon the boy's shoulder, Pedro unscrewed his peg from its socket, and as an exclamation of amazement and dismay arose from the crowd, tossed it high in the air, caught it, and set it whirling in his nimble fingers. The circle spread abruptly. The old Indio forgot his dignity and watched in stupefaction while the cook juggled his member with the skill of a mountebank. Transforming it into a weapon, he attacked a fancied enemy, hopping about, striking, and guarding, until the foe was laid low by one last fell stroke. From the role of a weapon it passed to that of a flute, and as Pedro's fingers ran over imaginary keys he whistled a Spanish air, then one of their own, to their infinite wonder and delight. He finished with a bow to the old Indio, and tendered the peg for inspection. It was taken gingerly, and the ice was broken.

The old man examined it with profound solemnity, while his daughter looked upon the gracious cook with a round-eyed fascination most grateful to his complacent soul. It ended with an invitation into the *cantina*, and, having screwed his peg back into place, Pedro ushered in the entire family and served a luncheon, at the end of which he was asked to their *huasi*, six miles out beyond the fortress. The Indio, Municancha, was a master-mason engaged upon the uncompleted fortifications. Thus the cook opened an acquaintance which he afterward found of value.

Pedro bade his guests farewell, bestowing a significant squeeze upon the hand of the daughter, Coriampa, and was pleasantly reviewing the circumstance, when a shout from his boy at the door hurried him to the street. His expected countrymen were approaching. A distant flutter of pennons and the gleam of steel showed above the heads of the crowd, and soon Pedro was cheering lustily

as the company passed. In the lead rode Sotelo, the commander of the company, with Saavedra, commandant of the fortress, his travel-stained accoutrements contrasting with the latter's burnished armor. Following, and escorted by Father Tendilla, were half-a-dozen priests and friars, a few on mules and jaded horses, but most of them on foot. As they passed, Pedro suddenly ceased his greetings.

"Aha! Thou back, Fray Mauricio!" he muttered. "Hast renewed thy courage and venom, my small, liver-colored brother? I'd exchange thee for the devil himself, my friend, and so would José, had he his choice. Would thou wert back in Spain—or farther! I'll warn the armorer, be sure of it. And now, the cavaliers—two, four, six, eight. Not bad! But, father of famine, what a hungry lot! *Hola*!" he shouted. "What fare on the way, *compadres*? Saddle-leather and surcingles, I'll be bound. Cheer up! There's better beyond. Come, smile thou, my empty *caballero* in the rear! In a week thy waistband will renew acquaintance with thy pansiere. There's that in Peru to fill it, and some to be left over for the infantry. Oho! Here they are—our honest lads of the foot! Twenty in all—and that is to say, twenty larcenies the more for each day of the calendar. *Bien*! Were there no thieves we'd have no love for honest men. What cheer, pikemen? Did ye ever see a cold boiled ham? Ah, see them drool! They're blest with powers of memory, 't is sure. What, ho! A civilian! A leech, *amigo*? No? A barber!—next of kin. *Gracias á Dios*, a barber! Fall out, my friend; thy journey endeth here."

A weary individual in civil garb, his legs bare to the knees but for the fringe of rags that fell below them, turned out of the column.

"*Nombre de Dios*! Is this an inn?" he asked in astonishment, peering through the open door and sniffing the fragrance.

"An inn, and no less. An inn, and no more," replied Pedro. "Enter. Thou 'rt as welcome to it as the smell of it seemeth to be to thee."

The stranger shook his head. "I have no money, Señor."

"The fiend!" ejaculated Pedro. "But thou hast an appetite, or thy looks belie thee. Enter, and call for what there is. Thy credit is good. Are there any others—civilians?"

"My gratitude, Señor," said the other, with feeling. "Yes, there are four in the rear of the baggage, and three women with the rear guard."

"Three women!" repeated Pedro. "Native women, thou wouldst say?"

"Of our own race, Señor."

"What!" exclaimed Pedro, in amazement. "Three Spanish women? *Santo Sacramento*! sayst thou so? What do they in this land of paynimry? Oh, these modern women!"

"Two are wives of cavaliers. The third is alone. And, Señor"—he spoke earnestly—"beware of this third."

"Ho!" responded Pedro, with a shrug. "I have all my feathers, *amigo*."

"Nay; but, Señor—" he was interrupted by the jubilant bray of a pack-mule which had divined the end of the march. When he would have continued Pedro was badgering a muleteer. The stranger entered the *cantina*—and Fate rode down upon the unsuspecting Pedro.

The rear guard approached. Sure enough, there were three señoras, two heavily veiled, riding mules. Pedro was bowing profoundly.

"Welcome, Señoras! Welcome to the land of gold. 'T is a Heaven's blessing to look once more upon your kind."

They inclined their heads graciously and Pedro raised his eyes to the third, some paces in the rear. As he bowed again he was conscious of a buxom figure, strangely bedight in a rusty corselet and a man's sombrero which showed marks of the hard journey, its limp rim hanging tow about a face which he saw only partly. She was astride, he noted, with a huge battle-axe at her saddle-bow, and a ponderous spur on a foot of goodly size.

The lady glanced at him, gasped, reined up with vigor, and shouted in a voice of joyful surprise, "*Pedro!*"

Pedro straightened with a jerk and staggered against the wall.

"Pedro!" she shouted again. She urged her steed across the street with a series of jabs of her spurs, and tumbled out of the saddle, a confusion of petticoats, arms, legs, and a flapping sombrero. Dropping the reins, she charged the cook, who stood transfixed to the wall, powerless.

"Pedro, as I live!" she cried, seizing his hands. "Oh, Pedro, thou graceless, fat, one-legged darling of a cook, I was never more joyed in my life!"

Pedro struggled in her grasp, speechless, his face reddening violently, as she held him at arm's length, surveying him with pleasure.

"And 't is thou!" she exclaimed. "Hold, whilst I look at thee—stop squirming, thou lubber! Yes, I'd know thee in a brigade, even did I not see thy peg. But why dost not greet me, Pedro? Greet me, sinner! Dost think I've journeyed a thousand leagues over sea and mountain to be received like a cold omelet? Fie, Pedro!"

He gained his voice with an effort. "Why—my greetings, Señora Bolio!" he panted. "What the devil—I'm glad to see thee well!—but release my hands, prithee!—we're in the street, woman. Thou'lt stir a scandal!"

"A scandal!" returned the señora, scornfully. "Soapsuds! A scandal, forsooth! What care I for these pagans? I'm glad to see thee."

"Of course—of course!" gasped Pedro. "But look to thy mule!—he's wandering away, reins down. Let me go! I'll—I'll catch him."

"Let him wander, Pedro, and may the fiend ride him with hot spurs! He hath jolted the life out of me these many days. But, art not surprised to see me? Say!"

"Name of a martyr! Yes!" said Pedro, desperately. "But loose my hands, I tell thee! We're observed."

"Oh, Pedro, thou 'rt so coy, thou dear old cherub!"—and she laughed joyfully.

"Oh, coy!" groaned Pedro. "Thunder and Mars! Dost not see the town watching us? And look at the rear guard!"

The troopers had halted, and were observing the little drama with interest.

"Brava, Señora!" called one, encouragingly. "His timidity is that of inexperience. Persist, and he'll succumb, my head upon it!"

The lady turned. "What now?" she demanded, indignantly, facing them with hands upon her hips. "Who gave you command to halt? Jog on, jog on! Circulate! Go, you singular accumulation of veal and old iron! Wend, worry on, flit, you most unusual galaxy of junk and poultice! You grotesque pack of——"

They tarried not to hear the completion of her period. They had journeyed with Señora Bolio for many weeks, and had learned her powers. When she turned to Pedro he was vanishing through the doorway, and she followed precipitately. He backed against a table, and she dropped into a chair facing him.

"Vagabonds!" she exclaimed, wrathfully, fanning herself with her sombrero. "They have gone clean through my patience a hundred times since we sailed from Panama. May the goblins gnaw their shin-bones!"

Pedro passed his sleeve across his forehead. "But they have left thee thy gifts of speech, Señora," he ventured.

"Ah! What would I do without them—a helpless woman? Oh, me! 'T is a sad world, Pedro.—But thou 'rt plump as a suckling porker, *chiquito.* And this is thy place? *Cara*! What a savory smell!"

"Why, bless me!" cried Pedro, forgetting his disturbance in his hospitality. "Thou must be hungry!"

"Hungry!" said Señora Bolio. "Boil me this hat, and I would eat it, *amigo mio*! But first, help me off with this rusty furniture of mine. Saints! I was never so wearied of a garment as of this iron bodice. 'T is a man's, of course, tight where it should be full, and' full where it should be snug. But they told me I should have to fight as often as eat, or more, so I bought it, with the cleaver thou mayst have seen on my saddle. And, Pedro, we must find the mule, for I would keep that cleaver by me. No telling when I may need to use it on an Inca—thou callest them Incas, these varlets in sleeveless pinafores?—Well, 'tis all the same. Now, I am ready for a full trencher."

Seated before his guest while she ate with an appetite keened by hard marches and harder fare, Pedro recovered his composure in listening to news of the civilized world, interrupted now and again by the entrance of patrons, each of whom started at sight of the lady, then bowed with a curious glance at

the host which made him fidget.

"Now," said the señora, finishing, "thou must find me lodgings, Pedro dear; and before night, my mule, for I'll not sleep without that axe. My crucifix and it have been mine only comforts since I touched this benighted land. I'll part with neither. Canst find me a room, thinkst thou? Ah, thou'rt a love! I could wish thou hadst two legs; but with only one and a half thou 'rt more complete than any other man I ever knew," and she bestowed a smile whose warmth caused him to back away with an uneasy glance about the room. To his relief she made no further demonstration, and shortly they sallied out in search of quarters for her accommodation. A satisfactory lodging was found with a native couple—and thus was Señora Margarita Bolio established in the land of the Incas.

CHAPTER XXII

Rava in the Toils

Next morning early Pedro's mule, held by Pedrillo, stood at his door, surrounded by a whispering, awe-stricken group of native urchins lingering to see the dread beast mounted by the Viracocha of the fabulous leg. As Pedro appeared the brute twitched an ear toward him, opened his mouth, and drew breath in a faint, rasping, wheezy note of salutation. Pedro was gloomy, but he paused to rub the gray nose.

"Ah, my good friend," he said, with feeling, "there is melancholy in thine accent—belike, the echo of a melancholy in thy soul, like that in mine. 'T is but a sorry life: we're agreed in that, and comrades in misery. Thou, a mule, a cook's mule; I, a cook, a one-legged cook; and a panting, surcharged, vociferous Bolio at our heels, following with the pertinacy of doom! But if thou, too, hast doleful thoughts, forbear to voice them, lest I be brought to tears. Now, prithee, lend me thy back. *Adiós*, Pedrillo. Remember the *frijoles*. Burn them again, scamp, and I'll—Whoa, mule! Thou misbegotten whimsy, I thought I read sadness in thine eye,—and 't was the devil. Be done, or I'll chew thine ear! Farewell, Pedrillo."

Pedro was off. Half-an-hour's ride took him through the suburbs, and he turned into the military road toward the grim fortress overlooking the town. A short, steep climb, and he was at the gate, bantered by the guard about the coming of Señora Bolio. Within was a citadel, surrounded by buildings for the garrison, or the townspeople when driven by war, and quarters for the Inca's officers. As

Pedro was passing he was hailed by the familiar pipe of Rogelio. He drew rein, not in the best of grace, awaiting the *veedor's* approach.

"Ah, Pedro, my good friend," said Rogelio, "I am pleased to see thee. I had thee in mind, 't is but a moment since. I——"

"Ware the heels of the mule!" bellowed Pedro, with a violence that startled the *veedor* into sudden agility in a backward spring.

"My soul and body!" exclaimed Rogelio, rolling his eyes from the beast to its rider. "No need to roar, my friend. Thine animal looketh gentle enough."

"He hideth an abundance of wickedness under a smooth exterior—like some of his brethren who go on two legs," remarked Pedro.

"Ah?" Rogelio eyed the cook suspiciously.

"Ah!" returned Pedro. "But, hadst aught to say, Señor *Veedor*?"

"Why, I have, good Pedro," said Rogelio, recovering. "In a few days—perhaps a fortnight, perhaps very soon—I expect—that is to say, I—he, he, Pedro!—'tis a delicate subject—but—well, I may need a woman servant. Just a common servant, Pedro."

"Ah!" said the cook. "Just a common servant! So! 'T is a common need, *Veedor*, shared by common and uncommon. I thank thee for thy confidence, Señor. I'll betray it to no man." And apparently considering the interview closed, Pedro gathered his reins to go.

"Wait!" shouted the *veedor*. "Blockhead, that is not all!"

"Not all, Señor! Thou hast need of two?"

The *veedor* piped a curse, then controlled himself and went on with a smile of forced amiability. "I mean it is not all I have to say, Pedro. In a few days—or less—I hope to share thy happiness."

"My happiness!" exclaimed Pedro, mystified. "Oh, I see! The Señor is going to turn cook."

"Damnation!" squeaked the *veedor*; then stifling his rage, he continued: "No, no! Not that. By thy happiness I mean thine *inamorada*, the Señora Bolio——"

"Oh, blessed saints!" interrupted Pedro. "Thou wouldst share my happiness in the Señora? Take it all, Señor! Take the whole of her. By heaven, I'll send her up entire! Wait but an hour." He started to turn his mule.

"Stop, fool!" choked the exasperated *veedor*; and grasping at a rein, narrowly escaped a kick. He sprang out of range with a gasp.

"Well," said Pedro, complacently, "I gave thee warning, Señor. But hast more to say?"

It was a minute before Rogelio regained his speech. "Yes!" he shrilled. "Perdition! Yes! If thou wilt but hold thy tongue!"

"*Bueno*! I listen. Proceed, Señor *Veedor*."

Rogelio drew near again and said, with difficulty, forcing a grin: "Now, in the devil's name, give heed; and forbear to fly off the bowstring until I have finished! What I've tried to get into thy pate is this. In a few days I shall have a guest, Pedro." He looked cautiously about and whispered, "A maiden, my friend—the fairest heathen in the land. I'll not say her name—he, he!—that shall be a secret. But, I would have a woman servant—one worthy of dependence, dost mark? Canst find me one? Thou 'rt known to the townsfolk, and I am not. What sayst? There will be some moderate compensation for thy time and trouble, Pedro,—moderate, mind thee, for I am a poor man; though," he looked about again, "I'll tell thee this, once I have her safe, there will be treasure untold at my command—Ah! Hum!—That is, Pedro, a fair sum—rather small, in fact—little more than enough for my requirements, for I have a fam——" He stopped short, snuffled, and went on hastily, "I'll pay thee, Pedro. Wilt find me a servant?"

Pedro concealed both his contempt and his suddenly roused interest, and after brief scrutiny of the tallowy face and protuberant eyes, looked away. "Why," he drawled, "for the time it hath taken thee to get it out, 't is a simple matter. Doubtless I can find a woman. I'll look about."

"Do so, my worthy friend," said Rogelio, rubbing his hands. "It will be worth thy while."

"No doubt," answered Pedro. "*Adiós*, Señor." He rode away.

"Dolt, lunk-head, clod-pate!" muttered Rogelio, looking viciously after him.

"Oily scoundrel!" muttered Pedro. "Slimy dastard." Then he chuckled. "Oh, give me but an hour, and I could work him into a fit! His rage striketh at his vitals. But, let us see! A maiden, the fairest in the land, and treasure untold! God's love! Can it be she?" He reined up, the better to think, and sat in study, his geniality of countenance giving place to grave concern. Shortly he rode on, still pondering.

Pedro's mission to the fortress was to see the sick armorer and warn him against Fray Mauricio, with the advice that José go straightway to Cuzco, where Pizarro would hold him safe. The Morisco was so ill, however, that he said nothing of his errand, and after an hour at the bedside, took his departure.

Pedro rode back much occupied with uneasy thoughts of Cristoval and Rava. He had heard nothing of their fate, and it was generally believed that they had perished in the mountains. After De Valera had been found in the canyon by his companions even the Cañares had lost the scent. Still Pedro hoped, and better, prayed with right good-will. Now he determined to watch for Rogelio's expected guest, his suspicion thoroughly roused by the morning's conversation.

Two days later he was again riding toward the fortress. On this occasion, however, he went beyond, making inquiries for the *huasi* of one Municancha, master-mason. Rewarded at length, he was received with distinction by the dignified Indio and his interesting family, to whom he made himself so agreeable

that he was pressed to come again, the small children chasing the dust of his mule for many yards, with shrill farewell and reiterated invitation.

Pedro rode back in an enviable frame of mind. It was dark when he passed the road to the fortress, and he had gone a little beyond when his mule stopped with a suddenness that sent his hand smartly to his sword-hilt. He distinguished a shadowy group of figures ahead, and hearing a word in Spanish, he prodded his animal with his single spur and rode forward. The strangers had drawn off to let him pass. As he neared them Pedro hailed:—

"Hob, *compadres*! A good-night to you."

"Oh, 't is Pedro!" he heard one say in relief, then the ring of ordered pikes, and, "Good-night, Pedro!" briefly.

"What cheer, friends?" asked the cook, drawing rein; but they moved on without response. He grunted at their discourtesy and went his way, failing to observe in the darkness that two of the number bore a *hamaca*.

The party halted near the fortress gate. Duero was challenged by the sentinel, seating himself wearily while the soldier drawled his call for the sergeant. The officer appeared, a parley followed, and the gate swung open.

"Well, and what fortune, *amigo*?" asked the old sergeant, surveying Duero as he stood scowling in the lantern light. "Why, man, thou'rt haggard!"

The other replied with an oath: "Not the worst fortune, but so near the worst that, curse me, 't would be no easy choice between them. Dost pass my party?"

"Pass them," said the sergeant, and Duero called to his companions; then, not wishing to be interrogated, gave the officer good-night. The sergeant watched the *hamaca* past the gate, and with a grimace to his sentinel, retired to the guard-room. Since the death of Atahualpa he had seen the like more than once.

Inside the gate Duero dismissed his remnant of the Cañares. Taking up the silent and closely curtained *hamaca*, the Spaniards were presently pounding at the *veedor's* door. An Indio servant opened to them, and the litter was carried into the court. Apprised of its arrival, Rogelio hurried out.

Duero ignored his greeting and demanded bluntly: "Where is the cage, Señor *Veedor*? Here is the bird."

"Oh, my stars!" snuffled Rogelio, rubbing his hands and sidling round the *hamaca*. "Is she there, indeed?—and in good condition, Duero? Remember, that was part of the stipulation—that she should be unharmed, and in good condition."

"As to being unharmed, I'll answer for it," replied the soldier. "As for her condition, you can figure for yourself what it is like to be after such a journey. Where will you have her put? Come! We're weary."

"This way," said Rogelio, in a fluster. "The room is all prepared—a bower,

Duero, a very bower! He, he! Wait! I'll fetch a lamp." He scuttled away, reappeared with a light, and led the way to a door opening upon the patio. It was fastened with a heavy padlock. Fumbling for a second, he threw open the door. The *hamaca* was carried in, the door closed, and while Rogelio edged round eagerly with the lamp, striving for a glimpse, Duero threw back the curtains and lifted Rava, almost lifeless, from the litter. She moaned as he bore her to the couch, and he hastened to remove the bonds and gag she had worn since nearing Xauxa. She gave no other evidence of animation.

"Here—the light!" commanded Duero, gruffly, and took it without ceremony from the *veedor's* hand, bending over the girl in scrutiny. Rogelio hovered about, twisting his fat fingers, and straining to have a look at the pale, drawn face almost hidden by her disordered tresses. It was a face to move the compassion of a savage. The rough soldier felt its pathos, for he straightened up and said brusquely:—

"She needeth looking after, 't is a certainty. Fetch a woman at once, Señor *Veedor*."

"A woman!" piped Rogelio. "Why, there's no woman about. I have spoken for one, and may have her to-morrow."

"No woman about!" exclaimed Duero, turning upon him sternly. "Do you say there is none to give this girl the care she needeth?"

"To-morrow—" began the *veedor* weakly.

"To-morrow!—To-night! This night, *Veedor*, or she goeth to Xauxa." Duero's black eyes travelled over Rogelio with an expression the latter did not care to meet.

"To-night! Impossible, Duero!" he whined. "There is not a woman in the fortress save two just come from San Miguel, and they—" He shook his head.

"Then, Señor, you will fetch one from Xauxa," said Duero, with determination.

"Curse me if I will!" retorted the *veedor*, angrily. "And look thou, Duero: this is mine affair. Thy part in it is done. Thou'lt refrain from meddling."

Duero motioned his companions forward, and stepped to raise the Ñusta. At the move Rogelio forgot himself and sprang forward with a snarl and curse to interpose, but recollected himself at once when Duero, dagger half-drawn, thrust an elbow beneath his chin and met his eyes with a scowl so malevolent that he caught breath with a sudden weakening of his knees. As the *veedor* retreated with a gasp Duero followed him steadily with his glare, then turned again with deliberation to the couch. The *veedor* raised a shaking hand to his throat as if he expected to find it already cut, and quavered:—

"My—my soul—and body, Duero! Thou'rt sudden! Wait! I—fiends and goblins!—I'll go if it will please thee."

"It will," said Duero, briefly. "See that you do. We will tarry until your return. But first, a small cup of *chicha*. We must warm her blood, or your woman will find a corpse. Do you hear, *Veedor*? A cup of *chicha*!"

The *veedor* started painfully and waddled away. He was back in a moment with the liquor. The soldier forced a few drops between the pallid lips of the Ñusta, and vigorously chafed her hands and arms. A fierce, unprincipled rascal in most respects, he was endowed with a rough warmth of heart to which the helpless state of his captive made silent appeal. He worked with what gentleness was in him, and when at last Rava opened her pathetic eyes he motioned his companions out of the room with the *hamaca*. Rogelio lingered near, but a gesture from Duero and the menace in his eyes sent him back into the shadow, whispering a futile anathema. When the unhappy girl revived somewhat the soldier drew a robe over her, and leaving her sobbing desolately among the pillows, gripped Rogelio's arm and led him out. He locked the door, and to the *veedor's* astonishment and rage, pocketed the key. The other commenced a shrill expostulation, but the burly Duero merely hunched a shoulder at him with chin thrust out and a sidelong glance of quiet viciousness that stopped his railing abruptly. Rogelio led the way to his room with no further word, followed by his four sullen hirelings.

They ranged themselves round his table in silence. The *veedor* stood glancing uneasily from one scowl to another, then piped in irritation: "Well, gentlemen, your task is finished, isn't it? Come now, my good friends, the hour groweth late. Return in the morning, and I'll give you your hire."

Duero stepped forward, planting a powerful fist upon the table and hitching at his belt: "Señor *Veedor*, we'll have our hire now! Then, when you have brought some one to look after the señorita, our business is done. In the meantime, with your leave—or without it—we wait here. She must be cared for before morning. But now, our gold."

Rogelio blinked about the circle, snuffled, and went out. Having closed the door, his rage overflowed in a series of frenzied gesticulations in the direction of Duero, accompanied by suppressed grunts and squeaks, until he was swollen in feature and quite breathless. He returned with a bag and pair of balances. They looked on with vigilance while he weighed out the gold, the lamp illuminating swarthy faces full of eagerness—except that of Duero, which was only watchful and grim.

"There!" snapped the employer. "Two thousand *castellanos*. Take it."

Duero extended an arm to withhold the others and said, coolly, "Double it!"

The *veedor* staggered back with the bag clasped in his arms. "Wha—what?" he gasped.

"I say, double it!" replied Duero, with force.

Rogelio stared at him with fallen chin.

"Double it!" repeated the soldier, and returned the stare fixedly.

"Fiends!" shrieked the *veedor*. "Man, thou 'rt mad! What was our bargain?"

"That acquitteth the bargain, Señor, but there are damages."

"Damages! What damages?"

"Why, to our several consciences, *Veedor*. Mine, I'll swear, hath stood a wear and tear that hath left not remnants enough to equip a dog! 'T is a most villanous piece of villany, and promiseth to grow worse when our hands are out of it. By the crucifix! Señor Rogelio, my soul will need masses for this affair, and I mean to provide for them. You will make it double, or the girl goeth to Xauxa this night; and I'll have the Señor Inca notified—or mayhap, Mendoza."

"Scoundrels, bandits, thieves!" screamed Rogelio, his face purple and hands shaking. Duero took a step toward him with a movement to his sword-hilt, and the victim retreated to the wall, hugging his gold and rolling his eyes in terror. The soldier surveyed him with contempt.

"Well," he demanded, "what do you say? Must we lug her back to Xauxa? Answer, and quickly, for I sicken."

"Oh, gentlemen!" wailed Rogelio, "be honest. Be just. Be considerate of a poor man."

Duero broke in with imitation of his whine: "Oh, be open-handed. Be charitable. Be virtuous. Faugh! You offend my bile. Come. Yes, or no! Do you double it? 'T is indifferent to us, for the Inca, or Mendoza, will know how to reward. But answer!"

Rogelio rolled his eyes to heaven, then lagged forward to the table and took up the scales. "Oh, my good men, 't is—"

"Cease!" commanded Duero. "We are no good men. Had we been, you had not approached us. Weigh out, and be done."

The *veedor* heaved a long, shuddering sigh, and weighed the gold.

"Now," said Duero, "to your horse, and to Xauxa."

"Oh, curses!" protested the *veedor*. "Art not finished? I've paid thee twice!"

"Go!" shouted Duero, stamping his foot. "Order your horse. I'll see you to the gates."

Rogelio went out with a groan. In half an hour he was riding down the hill, panting an imprecation at every step. Duero returned from the gate whither he had escorted him, and calling the servant, ordered the best the *veedor's* larder

afforded. Then the villains held carnival.

CHAPTER XXIII

Rogelio Finds Gall and Wormwood

Pedro was extinguishing the lights of his *cantina* when he heard the clatter of a horse's hoofs. They stopped at his door, and Rogelio entered, perspiring, breathless, and in violent perturbation.

"Ho, Señor *Veedor*, thou dost ride late!" exclaimed Pedro, in surprise. "There is something amiss?"

Rogelio sank upon the nearest stool, panting and wiping away perspiration, on the verge of apoplexy from exertion and rage combined. The danger of it seemed to strike Pedro at once. He hurried forward and commenced fanning the official vigorously with his apron.

"Steady, steady, Señor!" he urged, soothingly. "Do not try to talk. Take time and spare thy wind. Thou 'rt gasping like a ducked hen.—Nay, nay! Do not swear. Be tranquil. Calm thyself. Count ten, Señor—now do! Believe me, naught doth so soothe a fit of ferment. But—swearing again! Gently, gently, or thou'lt melt in thine own heat! Gods, man! Cease rolling thine eyes. Hast a cramp under thy belt? Let me thump thy back.—Ah!"

Pedro pummelled the agitated *veedor* between the shoulders with hearty vigor, and succeeded thereby in expelling what little breath he had remaining, rendering him still more helpless from exasperation. He saved himself by bolting from his seat and backing against the wall, where he stood waving his arms in speechlessness to keep the zealous cook away.

"Name of a saint, my friend!" said Pedro, with great concern, after Rogelio began to breathe more freely, "I never saw an over-gorged pup nearer a fit than thou. What hath gone wrong?"

"She—hath arrived!" gasped the *veedor* at length.

"Oh! She hath arrived, hath she? Well, she must be a very tarantula to work thee a spell like that, Señor! By the gods, even Bolio's coming could not give me such a bedevilment of jerks and palpitations!"

The *veedor* was rendered speechless again. Pedro eyed him with great commiseration until he showed signs of recovery, then threw him into another spasm by inquiring with solicitude,

"Doth the lady pursue, Señor? If so, we will barricade the door."

Rogelio held up his hands, violently shaking his head. "No, no!" he managed to say. "Damned—numskull! Let me—talk."

"Why, talk, to be sure! 'T is what I've waited for,—to hear thee talk. What the devil dost think? that I've been standing here this while to see thee contort and strangle? I had liefer watch a pig in the colic. Proceed, *Veedor*, and talk. It may ease thy mind. *Sensa animi tui libere profare*—Latin, Señor, and it meaneth, speak freely. Prithee, begin. I listen."

The *veedor* had collapsed into a chair, choking with rage. He sprang up, shaking both fists at the cook, and started toward the door; turned back, and waving his arms for silence, howled: "Accursed—rattle-teeth!—hear me!—I seek a servant!"

"Thou seekest a servant!" responded Pedro, with composure. "Well, by heaven, I could guess it! And thou needest, not one, but a dozen, I should say; and a strait-jacket withal. But, *infierno*! is the quest of a servant so delirious a pursuit?—Now, do be calm, Señor! Hold a minute, and I'll bleed thee. No? But 't would be wise, my friend, for if thou 'rt not on the edge of the staggers, then I never gave physic to a horse.—And now thou'rt swearing again! Fie, *Veedor*! Here! Let me get thee a wet rag."

Pedro hurried away. When he returned the *veedor* had regained his utterance, and waving aside the proffered application, he shouted:—

"Keep off, thou babbling moon-calf! Wilt hear me? I need a servant—at once! A servant—dost hear? A servant—and may the fiend claw thy vitals! Canst get me one—to-night? I'll pay thee well."

"Well, stew me! if the need of a servant wrought me to such a state of mind, I'd——" Pedro seated himself. "But 't is late, *Veedor*. Thy guest hath come, sayst thou?"

"Yes, yes! She is sick from weariness, and needeth a woman. Wilt find me one?"

Pedro became serious at once. "Sick! Then 't is pressing. Let me think. There is Señora Bolio, for a possibility. She might consent to go, but she knoweth no Quichua. That, however, might be an advantage, not so? Less apt to connive at escape." Pedro eyed the *veedor* watchfully.

"Yes! *Diablo*, yes!" said Rogelio, eagerly. "Canst persuade her?"

"I'll try," said Pedro, rising. He threw off his apron and started toward the door; halted, and came back, determined to test his suspicion. "Señor," he said, abruptly, "how did they get her away from Peralta? Did they kill him? If not, then I swear to thee, *Veedor*, thou 'rt as good as dead!" and Pedro slowly shook his head in direst portent.

The *veedor* was unguarded. He started violently, and his face went ashy.

"Oh, my soul and body! I—I forgot to ask them." He scanned the cook with quick suspicion. "How in the devil's name dost know?" he demanded. Pedro placed a finger beside his nose, wagged his head with deep significance, and went out. Now it was his turn to be agitated.

He pegged straight to the señora's lodging, and pounded upon the door until it opened. "Quick!" he cried. "The Viracocha woman! There is sickness."

The native made him repeat it, refastened the door, and left Pedro in a fume. When she opened again, it was with a request to follow, and led him across the court. The señora appeared at a door with an under-garment over her shoulders. "Is it thou, Pedro?" she asked, sleepily. "What is to do? This is an unholy hour to wake a body, dost not know it?"

Pedro pushed the door open, and entered. "'T is a crying need," he said, and hastily explained.

"Who is this girl?" demanded the señora, with a pang of jealousy.

"Peralta's enamorada," replied the cook, thinking he lied, but venturing it to quiet her suspicion.

"And who this Rogelio?" asked the señora.

"A toad!" answered Pedro. "Wilt go? I will ride with thee to the fortress."

The señora was retying the fagged end of her braid.

"A favor to me, *carita*," urged Pedro.

"I will go," said Señora Bolio.

"Then come to the *cantina* as soon as thou 'rt clad. I will have thy mule," and he hastened away. By the time the animals were saddled the lady arrived, her battle-axe beneath her arm, wrapped in a bundle of apparel. Pedro strapped it to her saddle, and summoning the fevered *veedor*, assisted the señora to mount. As they rode out on the quiet road, Rogelio leading, the cook gave further history of the Ñusta, together with certain sidelights on the *veedor*. They reached the fortress, and having seen the two through the gate, Pedro returned, relieved for Rava, but sadly disturbed by thoughts of Cristoval.

The señora followed her conductor to his door. As he dismounted a sound of revelry stole out upon the night, and the *veedor* dashed in. The neglected lady sniffed after him scornfully, swung herself out of the saddle, unstrapped her belongings, led her mule into the patio, and followed the *veedor* to a half-open door. The unfortunate Rogelio was doomed to further bitterness. The room was lighted by all the lamps of the establishment. Duero and his companions were seated round a well-laden board, a bowl of steaming punch in the midst, and had arrived at the jovial stage. As Rogelio entered and stood blinking at the brilliancy, his fat chin wagging with renewed rage at their effrontery, they surveyed him a moment, and burst into a shout of laughter. Duero raised his cup.

"Hail, good host, liberal entertainer, most hospitable mate!" roared he.

"Thou 'rt welcome. Enter! Come, leave diffidence outside. Thou 'rt not intruding—now is he, *camaradas*? No! Sit and make free. What is ours is thine—not so, *camaradas*? *Segaramente*! *Hola*!" He sprang to his feet as the señora appeared at the door. "Blessed angels of Heaven, what do I see? The Señora Bolio!" He advanced with a profound bow. "Welcome, Señora, most welcome! Upon my heart, 'tis like the sight of a nosegay from Old Castile! Ho, *compañeros*!—your courtesies to *Señora la Conquistadora*!" He bowed again, answered by the lady with a glare of cold disdain.

"Miscreants, knaves, cutthroats!" shrieked Rogelio. "You shall pay dear for this night!"

Duero surveyed him darkly, hunched his shoulder, and thrust out his chin, and the *veedor* sank into a chair. The soldier eyed him for a moment, and turned to the lady. "Señora, I surmise thou hast come to care for the girl. She needeth it, God knoweth, and the less time lost the better. Come. I have the key."

Rogelio sprang up to follow, but once more the hunch of shoulder, the thrust of chin, and the scowling look askance, and he sat. Duero winked at the señora as he turned to lead the way, and ignoring her snort of resentment of the liberty, went out. She followed, and halting at the Ñusta's door, he said, as he unfastened, "Pedro hath told thee of this Rogelio?"

"Briefly, that he is a toad," responded the señora.

"Brief, but most precise! Pedro hath a good head. Now, Señora, I'll leave thee to enter, and the door unlocked. If thou hast need of aught, thou'lt find us entertaining the *veedor* for an hour or more. I'll have him send a bowl of broth at once. Adiós."

Duero rejoined the others, and they sat long making their host unhappy; then, having promised him with evident sincerity that if he whispered a complaint he would find himself some morning with a severed windpipe, they took their leave.

Señora Bolio went to the couch. Rava had raised her head, but perceiving the invader was a woman, rose to her knees, her eyes streaming, and voice broken with sobs. With arms outstretched, she poured forth an impassioned supplication in words to the stranger unknown,—in words unknown, but with meaning clear, and an eloquence that went straight to the heart of the señora. For the señora had a heart. It beat somewhat wildly at times, and at times with vehement hostility toward the sex which had worked it countless wrongs; but like other hearts that flame, it had its gentler warmth. The appeal of the injured and helpless girl touched her womanliness, and she hastened to her side.

"Poor dearie!" she exclaimed, seating herself and drawing the sobbing prisoner to her breast. "Poor little waif! Have they been cruel, these men? Ah, may the devil roast them well! Do not weep, love. Do not weep, chiquita. They shall

not harm thee more. Let the *veedor* beware. Let him come to trouble thee, and we'll unjoint him—will we not, little one? We'll put a twist in his neck, thou and I, that will let him look at his shoulderblades to his heart's content—will we not, my dove? Ah! That we'll do, and more, if he but roll his eyes aslant at thee!"

With soft voice and motherly caress, the señora soothed the heart-broken Rava; her words—perhaps quite as well—without meaning to the girl, but her tones replete with sympathy. Rava clung to her as to a last hope, becoming gradually more calm, until a knock at the door stirred her terror afresh. Releasing her, the señora sprang up. Grimly she stripped her battle-axe, and stepped to the door. The servant recoiled.

"Ah, 'tis thou!" the lady exclaimed, and received the broth.

The strength it gave aided her efforts to restore calm to the despairing captive, and in an hour Rava slept. Her guardian sat long, nursing a waxing enmity for the authors of the maiden's sorrows, and for Rogelio in particular; then, having with fell purpose placed her weapon conveniently at hand, she lay down beside her *protégée*.

She awoke early, astonished to find Rava kneeling with hands clasped in prayer, a silver crucifix before her on her pillow, the Latin periods, in her quaint, hesitating accents, sounding strangely. The señora joined her orison, then turned to her in surprise.

"A Christian, thou?" she asked, taking her hand.

Rava understood the word, and assented eagerly. "Cristoval!" she said, and touched the crucifix, her eyes filling at the name.

"Ah! Peralta! The stout freebooter with the good voice. I know him," and the señora nodded emphatically. "Art baptized, child?"

This word was familiar also, and Rava nodded her head; then said eagerly: "Father Tendilla! Father Tendilla!"

"Father Tendilla!" exclaimed Señora Bolio. "Thou knowest him? Blessed thought!—we'll send a word to Father Tendilla. Aha, Rogelio, sniffling obesity, we shall see! We'll choke thee with thine own unholy purpose, or I'm not Bolio. Rogelio, indeed! If, now, Pedro will but come!" She patted Rava's arm reassuringly and arose.

Meanwhile the *veedor*, with eyes puffed and bloodshot from a night of scanty sleep and much exacerbation, was breakfasting. At intervals he paused, laid down his knife, and sat rubbing his hands in pleasing meditation while he chewed. Then his complacent smile would fade, and he would cease both to rub his hands and to chew while he irefully reviewed the night's indignities. "Caitiffs! Perfidious scoundrels! Vipers! Only wait! Rogelio hath not done. If he live not to see the garrote at every one of your rascally throats, then 't is because he shall be short-lived. Wait, my over-cheerful bullies: we'll have another settling of this

account, and 't is Rogelio will split his sides! But, oh, my stars, what a cost! Four thousand—oh, calamities!" Then, as the matter slowly revolved in his mind and the other aspect came uppermost, he would begin to chew again with a returning smirk of satisfaction. "But what a prize! Eh, Rogelio, what a prize! And safely housed—in the cage, as Duero put it!—accursed knave! serpent! Four—oh, my soul and body!—But, oho! Mendoza, thou uncouth ruffian, how now? Rogelio hath overmatched thee, despite thy rant and swagger. He, he! The fox and the bull—the fox and the bull! Ah, but thou 'rt a rogue, Rogelio! a sad rogue and sly! And thou'lt be reimbursed the four thousand—oh, my life, yes! Her jewels ought to do that. Did she wear jewels last night? Murder! I did not think to look. But 't is like Duero looked out for that—or that prison-bird, Peralta." Rogelio's countenance fell. Presently it brightened. "But we have her, and now it is to be seen how she will receive thee, Rogelio—her daring captor! Doubtless with charming terrors and maidenly trembling. Oh, these delightful women! Shy, timid, alluring! Bless their souls—if they have souls. He, he!"

He sat awhile blinking and chuckling at the remains of his meal; snuffled, arose, and went to make a toilet which he purposed should reconcile his captive. A zestful, engaging occupation, this decking for the admiration of a fair one; and most agreeable if one can, like Rogelio, achieve it with the flattering self-assurance that it cannot fail. Nevertheless, it was not without some rasping of temper, and more than once in the process Rogelio stamped and swore with squeaky emphasis. But at length, after a final glance at his mirror and a dubious fingering of his double chin and hanging jowls, he quit his room, creditably attired, considering all the circumstances. To be sure, his hose were mended in places, his doublet seedy in the strong light, and his ruff far from crisp and snowy; but these defects were offset by a profusion of rings, and a redolence of musk sufficiently overpowering to divert attention.

Señora Bolio answered his rap, and opening the door a little way, replied to his salutation with a brief nod, and stood surveying him from head to foot and back again from foot to head with disfavor as disconcerting as it was manifest. Indisputably, the señora's aspect was unfriendly.

The *veedor* hesitated. "Is—ah—is the señorita within?"

The señora paused for another survey before she replied with asperity: "Is the señorita within! Of a surety the señorita is within. Prithee, where is she like to be—out chasing butterflies?"

Rogelio looked at her in blank surprise; then, with a feeble effort at a smile: "I would have a few words with her, Señora,—and alone! Pray, open the door."

The señora made no move to open the door, but replied tartly: "The señorita hath no words to spare and no ear for listening. She is wearied."

The *veedor* reddened slowly as astonishment turned to anger. "What—

what, woman! Dost think to offer me hindrance in mine own house? Stand aside, then gather thy belongings. Thou 'rt dismissed, dost hear? dismissed!" He stepped forward.

For reply the lady thrust out her arm and in close proximity to his nose, snapped her fingers. The *veedor* gasped. His nerves were already unstrung, and his indignation set him a-quiver as if he had been some huge, fancifully-moulded jelly.

"Why—name of a—thou—my soul and body! What meanest thou, beldame? inconceivable termagant!"

Alas! Rogelio. That was unfortunate, ill-considered, rash. As if thou wert not enough distraught!—and now to invite the overflow of this brimming vessel of wrath! Before he could draw a second breath she was outside, arms akimbo, her face thrust so close into his that her features for a moment were a blur to his startled eyes. Then she unrolled the infinite scroll of her diatribe,—a withering flow of invectives garnered in years of rude experience; a schedule of strange metaphors, born of inspiration and chasing in so rapid sequence that his bewildered ears no sooner received the shock of one than another followed, twice more shocking; a torrent of hyperboles so weird in their personal application that his ideas staggered in a vague, wondering effort to comprehend, then floundered helpless in the stream; and each member of her discourse emphasized by a jab at his nose with thumb and finger that forced him back, step by step, across the court. The first flush of rage vanished from his countenance and left an expression of surprised impotency, his jaw working in a futile effort to articulate, until, turning with uplifted hands, he fled.

As his door slammed, the breathless señora became conscious of another man. A man at the moment was as a flaunt in the face of a maddened bull, and she turned upon him. It was Pedro. He had watched the episode from its beginning to its close. Now he was bowing low, cap in hand.

"Señora Bolio," he said, with great unction, "my admiration! My admiration, my homage, my reverence! My veneration, my stupefaction, my awe! My——"

"Oh, drat thy gibberings!" interrupted the señora, with irritation. "Be done with thy bobbing, and come hither. Thou 'rt the very man I wished to see."

"Heaven forfend!" murmured Pedro. "Hast yet more wind?"

She eyed him sternly, then her features gradually relaxed. "Not for thee, my chicken pie. But hearken, Pedro. I have news. This girl—dost know it?—is a Christian."

Pedro stared. "No!" he exclaimed. "And 't is the Ñusta Rava?"

"'T is she, and she a Christian, Pedro, as I live! And she calleth for Father Tendilla."

"For Father Tendilla! Then stew me, she shall have him! I'll fetch him."

"Fetch him, Pedro. Go at once." And taking him by the shoulder, the señora turned him toward the entrance of the court. "Make haste, and, *Adiós*."

Pedro went a few paces, and halted; reflected a moment, and returned. As the señora looked back he nodded toward Rogelio's dcor, and approaching it, rapped vigorously. There was silence, and he pounded again.

"Be off!" came a piping voice, not entirely steady.

Pedro pushed open the door, and heard a scurrying within. "Be off, woman! I'm armed. Enter at thy peril!" trebled the voice. Pedro thrust in his head. The *veedor* was intrenched behind his table, bathed in perspiration.

"Oh, thy pardon, *Veedor*! I thought thou didst bid me enter," said Pedro, and closed the door with a grin.

"Hold, good Pedro! Wait! Tarry a moment, I pray thee, my dear friend," called the *veedor*, but Pedro was gone. As he left the court the door opened, and Rogelio protruded his head, calling again; espied the señora across the court, and retired abruptly.

CHAPTER XXIV

Pedro Seeks Tidings of Cristoval

Pedro cantered into town and dismounted in front of the great, heavily walled, low-roofed edifice that had been the Temple of the Sun,—the Temple of the Sun for centuries, but now surmounted by a cross, the interior shorn of its symbols of pagan worship and its splendor, and consecrated to the Holy Faith. Beside the gray old building was the ancient palace of the priestly attendants, now sheltering the good Father Tendilla and his assistants in the pious work of saving heathen souls.

The gentle-mannered old priest was shocked at Pedro's revelation of the *veedor's* iniquity, and made instant preparations.

"Good Father," said the cook, as he held the stirrup for Tendilla to mount, "if you can learn aught of Cristoval——"

"I will, my son. Come to-night," and the priest rode away.

Arrived at the fortress, he went directly to the commandant, and in half an hour was at Rogelio's door with a squad of halberdiers. It drew an outbreak of squeaky protests from that worthy, but the priest, leaving him grovelling in fear

of the punishing hand of the Church, ordered a sentinel posted at his door and sought the señora. She admitted him at once to Rava's room.

The girl was asleep, her tear-stained cheek resting on her clasped hands. Even unconsciousness did not release her from her sorrow, for she sighed heavily and moaned as Tendilla knelt for a brief prayer beside her. He arose, and stood regarding her with compassion. With deeper compassion still, when, awakening, she drew back with eyes wide and deep with the unutterable fear of a creature hunted and caught. But her recognition of his silvery hair and benevolent face was quick, and with a sigh, the faintest smile, and a movement entirely queenly, she extended her hand. He took it, and touching the dark head, murmured a benediction. Rava raised her eyes, studying his with the unconscious intensity and directness of gaze that had often given Cristoval the feeling that she looked beyond; then the lines of anxiety softened into an expression of trust. But that kindly old face brought a train of recollections of dreadful days, and she turned away in sudden weeping. If Señora Bolio had at first impressed Father Tendilla with some doubt of that lady's fitness for her post beside the prisoner, she dispelled it now by the tenderness with which she soothed the storm of grief. With whispered words—words that might have sounded strangely enough to the priest could he have heard them,—she pressed the shaking form to her bosom, while with moistened eyes he waited for the return of calm. When the girl was able to hear him he approached.

"My child," he began, in Quichua, and Rava turned quickly with joy in her tears at the sound of the tongue which she had not heard since the wild night at Xilcala. "My child, I have come to tell thee thou hast friends, and thy dangers are past. As soon as thou 'rt composed we will go from this unhappy place to one of safety, and I hope in a few days to place thee in thy brother's care."

"Oh, Viracocha—my father!" she cried, rising and nearing him with hands pressed to her heart. "Is it true? is it true? Hath the sweet Virgin Mother answered my prayers? Ah, Cristoval promised it would always be! I believed him, and it is so! She hath heard me. She hath not turned from Rava in her sorrow!" She drew the crucifix from her bosom and kissed it passionately. "And he said thou wast good, and merciful, and kind, my father. Oh, I know it is true. And thou wilt save me? Wilt save me? Wilt take me from this wicked place—beyond the reach of these cruel Viracochas? Ah, I thank thee, Blessed Mother! I thank thee, I thank thee!" and she sank upon her knees, pressing the crucifix to her breast.

Father Tendilla raised her gently and led her back to her couch. "It is all true, my daughter. Thy prayers will never be in vain. Now, compose thyself, and rest until I return. I go but for a moment."

He left the room, offering earnest thanks for her faith, and ordered the

hamaca. It was ready in a moment, and with the escort of halberdiers, and the resolute señora riding close beside her litter, Rava left the fortress.

Early in the evening Pedro went to the priest. He found his old confessor pacing the floor and full of mild enthusiasm.

"Ah, my son," said the father, beaming upon his visitor, "we have done a good work this day. I shudder to think of the infinite wrong that might have been but for thy prompt action in placing so rare a guardian as Señora Bolio over this injured girl, and apprising me of her peril. The señora, Pedro, is a remarkable woman. Where didst find her?"

"Stew me!—your pardon, father—I found her not. She found me—as the avalanche findeth the wayfarer." Pedro shook his head with a trace of gloom in his jovial face, adding, "Yes, she is a remarkable woman. No doubt of it! She hath powers and attributes, Father Tendilla. But, the Ñusta Rava—she doth well?"

"Much more tranquil, and though most unhappy, beginneth to show commendable patience and resignation. I have talked with her as my time allowed, and would say from what I have seen, Pedro, that she is one of the earth's choicest blooms. Poor Peralta hath been a humble agent in her salvation, but his task was well acquitted, and he shall have many masses for his soul's repose."

"Ah, *Madre*!" faltered Pedro. "Then Cristoval is dead?"

Father Tendilla shook his head sadly. "I fear it, Pedro. Duero hath so said to Saavedra. I have forborne to ask the Ñusta, for the mention of his name seemeth to pierce her heart. Alas! The old sad story of mortal love and grief."

Pedro rose and stumped nervously about the room. When he seated himself again his face was flushed and his hands were unsteady, but he said nothing, and the father went on.

"I have told the Ñusta of thy part in her rescue, Pedro, and she would see thee. She holdeth thee in kindly recollection."

"I am easily remembered," said Pedro, briefly. "I'm pegged in memories wherever I roam," and he looked glumly at his wooden leg.

"For more than that, my son," said the priest, kindly. "Peralta never forgot thee, and made the Ñusta partaker in full of his affection. But thou must see her soon—not to-morrow, for she is much in need of quiet; but possibly on the day following."

"*Bien!*" said Pedro, and his voice was hoarse.

"And now," continued Tendilla, "we must communicate with the Inca Manco."

"No better way than by *chasqui*," said the cook, "though there is uncertainty of his reaching Cuzco. It is said there are roving bands of Quitoans—remnants of Atahualpa's troops—still in the mountains. Since Manco's coronation they have been hostile. But have you learned, father, where the Ñusta was found?"

"Only that the place is called Xilcala, and is some six days' march from here."

"Xilcala," repeated Pedro, and fixed the name in his memory. When he pegged back to his *cantina* he meditated a purpose.

Two days later the cook was admitted to Rava's presence. She was expecting him, and if he had been disposed to think disparagingly of the grounds on which he was favored in her recollection, his modesty was gently reproved by her evident pleasure. He found her changed. Her pallor was sadly heightened, and the proud fire had gone from the dark eyes. Sorrow seemed indelibly impressed upon the gentle face; but with it a dignity strangely at variance with her youthfulness, and a refinement of beauty almost startling to the good Pedro, who whispered to himself, "Blessed saints! 't is the face of an angel." As she greeted him her eyes lighted with a faint smile, but he noted with a twinge the quiver of lip and chin and the scarcely controlled tremor in her voice.

"Ah, Pedro," she said, after bidding him to sit, and observing the diffidence in his honest eyes, "Father Tendilla hath told me all. I would that I could tell thee my gratitude, but thou knowest. Thou didst come to mine aid at the moment of despair, when I thought that even Heaven had forsaken me."

"I have done naught, Ñusta Rava. Father Tendilla and the señora——"

"Thou didst send them, Pedro; and it is twice, now, that I have owed thee the means of my rescue. But for thy help at Caxamalca——" She shuddered, then presently went on: "I know how our escape was made possible, my friend. Cristoval—Cristoval told me. Ah, Pedro, he loved thee well!" A choking sob shook her frame, and covering her face with her hands, she turned toward Señora Bolio, who hastened to her side. Poor Pedro dashed his hand across his eyes, and sat bolt upright, his lips compressed. In a moment Rava was able to proceed.

"He spoke of thee often, Pedro."

Pedro bent forward. "Ñusta Rava, is there no hope that Cristoval still liveth? Do you know that it cannot be?"

"Oh, I know not, I know not! Once, on that dreadful night, I thought I heard his voice rising above the clamor. I heard no more." She covered her eyes as if to shut out the memory of the horror.

Pedro silently cursed himself for the stupidity of the question, and it was moments before he could say something to divert her. He did so at last, and soon took his leave. Rava said earnestly, "Thou'lt come again, good Pedro?"

"I'll come again, Ñusta Rava; and meanwhile, keep courage." He added to himself as he crossed the court, "I would I might say, hope! *Ay de mi*, Cristoval! if I could but know."

He tarried at the *cantina* only while Pedrillo was saddling his mule, then mounted and struck toward the fortress. Again his errand lay beyond; and he

drew rein at the *huasi* of Municancha. The old Indio gave him welcome, and to him Pedro narrated Rava's flight from Caxamalca with the gallant Viracocha Cristoval. He told of her recent perils and deliverance, and begged Municancha's aid in learning from Xilcala whether the good soldier still lived, and if not, where lay his grave. He found a willing helper. The old man, overjoyed by the news of the safety of Rava, who had been mourned as dead throughout the empire, did not hesitate. He had a nephew, Ocallo. Ocallo was summoned. He would gladly accompany, would organize a company at once, and would be ready to start the following dawn. They agreed upon a meeting place, and having enjoined secrecy, Pedro rode back to Xauxa, grateful to the peg which had won him so good a friend as Municancha.

Night had fallen before he reached the town. He told his plan to Father Tendilla, arranged for his absence, received the confessor's blessing, and departed to prepare for the journey. Pedro worked late, completed his preparations, and lay down for a few hours' sleep. Long before dawn he was up, and having breakfasted, was assisted by Pedrillo to arm. His mule was brought, and with a few parting instructions, he was away. In half an hour he was clear of the town, on the road going north. A brisk trot for a mile or more, and he halted at a cross-road. A dim figure rose out of the darkness and was hailed by Pedro in Quichua. After a brief greeting, the man summoned half-a-dozen companions from a thicket beside the road.

"Are we all here?" asked Pedro, looking over the group.

"All here, Viracocha—four archers and two carriers," replied the one who had first approached.

"Good! Then we will move. Take the lead, Ocallo. We should be well in the mountains before the light."

Thus Pedro set out on his search for Cristoval.

CHAPTER XXV

A Glimpse of Cuzco

The interest at first aroused by Pedro's disappearance gradually subsided, and was suddenly forgotten for a time, in the excitement following upon another departure. This was attended by tragic circumstance. Fray Mauricio, having established himself at Xauxa, at once denounced José to the commandant, Saavedra,

as a heretic, demanding his arrest. Saavedra, intimidated by threats of the Inquisition's vengeance, unwillingly consented. He was not prompt, however, and word of the friar's efforts reached the armorer, who was almost recovered from his fever. The next morning Mauricio was found in his quarters, stabbed to the heart. José had vanished.

Search was made in the town and neighboring mountains, but no trace of the armorer was found, and as no reward was offered, the hunt was given up.

Pedro's absence was not unnoted by Rava, however, and her gratitude for his devotion and services inspired her persistent inquiries. To these Father Tendilla made evasive replies, deeming it unwise to suggest a hope which would probably renew her anguish when Pedro returned. But to Señora Bolio, so much exercised that she even proposed to take the field in search of the cook, he confided his mission, perplexed at that lady's attitude, which seemed too resolute to imply tenderness, but which nevertheless indicated something more than mere solicitude. Even had the good father been better versed in the gentle passion as manifested in the feminine breast, the señora's symptoms might easily have balked his diagnosis. When she learned that Pedro had left Xauxa she suspected it was prompted by his unconquerable coyness, and shocked the mild priest by a characteristic opinion of the apparent treachery. But, apprised of the fact, she melted in a manner no less surprising, blew her nose violently to abort a threatened tear, and broke into eulogy even more emphatic than her denunciation.

Rava's spiritual growth had been such as to rejoice the good missionary's heart. She turned now with all the emotion born of grief, the yearning of a heart bereft, the ardent faith of a sincere and ingenuous mind, to the Mater Dolorosa and the Redeemer. Obedient to her preceptor, she conquered the despair which he saw was menacing her life itself. She found divine consolation, and in its realization her belief received new strength. She was baptized and received the sacrament. The occasion was one of utmost solemnity, and the garrison attended in body. The little flock of native converts and as many more of the people of Xauxa as the walls of the church would hold, gathered to see the daughter of an Inca repudiate the gods of her fathers in their ancient temple.

One morning Father Tendilla hastened to Rava with the news that a *chasqui* had arrived from Cuzco, announcing that the Inca Manco had despatched an escort to convey her to the capital. Not many days later the sun rose upon a city of tents on the plain outside the town. The escort had arrived at nightfall the day before—battalions of the Incarial Guard, a hundred nobles, a throng of maids for the Ñusta's attendance, and a long train of camp servants, *hamaca* bearers, and carriers for the baggage. That morning the sacerdotal palace was a-glitter with the richly costumed members of the royal suite, bringing the Inca Manco's brotherly greetings and their own homage to the restored princess. Rava's simpler life

was of the past, and once more she was a Daughter of the Sun.

A fortnight later the *cortège* of the Ñusta was descending by the great Chinchasuyu Road into the valley of Cuzco. As the column emerged from the pass, and the fertile *bolson* opened out below, Rava drew aside the curtains of the *hamaca*. The arid slope dropped for hundreds of feet to the uppermost terraces of the *andenes* which clung to the mountain-sides and ended with their green the bleak wilderness of eroded rock. Beyond these the rolling floor of the valley, traversed by the stream Cachimayo; and on the left, rising abruptly from the plain, crowned by the ramparts and towers of its huge fortress, loomed the sullen mass of the hill Sachsahuaman. At its feet lay Cuzco, the "Navel," the centre of the universe, the ancient capital of the Incas; and still farther away, the bastions of the gigantic circumvallation of the Cordillera, its peaks delicately outlined against the azure of the cloudless sky or the white of more distant snow-clad summits.

A faint haziness overhung the valley, with filmy spirals of white smoke rising languidly above the roofs into the air, a-quiver with the warmth of the lowland and lending lightness and unreality to the almost dreamlike splendor of the capital. It seemed not of the West. The bright walls of dwellings, the glare of street and plaza, the green of interior court and garden, and the gold of the roofs of palace and temple, were blended by distance into a harmonious beauty which might have belonged rather to some metropolis of the fabled Orient.

As her escort wound slowly down, Rava looked forward with throbbing heart, her eyes seeking in the confusion of roofs the spots endeared to her by lifelong association. The palace, the Amarucancha, was easily found on the great square, and even her own court with its shade of quinuars. Beyond gleamed the golden roof of the Temple of the Sun, now to her a symbol of the darkness from which she had been led by loving hands, and whence she felt it her mission to rescue others. A turn hid the city from view, and she leaned back with closed eyes until the rhythmical tramp of the companies was echoed by the walls of houses, and she heard the murmur of a multitude. The street was full of her people, and as she looked from the *hamaca* they raised a mighty shout, waving hands and brightly colored scarfs and showering her with flowers. Her heart was full as she smiled back their greetings, and in her joy over theirs at beholding her again she could have embraced the humblest.

Far down the street the bristling column of spears turned to the left, and the thunder of the drums at its head grew faint, to rise again as her *hamaca* reached the corner. Now she could see the plaza with its expectant crowds, and shortly she emerged from the narrow way, while waiting companies fell in on the right and left to form a hollow square. Suddenly her eyes rested upon a group of bearded faces crowded close to the lines, and she drew back into the shadow of the *hamaca*. They stared with quiet insolence, and others were elbowing through

the throng from the direction of a building on the farther side of the square, over whose door she saw with sinking heart the flag of Spain and the dark colors of the Army of the Conquest. In front of the building was a picketed line of horses and a loitering knot of Spaniards. Rava turned away with a shiver, her brief happiness gone.

Before the Amarucancha the escort halted, and passing a double line of kneeling nobles, the Ñusta was borne beneath the sculptured serpents. The first court was crowded, but she had barely time for a glance before her hands were seized by the Auqui Paullo, her younger brother, who had sprung to the side of the *hamaca*. Rava embraced him fondly and was about to alight when she saw a familiar, swarthy countenance near the door of the audience chamber. The owner was looking intently, and as he caught her eyes, doffed his sombrero and started forward. Her heart seemed to cease beating. Paullo was startled by her suddenly heightened pallor.

"Great Inti!" he cried, in alarm. "What is it, Rava? Art ill?"

She grasped his arm convulsively. "Quick, oh, quick!" she gasped. "Order my bearers forward—to my apartments!" and she sank, almost fainting, into the shadow of the curtains. Mendoza halted with a shrug as the *hamaca* was raised, replaced his sombrero, and turned back. "By the demon!" he muttered, with an unpleasant smile, "our haughty Señorita Ñusta seemeth to disdain old acquaintance. *No importa*! *No importa*! There are other days to follow."

As he entered the hall he cast a glance over his shoulder at the *hamaca* just disappearing into another court, and clicked his tongue in his cheek.

CHAPTER XXVI

The Inca Manco

Ignoring the salutes of the two sentinels of the royal guard, Mendoza lounged into the audience room and stood leaning against the wall near the door. It was a spacious apartment, resplendent with the usual profusion and wealth of mural decoration thus far left undisturbed by Pizarro's rapacious followers. At the farther end of the hall an assemblage of natives stood at some distance from the throne, on which was seated the young Inca Manco. Behind him stood a group of nobles, and at his side, on a lower seat, was Almagro, commandant of the city in the absence of Pizarro, then on an expedition to the coast. On the left of the

throne, in the front line of nobles, were Juan and Gonzalo Pizarro, recently superseded in command by Almagro, and now alcaldes of Cuzco. These three officials, with eight Spanish regidores, constituted the municipal government established by Pizarro. To the Inca had been left the insignia of sovereignty, and little more. He had the privilege of his councils and the conduct of his realm so far as these did not conflict with Spanish interests; but, as now, the Conquistadors were at his elbow in humiliating censorship.

The Inca Manco was a youth of twenty years, though his serious and resolute expression made him look more mature. He resembled his half-brother Atahualpa, but his countenance, of a finer type, was lacking in the other's fierceness, and in its delicate modelling was more like that of the Ñusta Rava. As he sat listening to the *curaca* of a distant town who had brought a case for adjudication, he wore an air of thoughtful gloom. The lines of care about his mouth and eyes vanished when he spoke, announcing his judgment in brisk, quiet tones, full of decision and confidence. The decree was favorable to the speaker, and as the latter uttered his gratitude the Inca spoke again briefly and in lowered voice, his face alight with a trace of pleasure. The *curaca* retired, and the next, an aged man, advanced with hesitation, and having knelt with head bowed to the floor, seemed unable to finish his obeisance, but remained prostrate. The Inca said kindly, the customary address strangely inconsistent with their disparity of age, "Rise, my son, rise! We are waiting."

The old man rose painfully, and in a voice unsteady with age and emotion, told of outrage that brought hot blood to his sovereign's cheek. The night before—he had been waiting all day to make his complaint—his house had been broken into by a Viracocha soldier, and his granddaughter carried away. His voice rose as he finished, and he tottered forward to the dais, extending his trembling old hands in appeal.

"In the name of the God who shineth in mercy upon us both, Sapa Inca, I pray to you for vengeance! She is but a child—a mere child—and the light of mine old life. Grant that your just wrath shall fall upon the head accursed of the son of that wholly accursed race."

The Inca had started partly to his feet, his dark eyes ablaze. He sat again. "Where is the girl?" he demanded, hoarsely.

"Cowering in the darkest corner of the darkest chamber of her home, Sapa Inca—half mad—a blighted bud—a blemished pearl!" He turned abruptly upon Almagro, who, unacquainted with the Quichua, had given him little heed, lolling wearily in his chair.

"O, thou Viracocha, offspring of Supay!" cried the old Indio, shaking his clenched hands toward the Spaniard, "dost yawn at my sorrow, monster? Hast the heart of a wolf—thou who wearest the aspect of a man? May the great Inti

strike thee with thrice my grief, thrice mine infirmities!"

Almagro, listening with some surprise to the violent apostrophe, looked toward the younger Pizarro: "What saith he, Juan?"

"By God, he hath told a tale of bitter wrong, Diego!" responded the other, vehemently. "One of our men hath stolen his girl. It calleth for the garrote, or I'm an Ethiopian!"

Almagro sat up and glanced quickly at the Inca, who raised his hand to silence the complainant, and was now regarding the commandant with stern eyes and burning cheeks.

"Viracocha Almagro," said Manco, "before thy general went from Cuzco he engaged that neither house nor person of my subjects should suffer violation. Thy soldier hath committed a crime which is punished in Tavantinsuyu with death. I look to thee for vindication."

"Why, blood and wounds!" exclaimed the cavalier, when Manco's words had been translated. "Tell him, Juan, that we will indemnify with—Fiends! but these people set no store by money. Say, then, that we will punish with any just severity—short of death. That is out of reason."

The Inca's eyes were fixed steadily upon Almagro while the answer was being made known to him. "Viracocha," he said coldly, "this outrage is not the first of its kind. Now, I demand the penalty of death."

Almagro's scarred face flushed as his single eye met the Inca's frown, and he replied bluntly: "I refuse! Tell him I refuse, Juan. We'll make what reparation lieth within our power, but curse me if we'll waste a soldier at any man's behest!" and Almagro glanced defiantly from the Inca to the stern faces of his nobles.

Manco rose abruptly, dismissed his court with a few quick words, and left the dais. As he passed the old man he spoke to him in an undertone, and touching his white head lightly as he sank upon his knees, moved toward the door, followed by his suite.

Almagro sprang to his feet. "How now, my puppet king! Dost turn us an angry back? For the price of a breath of air I'd trim the fringe from thy toy of a diadem!"

"Not so loud, Diego!" remonstrated Juan Pizarro. "He hath good offence. I tell thee, we are not wise to make light of this soldier's trespass, *amigo.* One such outrage unpunished will breed a thousand, and before we are aware the country will be about our ears. 'T is a cut at their tenderest sensibility. I say, hang the knave and keep the peace."

"Kill a good fighting man for the sake of a twig of a heathen girl! Thou 'rt mad, Juan. I had as lief sacrifice a horse. We'll iron him for forty days, and the matter will be forgotten. Come! Set the business afoot. Have a public trial and advertise thy zeal, then keep the affair hanging until interest is worn out. Parade

justice for a week, and these varlets will forget their grievance. *Vamos*!" They left the empty hall, and indifferent to the dark looks of the throng in front of the palace, sought their quarters in the old palace of the Inca Tupac Yupanqui.

With the few nobles so privileged, Manco went to his apartments. Controlling his agitation, he faced his counsellors. For a moment he studied each, reading under their impassiveness the fire smouldering in his own breast. In the group was Villaoma, the Villac Vmu, or high priest of the empire, most sagacious of his advisers, as he had been before to Huayna Capac and to the ill-fated Huascar. The old priest met his look with one of keen scrutiny. Manco had been his favorite, and from boyhood had been watched with an interest as deep and hopeful as if of his own flesh and blood. Manco's admission to the military order came when Cuzco was prostrate before the conqueror Atahualpa, her armies scattered, and the Inca Huascar a prisoner in the fortress at Xauxa. When Pizarro, after the death of Atahualpa, marched upon the capital with the new Inca, Toparca, Manco reassembled the forces of Cuzco and prepared for resistance. Following the counsel of the Villac Vmu, Prince Manco had suspended hostilities after Toparca's death and laid before Pizarro his own claim to the imperial *llautu*, temporarily humiliating himself to forestall such other pretender as this king-maker might advance. If he had underestimated the cost of this surrender of dignity to policy, the Villac Vmu did not share his mistake; and when the monarch presently realized the penalty for his pawned manhood, the stings of injured pride, the chafing under arrogance, and the wounds of slighted majesty, it was with difficulty that the priest restrained a premature outbreak. Now he saw the fire long kept in check burning near the surface. He held his peace, however, and Manco said merely:—

"I would have thee come hither to-night, Villac Vmu, after the third watch—and you, my generals, Quehuar, Mayta, and Mocho. And come prepared to counsel no longer caution, delay, but—action!" The effect of the last word was electrical—but as a flash of heat lightning, and as silent. It brightened their dark faces and fierce eyes for an instant, and was gone. But he knew them well, this young warrior-emperor; expected no reply, nor wished it. Presently he was alone.

The lamps were being lighted before Manco was in a mood to greet the Ñusta Rava. He sent a page to advise her of his coming, requesting that she be alone. After the youth had gone, he stood at his table with eyes bent moodily upon the floor; then with quick impulse lifted the *llautu* from his head, laid it aside, and quitted the apartment.

The evening was quiet and warm, but at that hour the several courts were almost deserted, and he walked slowly, encountering few but the frequent sentinels posted since the coming of the Spaniards. Through intermediate patios, he

gained the establishment devoted to the suite of Rava and her younger sisters, the Ñustas Ocllo and Alcaya, halting near a door through which came the notes of a *tinya* and of some fair one singing. The song was a sad one, and he walked on, thinking of the days when these gloomy courts were enlivened with music and laughter from hearts untouched by care. Would those days come again to the brooding old Amarucancha?—to stricken Cuzco? The question was like the thrust of a dagger, self-administered. Was not this air of sadness, this pervading gloom, directly due to his own supineness? Was not its source in his weak, nay, criminal, submission to the Viracochas. Ah, why was he lingering, inactive, under the goading of every crying hour? Why did he rest an instant while there remained an enemy in Cuzco, or in all Tavantinsuyu?

He came to Rava's door, and passed it; returned and passed it again and again, the sweat starting under the flagellation of his conscience. How could he face the noble girl within? What would she say of the Cuzco she had left so fair: now so shorn of its glories? Would she not reproach him, and justly? And could she do otherwise than attribute to his neglect the suffering and dangers from which she had just escaped? He must explain—without another second of delay, he must explain!

He recrossed the court impetuously, and pushing open the door without ceremony, entered the room. Rava arose, startled, and hurried forward with a cry of joy, alarmed again when she saw his pallor and the drawn lines of his countenance. But there was no reproach in her tone or bearing, only affection and gladness, and he embraced her with nervous fervor.

Rava's arms were about his neck. "Oh, my brother! Oh, my brother! Do I really see thee again? Manco! Manco! How many, many times in these long months have I feared—but fears are gone. How thou hast changed, my dear! Thou 'rt troubled! Ah, me—" she stopped, regarding him with surprised concern. "Where is thy *llautu*, Manco? Why dost not wear it?"

He reddened painfully as he kissed her forehead again. "I—I have laid it aside to-night," he said quickly, seating himself beside her. "To-night, I am Manco—not the Inca, my dearest."

"But I would have seen thee wearing it. It should never be laid aside, save in privacy, brother dear; and thou wouldst still have been Manco to Rava, thou knowest well. That is not the reason."

He looked at her with troubled eyes.

"Why didst thou leave it?" she persisted, studying his face.

"I have told thee, Rava. I have put it by that I might be to thee only Manco, as of old."

The lightness of his words was forced, and Rava saw it. "Nay, it is not that," she said, gently. "Tell me why."

His eyes left hers, and she laid a hand upon his arm. "Tell me why, Manco." He rose, but she detained him; and a glance at her anxious face forced a confession. He hesitated, then said with an effort: "I will tell thee why, Rava. It is because—oh, may the souls of the departed Incas look mercifully upon me!—it is because—it is stained, my sister: debased and dishonored! It came to me not from the hands of a priest of the Sun, but placed upon my head by the foul hand of a Viracocha. O, thou great Inti, why was I suffered to live to bring this shame upon my line? I wear the *llautu*, and look thou, Rava, the shadow of a Viracocha resteth ever upon my throne. When I speak to my people a Viracocha speaketh, and my voice is drowned. My laws have ceased to be. The very dogs of the streets look dumb question of mine authority." His words failed, but he resumed, his voice strained with agony: "But worse—worse hath befallen Tavantinsuyu. They have violated the Temple of the Sun, stripped it of its splendor, and polluted its halls. They have cast down the silent forms of our fathers, ravished of their sacred insignia. The golden effigy of the Sun hath been torn from the wall, crushed into ruin by Viracocha feet, and carried away to be gambled for. The gardens have been despoiled, and not one hand's-breadth of their hallowed soil hath been left unturned by these destroyers in their ravening for gold. The Inti-pampa is a desolation. Ah, Rava, Rava, ask me not why I lay aside the *llautu*! Ask me, rather, how I dare to wear it! Ask why the Sun doth rise and set upon my profanation!"

He covered his face with his hands. Rava sat very still. She was prepared for his tale of ravage, and was less shocked by his words than by the intensity of his agitation. A strong man's anguish is always terrible to a woman or a child, and the stoicism of the Peruvian made this outburst the more harrowing. She stepped to his side and put her arms about his neck. The unspoken sympathy gave him strength, and he controlled himself and went on more calmly.

"Ah, my dearest sister, the sacredness of Cuzco is no more! Its palaces have been despoiled. The beasts of the Viracochas defile the halls of the Yupanquis. These very decorations on the walls that shelter thee are here only on sufferance." He paused long enough to steady his voice, pressing her hand to stay her from speaking. "A moment more, my dear, and I have done. I have told thee only of Cuzco. The cloud that darkeneth her sunshine hath spread to the four quarters of the empire. Quito hath fallen. Daily, as came the reports of the great pestilence, come now tales of new invasion. The great sea, vacant since the world began, disgorgeth fresh swarms with every tide, as some rotten pool its burden of vermin. The gaunt leader, Pizarro, is rearing cities, driving our children into slavery to hew his stone and build his walls. The fairest vales of Tavantinsuyu are being seized by strangers, their people banished from their homes, or lashed into servitude. Yet I am called the Inca! Oh, Rava, turn away thy face till Manco hath been worthy of his trust!"

He sank into a chair, his head bowed. Rava touched him. "Manco, do I behold my brother in despair?"

He looked up, his face reddening. "No, no! Not that, my sister, not that! I have spoken of the past and the present. The curse hath fallen whilst I have been held by chains of circumstance—the great Inti knoweth how much against my will. Now, it is ended!" He rose and regarded her with steady eyes, his voice calm, but intense. "It is ended, Rava! To-night I meet the Villac Vmu and my generals. To-morrow at dawn, whilst *chasquis* are speeding the four roads from Cuzco, the priest will sacrifice to the Sun—not in his desecrated temple, but under his blue vault secretly in the mountains—invoking at last his dread ministers, the Thunder and Lightning. But, Rava," he exclaimed, seizing her hands, "think not that in the weakness thou hast seen to-night there was the plaint of a coward! My heart was full. My lips have been sealed in all these months of shame with links of bronze. No mortal but thee hath heard a sigh or a faltered word; but thy dear eyes have drawn from me what torture could not compel. Not even Amancay, sweetest of consorts, hath heard a whisper of the sorrow which hath made mine every night a harrowed year. But now, it is done!"

He fell into gloomy reverie, while Rava, pale and quite silent, sat pressing his hand and looking far away, or anxiously at his sombre eyes. He was oblivious of her presence, until he roused with a faint smile.

"But now, dear girl, what of thyself? I have not even told thee my joy in having thee again. Forgive me."

Rava placed her fingers on his lips. "No need, Manco, either for thee to tell me, or for me to say that I forgive. But mine is a long story. Be content to-night to know that I am safe."

"No; but let me hear it, Rava. It is of concern to me, as thou knowest. How didst come to be at Xauxa?"

"Ah, that is near the end of the story, brother."

"Then tell me from the beginning. I had thought thee in Toparca's suite until I met—Pizarro at Xaquixaguana. He told me, Rava, thou hadst fled from Caxamalca with a traitor Viracocha who had broken prison." Manco's voice was grave.

Rava's eyes flashed as they met his. "Pizarro called him so, Manco?" she demanded; then after a pause, "Ah, yes—a traitor! But what wouldst say of a traitor to these men of evil?"

Manco studied her face before he replied slowly, "Much worse even than they—or much better."

"Then much better!" she said, with quiet emphasis. "His treason lay in this, my brother—that he fiercely resented Pizarro's perfidy to our kinsman, Atahualpa, whom he befriended in his darkest hours. And in this—that he saved

me from worse than death when I was at the mercy of those vultures; that he fought for me, starved for me, kept hope alive when my heart was broken, and shielded me from a thousand perils, until he led me to safety. And all this, Manco, for the sake of a vow to Atahualpa, whom he promised to deliver me from mine enemies. A traitor! Oh, my brother, if thy nobles have virtues like his treason, thou 'rt a fortunate monarch!"

While she was speaking, and afterward, Manco searched her deep eyes until, conscious of his scrutiny, they fell. Her hand was trembling, and his face darkened with displeasure. "Rava," he demanded, "where is this Viracocha?"

She looked up, and the sorrow and desolation which had swept quickly over her gentle face brought generous remorse for his instant of sternness. Her lips trembled piteously. "Oh, Manco, Manco," she faltered, "he fell for me at last. He is no more!"

With head bowed and form shaken by grief, her hands sought his neck; and whatever he would have said a moment before in reproof of her feeling for one of the hated race, it was forgotten in pity as he drew her into his arms. With affectionate sympathy he endeavored to moderate her anguish, but words were vain, and he could only hold her tight-clasped until its force was spent. Then he half carried her, benumbed and yielding, to her couch and called her maids, lingering helpless beside her while they ministered.

Rava had grown more tranquil, and he was about to depart. She lay quiet, her eyes closed, their lashes yet moist, and he bent over to kiss the pallid cheek. As he did so she sighed deeply, and a small object slipped from her bosom and lay sparkling at the end of its slender chain. Its silvery gleam caught his eye. He started, looked more closely, and recoiled as if he had seen a serpent in the folds of her robe. He caught breath sharply, and an ashy paleness spread over his bronzed face. By a blessing of Heaven the girl did not open her eyes upon the mingled abhorrence, unbelief, and anger, with which he beheld the tiny image of the crucified Saviour—the emblem of all on the broad earth that he hated most savagely. He gazed for a fascinated instant, stood erect, glanced at the sad face once more, and left the room with features as rigid as if cast in the metal whose color they wore. The startled maids looked after him as he went, but none saw him stagger as he crossed the court with his hands pressed to his forehead. The Moon, goddess consort of the Sun, was rising over the dark roofs of the palace. He wavered out from the shadow into her rays and cowered beneath them, shuddering as if he felt her silent denunciation of his sister's apostasy. Gaining his apartments, he passed his attendants without a word, leaving them awed by a face they had hardly recognized.

When his generals met him, near midnight, his eyes were fevered, his voice hoarse and dry, and his words, fraught with war, were uttered with an abrupt

tensity that fired their warlike hearts. The council was long. At its close the *chasquis* who were to bear his messages to the distant provinces, calling them to arms, were summoned to have the words from his own lips. They left it with nerves strung by their portentous import and the fierce, suppressed energy with which they were given.

Before the sun rose above Cuzco the fiat had gone forth that would convulse the empire.

Within the month every province, town, and hamlet within the realm was in secret preparation. Armorers doubled their industry. The great system of posts sprang to its highest activity, the tireless *chasquis* speeding day and night over every road and mountain trail, hurrying commands from the capital, bearing back reports of governors and *curacas*, in ceaseless radiation and convergence. Magazines and armories were replenished of their stores, and trains of carriers toiled over every highway, concentrating provisions and material of war upon the strongholds in the mountains surrounding Cuzco. All the machinery of the most elaborately perfect organization the world has ever seen was in motion, but as silently as clouds gather before a tempest. The couriers stole in and out of the city under cover of darkness. Few of them went to the Amarucancha, but were received and despatched by the Villac Vmu at his own palace, their tidings and *quipus* carried by him to the Inca. The impending cataclysm gave no faintest warning, and the Spaniards idled, caroused, and brawled, unconscious of its approach.

The Ñusta Rava, quite unaware, fortunately, of the agitation with which Manco had quitted her, worn out by stress of mind and the weariness of her journey, at length found forgetfulness in sleep. The next day and evening were spent with her sisters and the Auqui Paullo, but Manco did not return, though he sent a page with inquiries for her health. The day following, and the next, her hope to see him was disappointed. At length he came.

The first glance from his gloomy eyes chilled the warmth from her words as she started to meet him, and she stopped, her smile of welcome fading into startled inquiry. The Inca dismissed the maids, and motioned her to her seat, neither avoiding nor heeding her hand as she laid it hesitatingly upon his arm, nor replying to the question in her face.

The interview was not long nor violent, but when he left and sent in her maids, they found her unconscious. The last of many woes had snapped the frail thread of courage that had sustained her. Manco had questioned her about the crucifix, had requested that she abjure the abhorred religion, had been refused as firmly as gently. His respect for her had prohibited command or reproach, but the coldness of his farewell and its finality had been a stab more cruel than the most passionate denunciation.

The next day Rava did not rise, nor the next, nor for many days thereafter. The *amautas* came—wise men—three of them. They noted her fever, listened a moment to her delirium, consulted, and administered the simple remedies known to the Peruvian pharmacopoeia. These were few and mostly harmless, so nature fought for her with few hindrances from drugs, and with all the assistance that nursing could give. But it was a long and dreary struggle before the unseeing eyes at last looked sadly but clearly at her attendants, and her whispered words grew intelligible. Almost the first were "Father Valverde," and the maids looked in wonder. But she repeated the name until the priest was sent for and came.

Father Valverde, now Bishop of Cuzco, was an elderly man, well preserved and well fed, with a rugged, determined face, a great slit of a mouth with good lines about it; keen eyes which could look stern beneath their shaggy brows when occasion demanded, or amiably and humorously upon opportunity, and with an ability to storm at lawless soldiery in terms suited to their understanding and their needs with a vigor that would have been creditable to Chrysostom. He was a rabid hater of the devil. Next to the devil he hated an unbeliever. A missionary of fanatical type, he could burn a heathen at the stake for the good of his unassoilzied soul with easy conscience and some satisfaction. But he could, withal, rejoice sincerely over a soul rescued from damnation, and did rejoice over a letter from Father Tendilla regarding the Ñusta Rava. The missive, after the usual salutation and some preliminary words, ran as follows:—

"I will leave her long story to a fitter time, and say merely that I found her already a Christian, having been brought to the Faith by the Caballero Cristoval de Peralta, whom thou knowest well. And not only a Christian in belief, but what is more admirable, in fibre, inclination, and bent of mind; being, in truth, a most gentle, saintly girl. I had the ineffable satisfaction of baptizing and receiving her into Holy Communion. Thereafter, she worked with me earnestly in the conversion of her people here, and departed with the hope of pursuing the same good work in Cuzco. I pray, therefore, that thou attend upon her. She hath many sorrows. One is the death of this Cristoval.

"Now, I have thought of this concerning the Ñusta Rava, and having broached it gently, found it received not with disfavor and even gratefully, to wit: that as thou dost plan to found, as soon as may be, a convent at Cuzco, she might be led to embrace a holy life. Her preparation, begun here, could be completed at Panama, or even at Seville, where she would doubtless enjoy the interest and favor to which her rank entitleth her."

There followed items of personal concern, and the letter closed. The interest aroused in the mind of Father Valverde was immediate and effective, and once admitted to the palace, he devoted himself to the work so well begun by Cristoval and Tendilla. Like his brother missionaries, he possessed a knowledge

of medicine, and was able to hasten Rava's convalescence. It need not be said that he found her all that Tendilla had described, and the desolate girl received his fatherly ministrations with a grateful heart.

CHAPTER XXVII

The Incarial Diadem on a Spanish Saddle-bow

Tavantinsuyu was rousing; was at last aroused. Dark masses of warriors, marching with grim purpose, without song, or drum, or horn, filled the defiles and roads leading toward the City of the Sun. Day after day, week after week, from the most distant quarters of the empire, the converging columns moved upon the capital, swelling as each village or province added its contingent. So rapid and secret was the concentration that before a whisper of their danger had reached the ears of the conquistadors, the fortified valley of Ollantaytambo, a few leagues from Cuzco, had become a vast encampment, and waited only the signal from the Inca to pour forth its avenging legions.

Proud, gloomy, and taciturn; enduring the contemptuous indifference, the unconcealed scorn, and the open insult of the Spanish officers with the patient fortitude of a heart of iron, Manco bided the hour. During the long weeks of preparation, while his forces were gathering, he never left the palace. From dawn to darkness, and often from darkness to dawn again, he sat in his chamber, poring over *quipos*, or feverishly pacing his floor while he listened to the reports of officers or issued his commands. Daily intelligence borne by the *chasquis* kept him in touch with the advancing columns, and on a map roughly sketched with charcoal on a sheet of cotton lying on his table he marked their approach. His generals came and went unheeded by the quarrelling Spaniards, and the ominous councils held nightly within the palace were unsuspected.

The day was near at hand. Manco was in midnight council with his officers and the Auqui Paullo. The final disposition of his troops was being considered, but the blow was withheld until word should come from the coast that the forces near the newly founded Spanish cities, Ciudad de los Reyes and Truxillo, were ready to strike simultaneously. At Xauxa preparations for investment were complete. All passes and lines of communication between the several Spanish posts were occupied. Already the women of the royal household were being sent, in twos and threes, and with all possible secrecy, to the protection of the fortress at

Ollantaytambo. Rava had not gone, but would depart with Paullo on the following night.

The group of nobles about the young Inca as he stood at the head of his table, was one which would have been distinguished in any council of warriors or statesmen. All were veterans of many wars; and all, with the exception of Yumaquilque, commander of the Amahuacas, a warlike mountain tribe to the northeast of Cuzco, were of the pure Inca blood. Two, the generals Mayta and Quehuar, were members of the royal family; the former a cousin, the latter an uncle, of Manco. Quehuar, the eldest and next of kin, stood beside the Auqui Paullo. At his side was Mayta, younger by years, and one of the handsomest of the nobility of Tavantinsuyu. He had the features and form of a Roman, every line indicative of the energy and alertness which had gained him the sobriquet of "The Puma" among his devoted soldiery. He commanded the Incarial Guard and was the head of the military school. Next was Mocho, chief of the fierce Antis. He was a short, dark, irritable genius of aggressiveness, known as the fiercest fighter in all Tavantinsuyu, and the most persistent. There were others of less distinction, but all were of tried courage and ability. Now they listened with close attention to the words of their young lord, whose force and spirit as developed in the last few months had inspired an admiration in which his youth was forgotten, and had filled them with high hope for their stricken country.

"My lords," said Manco, after the business of the council was finished, "I perceive that the current of things is bearing us to early victory. The *Cañares* left in the city number less than a thousand. We scarcely need count them. The Viracochas die hard, as we learned at Vilcaconga," he smiled grimly, "but they are not more than two hundred. Almagro is marching rapidly to the south, and he is now where no cry for help from Cuzco can reach. Should he seek to return he would find the passes closed. Ullulama is within five days' march, but we need not wait. The Villac Vmu will be with us to-morrow, and by the day following the household will be in safety at Ollantaytambo. Then, my lords, we strike. To thee, my Lord Mocho, it will please me to give the honor of taking the Sachsahuaman."

Mocho bowed. "I would better like an honor more dearly gained, Sapa Inca. The place is but feebly garrisoned."

The Inca smiled. "Thou'lt have opportunity, presently, for others less easily won, my lord; do not fear it. The fortress may not be so easily held as taken, for if I mistake not the Viracochas will not be slow to learn its importance. Thou wilt garrison it strongly, therefore, and see it amply supplied." He turned to the senior general. "My Lord Quehuar, thou wilt send a *chasqui* to Xauxa to-night——"

He was interrupted by commotion and an excited voice in the antechamber. A frown crossed his face, and he motioned to Paullo. The prince hurried out, returned in a moment with precipitation, and as he threw open the door the Inca

started. Paullo's face was drawn with horror. At his elbow was a soldier in the uniform of the guard, who, as Paullo strove to speak, sank upon his knees and bent to the floor.

"Manco! Manco!" cried the young prince, in agony. "In the name of Inti!—The Virgins of the Sun!"

The Inca strode toward him, demanding sharply as he seized his arm, "What meanest thou, boy? Speak!"

"The Acllahuasi! The Viracochas are battering its doors!"

Manco rushed across the anteroom to the court without a word. Paullo jerked the soldier to his feet, and followed by the generals, hurried after. As the Inca stepped into the open air a dull roar of voices in the street outside, the sound of blows, and fierce shouts shocked his hearing; then a rending crash of a falling door, and the clamor of a rush. For an instant he was motionless, strained and listening. He turned suddenly, and the light from the open door fell upon his face, distorted by fury.

"Mayta!" he shouted. "Mayta!—where is he?—Mayta, thy battalions! Fly!—Paullo, my arms!"

As Mayta started the soldier grasped his arm. "Hold, my lord!" he said; then, rapidly to Manco: "Sapa Inca, the barracks are surrounded, and but twenty are within the quarters—the rest have gone to Ollantaytambo. I sought to enter, but was driven away."

Manco stamped with impatience and rage, "Follow me!" he cried to his generals, seizing his arms from Paullo. "We will take the guard."

Quehuar blocked his way determinedly. "Rashness, my Lord Inca! We are unarmed, and the guard may be needed at its post before the night is gone."

Manco thrust him aside, maddened by women's shrieks from the convent, but the generals crowded about him. Quehuar laid a strong hand upon his shoulder.

"Prudence, prudence, my lord!" he urged. "A moment's folly now would undo all that hath been done."

Manco shook off his grasp. "Prudence! Dost hear those cries, old man? Release me!"

"God of heaven! do I not hear them? But—hold!—wouldst have vengeance in full? Then abort it not by an act of madness! Dost forget thine army?" Manco checked himself with an effort, and Quehuar went on energetically: "The instrument for punishment is ready for thy hand. Beware thrusting that hand without it into the teeth of wild beasts! What couldst thou—what could our united strength do to-night? Thy death, or even a wound, would seal the fate of Tavantinsuyu. Bethink thee, Inca!"

Manco drew his cloak over his face with a groan. He dropped it and ex-

claimed hoarsely: "My lords, I go to the army to-night! The hour hath come for action. Mayta, thou wilt go with me. Do you, my friends, remain until the women are in safety. You will join me at Ollantaytambo."

"Sapa Inca——" began Quehuar; but Manco raised his hand and continued vehemently:—

"I go to-night! What wouldst have? That I sit clutching mine ears, or shuffling my feet to drown the wails of these unfortunates? Hear them! Hear them! Oh, by the gods, they drive away my reason! Come, Mayta: we go!"

He grasped the officer's arm, waved back the others, and hurried across the court. At the entrance of the next stood a sentinel, and the Inca halted, checking his salute. "Here, Mayta, thou 'rt unarmed. Take this." With his own hand he drew the soldier's sword and passed it to his companion. They hastened across another court filled with shuddering attendants, and through a third and smaller one to a narrow corridor along which they groped until halted by a door at its end. Manco hastily unbarred. It was a postern opening upon a terrace between the wall of the palace and the rivulet Huatenay. Opposite was a flight of steps leading to the bed of the stream, and they descended.

Meanwhile, within the walls of the Convent of the Virgins and in the street without, a hell-carnival was in progress too hideous to dwell upon. At the moment the Inca was passing through the outskirts of the city Juan Pizarro, mounted bareback, unarmored, and bareheaded, was charging into the tumult, followed by his brother Gonzalo and a few other cavaliers, sword in hand. Bellowing oaths, laying about with the flat of their blades, not infrequently with the edge, and leaping their horses upon the obstinate, they cut their way to the convent and rode in to rescue the unhappy inmates. Behind followed a dozen of the guard, only to throw aside their pikes and join in the fiendish revel, leaving their duty to the black-robed priests and friars who struggled through in their wake. One bore a crucifix; but the stout Valverde did better work with a bludgeon, breaking many a wicked face and ruffianly head in his career through the desecrated halls and gardens.

The night was far spent before the place was cleared, and its doors closed and guarded. Juan Pizarro was riding slowly back toward the square when a Cañare, who had lurked about the Spaniard for an hour in a vain effort to approach and be heard without a cleft skull for his pains, touched his leg and sprang back with hands upraised. Juan halted.

"Well?" he demanded brusquely, scowling at the Indio. "Hast business with me? If so, be brisk." The Cañare jabbered a stream of broken words in Quichua, not intelligible, but something, it seemed to be, about the Inca,—enough to arrest the attention of Juan Pizarro, and he demanded impatiently of his brother:—

"What saith the dog, Gonzalo? Canst make it out? Here, thou, say it over

and slowly."

The Cañare repeated his words with better effect,—with immediate and startling effect, for Juan turned with a shout to his companions: "Dost hear, Gonzalo? Do ye hear, Caballeros? The Inca hath fled the city!" He kicked the ribs of his horse and galloped madly to the palace of Viracocha, across the great court and into the hall that served as a guard-room, filling it with the clamor of hoofs, and throwing its occupants into confusion. They seized their arms in a panic.

"Ho! The trumpeter!" he roared. "Out, and sound to horse! Out, and sound to horse! *Presteza*! *Salta*! To horse! To horse!" He went out like a whirlwind. Before he had reached his quarters the shrill, quick notes were rising from the square. Again, and again, and again the stirring measure, and the stable was alive with men, tossing saddles, tugging at straps, swearing, and panting in a frenzy. One after another, and by twos and threes, the mailed riders swung into saddle, seized lances from the rack, and clattered out into the plaza. The line formed rapidly, and the plunging, kicking, and head-tossing of the excited steeds had hardly subsided before it was in column and, led by Juan Pizarro, took up a trot behind the Cañare.

The gloomy walls of the violated convent were growing gray in the dawn as the cavalcade roared past down the narrow, echoing streets and through the suburbs.

It was late afternoon when the troop reëntered Cuzco. It moved at a walk, and hanging on the pommel of the commander's saddle was the *llautu* of the Inca Manco. In the foremost rank of the column was a trooper without his helmet, with a bloody bandage across his face below the eyes. A weapon had passed the bars of his visor. Farther back was another, shorn of a pauldron and his right arm useless. In the rear, two Cañares carried a third on an improvised litter, dead. But in the middle of the column, between double files of troopers, marched the Inca and the Lord Mayta, blood-stained, bandaged, their arms bound behind their backs. Horses, riders, and the two prisoners, were splashed with mud.

Manco walked with head erect, without a glance at the Cañares who hurried into the street as the cavalcade traversed the suburb Munaycenca. Nor did he more than glance at his grief-stricken subjects who cast themselves moaning upon the pavement. Not a line of his stern young face betrayed his emotion at entering the capital a prisoner, nor his torture of mind at the disaster thus befallen his people on the very eve of the stroke for their deliverance.

From Munaycenca the news flew ahead. Cañares gathered, too stolid for manifestation, and knots of Spaniards, whom a sign from Juan Pizarro warned into silence. But throughout the remainder of the march every door was closed, and no native of Cuzco looked out upon the fallen majesty of their Inca.

Crossing the bridge toward the Coricancha the column turned northward

through the city, passing the palaces of the Yupanquis, of the Inca Rocca, the schools where Manco had won his youthful honors, and entered the road which mounted to the Sachsahuaman. The single company of pikemen constituting its garrison stood in front of the citadel, and to its commander Pizarro surrendered the prisoners. An hour later they were heavily ironed within the keep, and the troop was on its way back to Cuzco.

In the Amarucancha the hours had dragged in a long nightmare. After Manco's departure his lords remained, racked by the shocking sounds to which they listened in helplessness. The war-hardened old Quehuar paced the court. Yumaquilque stood motionless against the wall, his mantle over his face. The others hearkened in silence broken only by an occasional fierce, whispered sentence from Mocho. But from those dreadful hours they imbibed a relentless ferocity of hate for the invaders which no amount of Spanish blood could ever mitigate, and which in the days to follow would send many a conquistador unshriven to his Maker.

Upon the Auqui Paullo, young and uninured, the night's tragedy fell most cruelly; but the anguish of his sisters gathered in Rava's chamber, crouched in speechless horror, and surrounded by wailing maids, nerved him by its reminder of their dependence now upon him. By the time he had restored them to partial calmness the tumult beyond the walls had subsided.

As he stepped into the court again, he heard the call to horse; and a few minutes later, the uproar of the passing troop. The circumstance was alarming. It stirred a sudden fear that Manco's flight had been detected. Paullo sent a page to learn its significance. The youth did not return. He despatched a second, and sought Quehuar. He found the old general with the others in the council room, and had hardly entered before the second messenger returned to announce that a guard of pikemen was at the outer door, and he had not been permitted to pass. The palace was surrounded by guards, and all within were prisoners.

That night the humble native knelt at his evening prayer, shuddering at the infinite indifference of his god to the sorrows of Tavantinsuyu. As twilight came, a few muffled figures stole to the edge of the square, gazed in silence at the guarded doors and sombre walls of the Amarucancha, and slunk away. The capture of the Inca was told in whispers, stirring no cry for vengeance, no move to rescue. The calamity was as irremediable and appalling as if heaven itself had fallen. It was the wrath of Inti, not to be opposed.

A few days later, the nobles were permitted to depart: were, in the case of Quehuar and Yumaquilque, even compelled to go; for these two would have shared the captivity of Paullo and the household, whom the Pizarros retained as hostages for the quiet of the empire, whose patience under this latest blow they

doubted.

CHAPTER XXVIII

Two Comrades Reunited

Never a knight rode forth with more of chivalry than dwelt beneath sturdy Pedro's breastplate when he set out in quest of Cristoval. He went with little hope of doing more than saying a few prayers at the grave of the cavalier and marking it with a cross; but for these offices he would have traversed a continent.

Cristoval lay beneath an awning at the villa of the Curaca Huallampo, well bolstered and pillowed, and bandaged to a condition of almost total rigidity. He was looking moodily over the sparkling lake when his reverie was disturbed by the approach of his host, accompanied, unmistakably accompanied, by the familiar sound of a peg. The cavalier was startled half erect, but sank back weakly as Pedro appeared with Huallampo. The cook was breathless from a climb of the hill at his utmost speed. At sight of his friend he increased his pace across the terrace, grasped the extended hand, but instead of speaking, compressed his lips as a spasm crossed his face. Roaring his words to conceal his unsteadiness of voice, he exclaimed:—

"*Hola*, Cristoval! Do I see thee in the flesh? Blessed Virgin, it is so! Why, man, I came to weep over thy grave! But 't is thou, in very truth!"

"God bless thee, Pedro," said Cristoval, with moistened eyes, pressing the cook's hand.

"So He hath done, old friend, in letting me see thee again. But, *Santa Maria*! thou 'lt wrapped, and swathed, and beragged, and swaddled, like a sore finger! Canst wiggle thy toes? Ah! 'T is a comfort. Any broken bones? No? *Bueno*! Just full of holes—pricked, punctured, pinked, and perforated! Hum! It might be worse. The *curaca* saith thou 'rt mending fast."

Cristoval nodded. "Pedro," he began anxiously, then stopped.

"Well, say on, *amigo*," said the cook, seating himself.

"Dost know—aught of Rava?"

"That I do! She is safe in the care of Father Tendilla."

Cristoval closed his eyes and turned away, his lips moving. Pedro eyed him curiously, and shook his head. Both were silent. "Tell me about it, Pedro," at last.

"Nay," said Pedro. "It is too long a story for the present. The *curaca* warneth

me against much talking. Thou must be content to know that she is unharmed. Shortly I'll tell thee, and much history besides. But the Ñusta Rava is in good hands." Permitting no further conversation, he sat long, surveying the cavalier with great satisfaction while Huallampo gave him an inventory of the various hurts.

Cristoval's recovery had been much impeded by his condition of mind. Fever ensued after he had been carried from Maytalca's ruined villa, and for days he lay between life and death. His depression told seriously against him, and later, as he gained strength, his progress was further hindered by restless longing to be in search of Rava. Huallampo's admonitions availed little against his fuming, but he was somewhat reassured by knowing that a party had already gone to gain intelligence of the Ñusta. Pedro's coming with the knowledge that Rava was safe made his convalescence rapid. Still, it was weeks before he could rise, weeks more before he could stir abroad, and the summer was gone before Pedro would discuss their future plans. The party brought back word that Rava had left Xauxa for Cuzco. Cristoval was with Pedro when he received the information.

"Then she is with the Inca, and her troubles are past," he sighed. "Pedro, how long, thinkst thou, before I can mount?"

The cook looked at him sharply before replying. "That would depend," he said, presently, "upon thy purpose. Thou couldst amble about the valley tomorrow; but thou'lt not be fit to couch a lance for weeks to come, old friend, so make no plans for campaigning. What dost think of doing?"

"I must seek the Ñusta Rava," said Cristoval.

Pedro was not surprised, but said: "There will be danger for thee too near Cuzco, Cristoval, and not a man in the pack whom thou mayst trust. De Soto hath gone to the coast with the general, sick of the conquest and on his way to Spain. But when thou hast seen the Ñusta—what then?"

Cristoval looked at him earnestly. "After that—'t is a question. Help me with thy good head, Pedro. If she would flee with me to Xauxa we would go to Father Tendilla—" Cristoval paused.

"She would flee with thee to Xauxa, my head upon it!" replied Pedro, with assurance. "Or to the moon, or to the farthest star—couldst thou furnish transportation. But after Xauxa and Father Tendilla—what next?"

"Either refuge in some remote province of Tavantinsuyu, or Panama. We could harbor in some village near San Miguel until a ship came in; then get aboard in secret. Only one thought goeth against my conscience, and that is of the peril and hardship to which Rava would be again exposed. Ah, *Madre*! I know not, Pedro—I hesitate. This flight would be not only from Pizarro's men, but perhaps from the Inca as well. I doubt not that she could find faithful supporters in

the venture—but it would be a struggle; to say naught of taking her from home, friends, and country, into another world. It is much to ask. But, what thinkst thou, old friend?"

"I think," replied Pedro, gravely, "that she could easier bear such suffering than her present sorrow. But you may not need to leave the country. The Inca may prove friendly."

"I fear his friendship would help little with Pizarro dominating."

"True!" said Pedro, shaking his head. "Thou must go to Panama—and thence to Spain, for thou'lt be safe no nearer. Now, weigh this for a plan: Thou'lt go to Cuzco. Doubtless Huallampo will furnish thee an escort. I will go with thee as far as Xauxa, wait for thy return with the Ñusta, then we will go to the coast together. I will watch at San Miguel for a ship, and will arrange thy passage with—the Señora de Peralta. I have some moderate savings, Cristoval,—enough to purchase the aid of a shipmaster. I can pay him double what he would get for thy head, and have some left to silence others. What sayst thou to't, *amigo*?"

Cristoval seized his hand, overcome with gratitude. "Pedro, thou'rt—"

"A cook!" interrupted Pedro, returning his grasp with sudden animation. "A cook shorn of a leg by the iniquity of Fate. A cook with but half his share of footprints. A pruned cook. A remnant. Naught more, Cristoval. But what thinkst thou of it?"

"By Saint Michael! Pedro, thou'rt—"

"A cook!" said Pedro again. "Let it go. Come! Discuss, comment, bandy a word or two about the plan. Thou 'rt staring like a choked calf."

Cristoval's face clouded. "It will not do, my good comrade," he said. "Thou must have no part in it, save with thy counsel. Thou hast already ventured too much for friendship's sake. The affair at Caxamalca might have cost thee dearly." Pedro had not told him of the thumbscrews. "And furthermore, I cannot use thy gold. I am penniless, and could never repay thee. Advise, and no more."

"Why, stew me to rags, Cristoval!" retorted Pedro, with irritation, "thou dost talk as if we were not friends."

"Nay! That is as far from my thoughts as from thine. But friendship—"

"Is friendship!" blurted the cook, and would hear no further objection. They considered it long and in detail; foresaw difficulties, and overcame them; wrought their plans into as great perfection as plans are often wrought—and in the event, as shall be seen, carried them as near to execution as human plans are often carried.

The project gave a fresh impulse to Cristoval's recovery. They disclosed their purpose to nobody, though to Huallampo and Maytalca the cavalier confided his wish to see the Ñusta Rava before leaving the country, and the *curaca* proffered his aid. Markumi should go, and as many other men as needed, with

supplies for the journey to Cuzco.

At last Pedro admitted grudgingly that his companion was fit to take the road; and against the *curaca's* earnest advice they pushed their preparations.

When the time for departure was at hand Cristoval found many an unlooked-for pang. He was known to every man, woman, and child of the valley; was looked upon by them with reverence, endeared to them as the protector of their Ñusta, by his unfailing courtesy, simplicity, and helpful interest; and finally, by their sympathy when he was lying cut to pieces by the Cañares. All had received a kind word from the Viracocha Cristoval, and not one of them but must bid him farewell with a heart-felt wish that the Sun would brighten his way. When he took leave of Maytalca the lady wept frankly, murmuring a prayer for his welfare and a message of love to Rava when he should see her again. The *curaca's* daughters, who had sat many an hour at his bedside, were not less affected.

Clad in armor which Markumi's zeal had brought to the splendor of silver, Cristoval at last rode with Pedro through the crowded streets at the head of their few retainers. They were attended to the edge of the village by the people, and for a mile beyond by the old *curaca*, who bade them farewell with warm assurance that while a roof remained in Xilcala they should find there a welcome and refuge.

At the head of the canyon through which flowed Xilcala stream Cristoval halted for a final look at the valley, here to find the sharpest pang of all. He turned with a sigh from its tranquillity, its beauty, and the thousand recollections, and rode into the defile with a presentiment that in leaving its peace to enter the gloomy gorge was a foreshadowing of what lay before him.

CHAPTER XXIX

A March and Another Reunion

The march down the canyon of the Xilcala was rapid, and on the second day they were near its debouchment into the valley of the Maranon, close to the great national highway leading to Cuzco. After this they proceeded with the utmost circumspection. By the end of the fifth day they had passed Lake Chinchaycocha and halted at Carhuacaya, in the valley of the Xauxa. It was a hamlet of two dozen houses, regularly laid out and with the usual *campata*, or square, on which stood the residence of the *curaca*, where the two Viracochas were received for

the night. Like many another village they passed, this had suffered severely at the hands of the ravaging Cañares who had followed Pizarro's march, and from Spaniards on their way to Cuzco, for recruits were already flowing in; but Pedro had stopped there on his way to Xilcala, and his reappearance was welcome.

On the following morning the party encountered an interruption wholly deranging their plans. Cristoval and Pedro were preparing for the journey when the *curaca* entered, showing some embarrassment. He greeted them cordially, but advised them not to leave that day. In fact, it would be impossible. The roads were occupied. The town—it was distressing—was surrounded by the troops of the Inca! Pedro whistled.

"By the fighting San Miguel!" exploded Cristoval, in Spanish. "We are prisoners, Pedro! What sayst thou to that?"

Pedro sat down. "Why, stew me!—like the ancient Roman soldier who was hit in the belly by a stone from a catapult, I have very little to say."

"Viracochas," said the *curaca*, earnestly, "I pray you have no uneasiness. The General Matopo commanding shall be informed of your rescue of the Ñusta Rava, Viracocha Cristoval, of which Markumi hath told me. That service will insure you against any danger soever."

"Danger! Then we might be in danger, is it so, *Curaca*? Are these troops marching against the Viracochas?"

"You will readily understand, Viracocha Cristoval, it is not permitted me to know."

Cristoval resumed his arming. "Well, it might be worse. If Pizarro had us pent in this fashion it would be a short shrift for me, Pedro, and belike, would call for some painful lying from thee to explain thine indiscretion in choice of company. But let us step out and see what is to be seen."

They found several Xilcalans at the outer door, watching a battalion just entering the square. The two Spaniards halted, struck by its martial appearance as it massed in the plaza.

An officer of middle age wearing a noble's ear ornaments was followed by a group of twenty or more, many with the same insignia, and all brilliant in the uniform of the Conibos, a northern tribe from the valley of the Huallaga. Beside the officer was the *curaca*, talking earnestly. The party turned aside from the direct line of march to permit the passage of their column, and halted. The *curaca* approached to summon the Spaniards.

The commander eyed the two mail-clad figures with interest, but the sight of Pedro's wooden leg required all his self-possession to avoid a display of astonishment. His salutation was not unfriendly, but the Spaniards were aware that they were prisoners. "Viracochas," said he, after the *curaca* had presented them, "it seemeth an ill return for our indebtedness, of which the *curaca* informeth me,

but it is necessary that you accompany us. I assure you that one who hath befriended the Ñusta Rava need fear nothing more than inconvenience. Were it in my discretion I would not impose even that; but I am responsible for the secrecy of the movement of my troops and you will understand the necessity which compelleth me. In order, however, to avoid undue restraint, I will accept your words that you make no effort to escape."

"Thou mayst depend upon us, my lord," said Cristoval. "There is, however, one request. I have an escort of Xilcalans whom I count as friends. Will my lord permit that they accompany me?"

"Gladly," said the general, "if they so choose. We shall meet to-night, Viracochas. May the Sun guard you!"

He moved off with his officers, leaving one to follow with the two captives, and they hastened to saddle. Taking leave of the *curaca*, they joined the waiting officer and, followed by the Xilcalans, fell into an interval between battalions.

The command went into bivouac late at night, and Matopo sent for his prisoners to join him at supper. Several subordinate officers shared the meal, and to them and to the old noble it was an incident, for these were the first they had seen of the Viracochas. Matopo soon became assured of Cristoval's sympathy with the cause of Rava's people, though the cavalier avoided direct expression, merely relating, at the general's request, the details of his association with Atahualpa and the subsequent enmity of Pizarro. When he remembered and drew forth the Inca's last gift, the fringe from the royal *llautu*, the effect was magical. The officers bent before it with reverence little less than the actual presence of the monarch would have inspired, and Cristoval found himself elevated to a dignity as great as it was unexpected. The half-forgotten trifle was a talisman.

"Viracocha Cristoval," said Matopo, gravely, as the cavalier replaced the potent cord, "thou bearest a warrant from the Inca. No man in Tavantinsuyu will withhold from it his recognition. It is a rare credential, and demandeth the confidence in its possessor reposed in him by the Inca himself. The Inca Atahualpa won his throne by arms, but he was the Inca. Thou hadst done well to show me the fringe this morning, but I will make what reparation is possible. Thou 'rt free, Viracocha."

This result was so unforeseen that Cristoval failed to comprehend the change in his situation, and the general repeated: "Thou 'rt free, Viracocha Cristoval, and I have only to ask that I be allowed to make thee amends."

"I thank thee, General Matopo. There hath been no inconvenience, for, as I have said, we were journeying toward Cuzco. But—my comrade?"

Matopo shook his head. "Mine authority can go no farther. I shall be compelled to retain him."

"Then with thy leave we will remain together."

Matopo's surprise was as evident as his relief. His relief was equal to his uneasiness, what there was of it, lest the secret movement of his troops might be imperilled by the Viracocha's liberation. "No need to ask my leave," he replied, quickly; "but you will go as my guests, and I believe I can promise that he will not be long deprived of his liberty."

Two weeks later the column approached the village of Abancay, where it would cross the river Apurimac. Cristoval and Pedro were walking with Matopo at the head of the main body, leading their steeds. As they neared the village they could see that it was occupied by the advance guard. As they descended into the plain a soldier came at top speed to announce that there were two Viracochas in the village, apparently not soldiers, and that there was some difficulty in securing them.

"Shall we ride forward, my Lord Matopo?" asked Cristoval.

"It would be well," replied the general, "else the Viracochas may lose their lives in resisting."

The two Spaniards were off at a gallop. The soldiers scattered before them, and they drew rein at the square. At the sight of the two Viracochas Pedro raised a shout:—

"The señora, by the infernal cook of cooks!—and Father Tendilla!"

The square was full of excited soldiers, leaving a swaying ring in the middle, occupied by the lady and the priest mounted on mules. The father had the reins of her steed, which was facing his own, plunging, rearing, and kicking incredibly at the surrounding line of Conibos who repelled it with their javelins. Its rider, clinging frantically to her pommel with one hand, half-blinded by her sombrero which had been jolted over her eyes, fitfully whirled her battle-axe with the other in fruitless efforts to reach the helmeted heads. She was red-faced, shaken, and storming. The poor priest, hatless and nearly unseated by every plunge of his companion's mule, tugged desperately at the reins, while half-a-dozen officers circled about, dodging the heels of the frenzied animal, and entirely helpless before a situation transcending their wildest dreams.

"*Brava*, Bolio! *Brava*, Bolio!" roared Pedro, pushing forward. "Strike for Spain! *Cristo y San Miguel*! Strike for Spain! *Bravamente*!"

At the familiar voice the axe ceased to whirl, and between plunges the señora tilted back her sombrero. "Pedro!" she shouted wildly, then gave attention to retaining her seat, while the mule delivered another succession of kicks. Cristoval motioned the soldiers back as he spurred into the ring. Pedro rode up, slipped his hand along the reins of her steed, seized them close to the bit, and stopped the plunging. Cristoval assisted the flustered lady to the ground, too breathless to speak. He quieted the blowing mule while Pedro and Father Tendilla dismounted. The former hastened to the agitated señora, and at last she

was able to gasp:—

"Pedro—on my soul!—hast dropped from heaven?"

"Heaven forbid!" said Pedro, surveying her with concern. "I'm crippled enough as 't is. But thou 'rt unhurt?"

"Oh, these heathens!" panted the señora.

"I've known Christians who were worse," said Pedro. "But, art sound and whole?"

"If I could but have reached one of them! But, blessed name! how comest thou here, Pedro?"

"Prisoner of war—like thyself. Art uninjured?"

"Like myself!" snorted the lady. "Who hath made me a prisoner of war? Prisoner of fiddle-de-dee! Drum-sticks!" She glared vindictively at the wondering soldiery. "Let one of them bite his tongue at me!"

"Bueno! There are only five thousand," remarked Pedro. "But tell me, what dost thou here?"

"Oh, Pedro, I am going to Cuzco to see that angel of a girl! The father took it in mind to go, so I came with him—but such a time! He hath been as much care as a baby."

"Calm yourself, my dear Señora."

The señora sniffed scornfully. "Is that Peralta? I scarce knew him without his beard. He seemeth friendly enough with these fripperied Indians. He might be in better company—and so mightst thou, Pedro. 'T is little credit to you both."

"We are prisoners, Señora."

"Prisoners, forsooth! Well, if I were a man! But thou 'rt too good-natured, Pedro, for thine own good. And thou 'rt a love to rescue me," she added, tenderly.

Pedro stepped back a pace and looked uneasily about. "Nay, Señora Bolio," he said, hastily, "it was not I. It was Peralta. Wait. I'll call him."

"Oh, thou'rt so modest, Pedro! I tell thee, it was thou! But hold! God ha' mercy! I had almost forgotten to tell thee. Thou 'rt undone! They have entered thy lodging in Xauxa, broken into thy chests, and taken thy belongings."

"Furies and devils!" exclaimed the cook, sharply. "Who have?"

"Those runnion pikemen from the fortress."

At once flashed over him the use he had planned to make of his savings in aiding Cristoval to escape. He spun around once on his peg and swore with such violence that the cavalier and Father Tendilla hurried up.

"My son, my son!" cried the priest, placing a hand upon his shoulder. "Thy tongue is imperilling thy soul."

"Name of a saint, Pedro! What hath happened?" demanded Cristoval, anxiously.

"Happened!" shouted Pedro. "Scurviness hath happened. Thievery hath

happened. Sack, plunder, housebreaking, and depredation have happened. Those rakehells of the infantry have robbed me. Oh, hoop me with hoops lest I burst before I've killed a pikeman!"

He ceased abruptly and went to his mule, leaving the señora to explain. She did so with brevity and emphasis, and Cristoval turned to the priest in disgust: "We've brought a mangy pack, Father Tendilla, to set loose upon these hapless people. They turn to robbing one another before they've done robbing the country." The father shook his head sadly, but made no reply.

The advance guard moved on, and Matopo passed with his officers, casting a curious glance at the señora as he bowed. She responded with a haughty inclination and compressed her lips. It required all the persuasive eloquence of her three countrymen to induce her to mount and enter the column; but finding separation from Pedro the alternative, she at last consented, declaring vigorously that the barbarian who undertook to make a prisoner of her would repent his insolence and remember the circumstance. She swung into her saddle, disdaining assistance, and they were soon on the march.

Now Cristoval's good heart was warmed by later news of Rava. He rode with Father Tendilla, listening with eagerness to the tale of her sojourn at Xauxa, given with detail and sympathy by the kindly old priest, who was glowing in his eulogies of the gentle proselyte. The cavalier's hundred repeated questions were patiently answered over and over, and before an hour Cristoval had unbosomed himself, candidly revealing his hope of escape with her from the country. The priest listened to the plan, and said:—

"Well, my son, it will be for the child a hazardous undertaking. However, it will be in the guidance of Heaven. I had thought the maiden might find refuge from her sorrows in a life of holiness, for which her spirit seemeth well adapted. If it be otherwise ordained, it would not beseem me to oppose, and I will do all in my power to further thy happiness and hers."

"I thank you, father," said Cristoval. "But do you know whether Rava is aware that I am living?"

"I know not. I have written to Father Valverde since I learned it from the youth whom thou didst send from Xilcala, but have had no reply. Cañares have been abroad, and communication uncertain. The messenger may not have passed them. I have come myself, therefore, thinking to bear the news, but it hath ended—thus,"—and he cast a look over the battalions.

"Doubtless we can send her word," said Cristoval. "Matopo saith she is likely to be at Yucay, where the Incas have a castle. I think we may reach her, good father."

"I pray it may be so, surely," replied Tendilla.

That night the command encamped on the elevated plain of Curahuasi,

awaiting the morrow to cross the Apurimac. Before daylight it was moving again, and shortly the head of the column was threading its way down the wall of the chasm whence rose the faint murmur of the torrent, thousands of feet below. The trail seemed to Cristoval a mere scratch on the cliff. At his elbow rose the rock-mass, so steep that scarcely a shrub found clinging-place, while almost beneath his stirrup the precipice dropped away to an abyss. The descent, at first moderate, became so rapid as it zig-zagged from point to point that every step threatened to plunge horse and rider headlong. Generations of wayfarers had worn the rock treacherously smooth, and he presently dismounted to lead his horse. The others followed his example, and he heard the señora whimpering to Pedro. Gingerly now he went, hugging closely to points which so crowded the path that his saddlebow was scraped by the overhanging wall. In places the descent was by steps hewn into the granite, down which his horse blundered perilously, menaced at every slip by a hideous fall into vacancy. Cristoval's eyes were drawn to the brink in resistless fascination, and he crept along with shrinking soul. He heard Pedro muttering: "Martyred saints—and spirits damned! This is what cometh—of being a cook!"

They were hours descending, but the hours seemed days. At length the path lost itself in the blackness of a cavern-mouth. Cristoval found himself in a reverberating tunnel driven three hundred yards through living rock. Openings on the right admitted air and the growing thunder of the torrent. In the open again for another giddy, stumbling clamber down a hundred fathoms; and the bridge! Cristoval whispered a prayer. From a narrow shelf it swung out over the chasm in a long, sweeping curve to its anchorage on the farther side, a mere gossamer swaying in the breeze and vibrating fearfully beneath the soldiers' tread. Cristoval quailed within his steel at its frailty. From a huge windlass on the platform beside him stretched three cables of four or five inches in thickness, forming the support for the narrow floor. Above and on either side was a smaller cable connected with the floor supports by ropes, and serving as guard-rails, though the security afforded was largely moral, the vertical spaces between the cords being large enough to admit of a fall through at any point.

As Cristoval looked out over the quivering one hundred and fifty feet of fragility, listening to the lugubrious creaking of the cables at their anchorage, his hardihood slowly oozed. The bridge was now clear for his passage. He swore a little in undertone, piously consigned himself to the Virgin's keeping, and led off. His horse sniffed at the footway with deep-drawn breaths and long, tremulous expirations, but followed at his word. A stiff breeze was blowing up the canyon, swinging the structure rhythmically through an arc of six or eight feet, and Cristoval's brain reeled as he glanced at the sinister, whirling rush of green and foam bellowing a hundred feet below. Steadying his eyes on a point ahead,

he picked his way out into the air. An age in crossing, but at last he neared the end. Here his weight and that of the horse shifted the sag of the cables so that the last few feet were a steep ascent with scant foothold; but he scrambled up, and with a sigh of relief, stood on solid ground. He looked back. Father Tendilla was following, leading his mule and holding his hat in place, the wind tossing and tearing at his robe, and the cavalier turned giddy again as he watched the old priest's slow advance over the narrow, swinging floor. Cristoval gave him a hand at the end, and fairly jerked him to safety on the shelf.

Pedro and the señora were to follow, and here occurred a pause. The lady balked. She seated herself on the windlass, swelling with negation.

"Cross that unholy thing of strings and straws, Pedro?" she exclaimed, indignantly. "Not if I were a spider! 'T is a device of the devil, and may the devil fly away with it, or roost upon it! It is no place for a Christian. I'll go round, and that's an end to 't!"

"Go round!" retorted Pedro, impatiently. "Thou'lt march four hundred leagues to go around, Señora."

"Then I'll go back."

"Impossible to go back. The trail is full."

"Then I'll sit here till 'tis empty."

"Oh, the fiend, woman! Dost not see they cannot pass for our mules? The column is waiting."

"Then let the column wait and twiddle its fingers! The column can wait till it turneth to a column of waiting mummies if it see fit, but I'll not put foot to that bridge!"

Pedro stared at her helplessly. The way was blocked. Ocallo with his mule was behind them, and the narrow platform was full, the column at a standstill, its head at a safe distance from the heels of the rearmost animal. Somewhere, Matopo was storming, his voice rising above the roar of the stream, and echoing and reëchoing weirdly between the granite walls. Cristoval was hailing, and shortly began to swear. The lady tossed her head, and pulling up a spear of grass, began to chew its end. Pedro laughed with exasperation; opened his mouth, but finding no expletives to fit the situation, closed it again and grew excessively red. The soldiers in the rear began to murmur. Pedro contained himself with an effort, and began sadly:—

"Well, so it must be, Señora! *Adiós*! I shall remember thee. I shall think of thee with a pang. I shall see thee ever in my darkest moments, sitting dreary amid the lonely majesty of the eternal mountains on an uncushioned windlass, a spear of grass thine only sustenance, whilst tempest and avalanche thunder about thee throughout the drift of years. *Adiós*, Señora! Thou'lt be in my dreams, a silent, graceful, but resolute form, waiting in solitude, holding the brittle remnants of a

pair of reins; at thy feet a shrunken, staring, decayed cadaver of a mule, giving voiceless, desiccated testimony of thine inflexibility. *Adiós*! *Adiós*! I go. Come, thou, my steadfast and faithful steed, we obey the pointed finger of destiny. *Fata nos nolentes trahunt*!"

Pedro turned away, and straining to produce a sob, fetched a hiccough, and led to the bridge. The lady, at first bewildered by his burst of gloomy eloquence, then touched by the profound melancholy with which it was delivered, melted from determination to tenderness. As he stepped upon the floor she rose, glanced about despairingly, and shouted:—

"Hold, Pedro, thou dear love of a man! I follow! Wait for me, thou poor thing—and the fiend take the bridge and its makers if it serve me not across!"

But at the terror of the swaying structure she faltered, and Pedro turned. "Nay, Señora!" he cried, in a voice of sad but gentle deprecation, and raising his hand, "'t is too much. I ask it not. Turn back."

For answer she sat down, and in her desperation heedless of exposure of limb, began sliding down the steep incline, clutching and moaning plaintively, the feminine now wholly uppermost. At last she neared Pedro's mule, and he called:—

"Stand up, my dear, and grasp his tail."

"Oh—God's mercy!—he will kick!" she replied, in a shuddering wail.

"Nay, stew me! a fly would not venture to kick out here," answered Pedro, with feeling. "Seize his tail!"

She did so, and with many a piteous whine and gasp, was at length across the abyss.

CHAPTER XXX

An Encounter on the Plain of Chita

Within a few days after the passage of the Apurimac Matopo crossed, by a rapid night march, the plateau of Chita, not many leagues from Cuzco. He moved with caution, and halted, near morning, at the eastern edge of the plain, awaiting daylight before the descent into the valley of the Urubamba where lay Ollantay-tambo, the rendezvous of the Inca's forces and his objective.

The column moved at sunrise. Below, a full mile almost straight down, spread the floor of the valley. The road was a masterpiece of engineering. At

points it was hewn out of the solid rock; at others, supported by masonry; but everywhere of even breadth and gradient, and smoothly paved. Cristoval soon had a view of a distant town which Matopo said was Urubamba, clinging to the lower slopes of the opposite mountains, and near it the palace of Yucay, faintly visible. He saw it with a heart-throb, for here might be Rava.

Upon reaching the plain the command went into bivouac. Three days of forced marches had been exhausting, and at the earliest moment possible Cristoval disarmed, stretched himself upon his cloak under a terrace wall, and was soon asleep. He was roused by a Conibo. The sun, far past the meridian, apprised him that he had slept long.

"Viracocha," said the soldier, as the cavalier sat up, "the general would see you at once."

Cristoval noticed the man's perturbation, and gathered up his cloak to follow. He saw signs of unusual agitation among the Conibos, and that the few still sleeping were being roused. Those awake were gathered in knots, some conversing excitedly, but most were standing about, silent and profoundly depressed. Those he passed glanced at him darkly and turned away, some with muttered words which he could not hear. The cavalier, though wondering, was little disturbed; but he grew more concerned at the gloom and gravity of Matopo and his assembled officers. As he drew near he saw several nobles in the group quite unknown to him, who had apparently just arrived.

"*Diós*! Something hath gone awry," he said to himself, and hurried his steps. Matopo said abruptly,

"Viracocha, the Inca hath been made a prisoner."

Cristoval stopped, thunderstruck, and looked about the grim-faced circle. For a moment he was speechless, then demanded sharply: "A prisoner, sayst thou! Where is he a prisoner? Who hath made him prisoner?"

"Ah, who!" returned Matopo, fiercely. "Who but the Viracochas? He is in the Sachsahuaman. He was taken on his way to Ollantaytambo. The Auqui Paullo, the Ñustas, and most of his household are held in the palace at Cuzco, with—"

Cristoval interrupted him with a savage oath. "The Ñusta Rava? Is she again in the power of those hell-hounds?"

"All who were within the palace. Guards were put around it the moment it was known that the Inca had left the city."

Cristoval stood glowering, observed with some astonishment by the strangers, who, although already aware of his identity, were unprepared for his demonstration, and still less so for his vehement demand:—

"Matopo, what dost purpose? Whatever it may be must be quickly done, for I tell thee, the Inca's life is not worth a hair among those miscreants, and should

they suspect preparations for war it would not be worth—" and he snapped his fingers. "What is thy purpose?"

"Viracocha, this is my Lord Quehuar," said Matopo, indicating the noble beside him. "In the absence of the Inca he is in command."

The cavalier turned to him with as much force as he had addressed Matopo. "Lord Quehuar, if the movement of thy troops is known in Cuzco, there is not an hour to lose. The Pizarros will hesitate less to kill the Inca than in killing Atahualpa. Thou must act without delay. Have measures been taken for his rescue?"

The old noble hesitated before replying. But there was that in Cristoval's manner, in his vigorous intensity of speech, and his total unconsciousness of any consideration other than the Inca's danger, that banished doubt and commanded deference. The old Indio felt it, and without loss of dignity.

"No steps have yet been taken, Viracocha," he said, "for we have just been released from Cuzco. Nothing is known of the assembling of the Inca's troops. We have arrived at no determination. The calamity is overpowering."

Cristoval took a step forward as he answered, "The calamity will grow hourly, Lord Quehuar. The Inca must be released. Is the fortress strongly garrisoned?"

"Not strongly. Some thirty Viracochas."

"Good!" cried Cristoval. "Give me a hundred men and some one who knoweth the fortress, and we will release him.—*Hola*, Pedro!"

"*Aqui*! Here!" answered the approaching cook. "What is to do now? I have been shaken and thumped, and despoiled of sleep worth a *castellano* the minute. What is wrong, Cristoval?"

Cristoval replied in Quichua, "The Inca hath been imprisoned, and the Ñusta Rava is again in toils." Pedro halted with an exclamation, and Cristoval continued, "I say that with a hundred followers we can release him, Pedro. What sayst thou—wilt go?"

"Thou knowest, Cristoval!" replied the cook, with force. "But hast forgotten that I am myself a prisoner?"

Cristoval faced Matopo and demanded, "What of this, my lord? Wilt accept his word?"

The general signified his willingness emphatically, and Cristoval again turned to Quehuar with impetuosity: "My Lord Quehuar, permit us to march to-night."

Mocho, the fiery, strode forward. "Let me take a battalion of my Antis, General. I know the fortress to the last stone."

Quehuar deliberated, and turned to the other nobles. "My lords, we will consider it. Viracochas, we thank you for the offer of your swords." He bowed.

Taking Pedro's arm, Cristoval withdrew.

The conference was prolonged. Doubts were expressed by some concerning the prudence of trusting a Viracocha, and Matopo was questioned closely. Markumi and the other Xilcalans were summoned, and finally, Cristoval himself. His manifest sincerity determined the matter, and a *chasqui* was sent speeding to Ollantaytambo, some hours away, bearing a command from Mocho to his Antis.

Upon Pedro fell the task of apprising the señora of a short expedition with Cristoval, and of persuading her to accompany Matopo to Ollantaytambo. This the cook achieved with rare diplomacy. The lady, vehement in her obduracy for a time, in the end consented, and with Father Tendilla, marched with the Conibos that afternoon. The Antis arrived at nightfall, two hundred strong, the pick of Mocho's warriors. At dawn the expedition moved, with Cristoval and Pedro beside Mocho at its head.

Leaving the valley for the plateau of Chita, they took the direct road to the capital. Not long after midday a scout came in to say that two mounted Viracochas, accompanied by a third man on foot, were approaching from the direction of Cuzco. The two riders were in armor and bore lances. The pedestrian was a native, and appeared to be captive. Mocho heard the report and cast a critical glance over the country about. Some distance ahead was a low plain, boggy in spots beside the road, and surrounded by broken, rocky knolls. With a directness gratifying to Cristoval's soldierly taste, Mocho broke his command into parties to surround the plain, with orders to close upon it by squads when the strangers had reached the middle, and to cover, especially, gullies and slopes which might offer avenue for flight. Enough were retained to hold the road, and they retired to a rise of ground which concealed them from the oncoming party. Cristoval looked about in surprise. The two hundred had vanished as if by magic.

The wait was not long, and as the strangers descended the opposite slope Cristoval and Pedro spurred forward. There was some surprise at their sudden appearance, but the trio did not halt. Cristoval and his companion were first to reach the middle of the plain, and drew rein to await the strangers, who advanced without suspicion. Cristoval observed that the man on foot was a noble, and seemingly little more than a youth.

Presently one of the two mounted Spaniards hailed, and Cristoval dropped his visor with the word: "Mendoza, by the saints!" Pedro grunted his surprise and followed the example, but neither replied. The movement and silence seemed to excite uneasiness, for the trio slowed up, and Mendoza called again:—

"*Hola, amigos*! How far to Chinchero?"

Cristoval was silent, and after consultation the others advanced scowling. At a few paces they halted, and Mendoza demanded: "Come! Have ye no tongues, you two? If ye have, find them; or move aside and give us way. *Diablo*! Is it thou,

cook?" He had caught sight of Pedro's peg, and surveyed him in astonishment, then Cristoval, whom he failed to recognize in De Valera's armor.

Cristoval saluted, first the noble, and then, with deliberation, each of the two cavaliers, saying graciously: "Señores, your right of way endeth here. We have waited to inform you."

Mendoza started. "Ha! Peralta! God's life!—wilt dispute me passage? Stand aside, thou—"

"Gently, Señor!" interrupted Cristoval, with increased suavity. "Thy way endeth here! Canst doubt it?" He waved his hand toward the hills, and the two followed his gesture with an exclamation. The Antis were closing rapidly from all sides. The young Indio looked at the advancing warriors with no less astonishment. Cristoval went on:—

"However, Señor Mendoza, the circumstance need not prevent our personal settlement of the question of thy right of way. Here is a fair level of road—"

"Trapped, by the fiend!" bellowed Mendoza, and he turned savagely upon the noble. "Hast played us, thou dog? Well done! But—" He cast aside his lance and drew his sword—

A most sudden man, this Cristoval. He was upon Mendoza almost before the sword was bared, mace in hand. His first blow crashed upon the sword-wrist, and the murderous weapon clanged upon the roadway. The second followed like lightning, and Mendoza rolled from his saddle with a shattered helmet, while the riderless horse dashed across the plain. The second cavalier whirled his steed to fly, when Pedro charged him, struck him in mid-volt, and horse and rider went down before the impact.

The young noble had sprung back out of danger, bewildered, and hardly less shocked by the unexpected violence and clangor than if the earth had suddenly opened. Cristoval dismounted and was bending over Mendoza, unable to determine whether the man was dead, and not much concerned. The other rider was sitting up, in some disorder of mind, with Pedro hovering over him, lance in rest, admonishing him gently that he was expected to preserve a quiet demeanor. The Antis had closed upon the group, and Cristoval became aware of a hush in the encircling line. Every man was upon his knees. Mocho was just rising from a prostration before the young Indio.

"*El Inca!*" ejaculated Pedro. "God bless my soul!"

Cristoval started. He had scarcely noticed the youth, except to observe that he wore the ear ornaments of one of rank; but now he saw before him a replica of the features of Rava, darker, ruggedly masculine, but still the well-remembered traits. The *llauta* was absent. The young monarch turned from Mocho and spoke a word to the Antis, who rose with a shout, tossing shields and javelins in a frenzy of jubilation, as he advanced to the astonished Cristoval.

"Viracocha," he said, as he offered his hand, scrutinizing the cavalier's face. "I owe thee my life. My Lord Mocho, tell me whom I am to thank."

"The Viracocha Cristoval, Sapa Inca," replied Mocho, "to whom Tavantinsuyu is—"

He stopped. The Inca had dropped Cristoval's hand as if stung, his face suddenly darkening with enmity. Cristoval stiffened, and his face slowly reddened at the affront. There was a flash in his eyes as they met the frown, and he formally saluted, saying:—

"The Inca Manco oweth me nothing."

Manco turned away abruptly. Remembered his obligation, and again faced the cavalier, as he said, without gratitude and with an effort plainly visible: "You have saved my life, Viracocha. My Lord Mocho, see that he and his companion are suitably rewarded. Assemble thy men."

He moved away burdened by a debt heavier upon his proud heart than all the insults borne at Viracocha hands; haunted by the crucifix seen on Rava's bosom—placed there by the one for whose death he had given fervent thanks to Inti a hundred times: by the hand which had now saved him from the sword of one whom he hated less. Black thoughts, with blacker ones beneath: his liberty a loathed thing! He pushed on alone, far in advance of the column which Mocho was hurriedly forming.

Cristoval glanced after him, watched the Antis gathering up Mendoza, who was groaning feebly; saw the other Spaniard secured, and as the column moved off, turned to Pedro who was regarding him with inquiry.

"By the saints, Pedro, I have little taste for such a host. I misdoubt our welcome. However," he added, after a moment's gloomy thought, "I see no help for it." He recovered his lance, which he had dropped to catch up his mace, mounted, and they rode after the column.

Mocho joined them at the first halt. His manner betrayed his uneasiness at the reception accorded the two Spaniards by his master, and he hastened to say: "The Inca is not yet aware of all his indebtedness, Viracochas; but I will make him so. You will not find him ungrateful." Cristoval inclined his head gravely, presently asking how the monarch had effected his release.

"By ruse," answered Mocho. "He confided to the new commander of the Viracochas, Hernando Pizarro, that there is treasure concealed near Yucay, and was freed to guide the two soldiers to the hiding-place."

"Aha!" said Cristoval. "Hernando back! Well, his greed hath overreached. What is in store for the Viracochas who came with the Inca?—death, no doubt?"

"They will be left at Chinchero to make their way back to Cuzco as soon as the injured one is able to walk," replied Mocho. Cristoval was surprised, but made no comment.

It was near midnight when Urubamba was reached, and having despatched heralds to announce the Inca, the command moved on to Yucay. The palace occupied a rocky shelf far above the valley. It was approached by a road which wound upward from terrace to terrace through an immense park, and after a tedious ascent the great rambling group of buildings rose at the head of the avenue. In a brightly lighted court large enough for a regiment the escort halted, and the Inca passed between prostrate menials to his apartments, accompanied by Mocho. On the latter's return the two Spaniards were led to quarters in a distant part of the building, followed by a corps of servants.

Their apartment consisted of a large salon with sleeping-rooms adjoining. It was already alight. Mocho was depressed, but took leave with cordiality, promising to join them early the following day. A few minutes later refreshments were brought. As they were about to sit Pedro inquired,

"Canst feed thyself, Cristoval?"

"Assuredly!" replied Cristoval, with mild surprise. "Why not?"

"So can I," said Pedro. "Canst get to bed without assistance?"

"Nonsense, Pedro! What dost think?—that I may drink too much?"

"Then in the name of a saint, dismiss these servants! It neither aideth me to eat to have twelve men observing me how I do it, nor my digestion afterwards. Tell them to go. They need rest." Cristoval smiled, indicated to the attendants that they were no longer needed, and Pedro sat with evident relief. "That," he observed, "is one of the reasons why I would not be a king. But now we can eat in comfort and spontaneously as becometh hungry men, notwithstanding the iciness of His Majesty. Hast guessed at the cause of that, Cristoval?"

"I've guessed in a hundred guesses, but can make naught of it. He looked not unfriendly until he heard my name. It may be that Pizarro hath smirched it with evil report. The name liked him not, 't is certain, and we may cast about for the reason. Let it go. But now, Pedro, he is free, and that meaneth war against Pizarro. Thou knowest my purpose to offer my sword."

Pedro nodded.

"It may be," continued Cristoval, "this enmity of the Inca will deny me privilege, though I scarce can think it. If not, I will fight with Mocho, and in that event, old friend, we are near to parting."

"Ah!" said Pedro, without looking up.

"Thy friendship," Cristoval went on, "hath dragged thee into rough places and more dangers than one. Mine for thee is the only return I have been able to make. It hath profited thee little, but I swear to thee, Pedro, it is warmer than I ever felt for any other man, and it will go sorely to part, *amigo*." Cristoval extended his hand over the table. Pedro gave it a wrench, and starting to his feet, pegged rapidly across the room and back. He halted before Cristoval with face

slightly flushed, and surveyed him sternly.

"Cristoval," he growled, "sometimes thou growest wearisome. Curse it, dost think my friendship hath gone halt, like myself? Hath it travelled so far and now can go no farther? Who hath said so?"

"Nay! God forbid that I should think it," said Cristoval, rising. "But look thou, Pedro, this will be war, and against countrymen. Thou hast no quarrel."

"No?" returned Pedro, remembering again his crushed thumbs and ravaged chests. "But mayhap I have. If not, then one shall not be long wanting."

What further protest Cristoval would have made was interrupted by a rap on the door, and he opened it to Mocho. The general was disturbed and said quickly, "My friend Cristoval, the Inca would see thee immediately."

"What!" exclaimed the cavalier. "Doth he not sleep? It is near the morning."

"He hath not slept," said Mocho.

Cristoval threw his cloak over his shoulders and followed him out.

CHAPTER XXXI

Inca and Conquistador

The Inca Manco did not sleep. His attendants dismissed, he found himself alone with torturing thoughts. Lashed, stung, and seared by the recollection of a thousand Spanish outrages, of the humiliations during his imprisonment, his mind seethed with purpose of vengeance, with plans of action, and impatience for their execution. Most merciless of all was the thought that beneath his very roof were sheltered two of the hated aliens, harbored through the demands of a gratitude which he could not feel. And one of them (the one who had seduced Rava from her faith in the ancient gods, whom he had seen her mourning with he knew not—O, Inti!—what secret cause of grief, and whom he would have gladly given to death) had imposed upon him the final obligation! The sense of it bit to his proud soul like the thrust of a javelin. He would have seen this Viracocha hurled from a precipice as he would a common criminal, but the debt was there, burdening his heart like a monstrous incubus. He strode about, clutching his head, now resolved to issue a fell command, now restrained by the stern injunction of honor. The Viracocha was his guest; had, moreover, said Mocho, been zealous for storming the Sachsahuaman; had served Tavantinsuyu in other ways, and professed a wish to serve still further. With what motive, this allegiance? Ah!

what motive could a Viracocha have but one?—the hope of gold! He was merely more astute than his fellows, and of deeper cunning; but the incentive was, could be nothing else. Then this debt could be acquitted!—should be acquitted that very hour! The Viracocha should have his gold and be gone. At once! Before the sun should find him beneath the roofs of Yucay!

Manco hastened to the door. He threw it open, restrained the sentinels with impatience from their obeisance, and sent one in hot haste for Mocho. The general was soon in the royal chamber. Manco stood in the middle of the floor, hot-eyed and scowling.

"Fetch the Viracocha!" he cried, impetuously, as Mocho appeared. "Hasten—the one called Cristoval—and—I will see him alone, Mocho."

Mocho hurried away, wondering and disturbed. The Inca saw the door closed, and became active. On his table was his untouched supper, served on plates and salvers of massive gold. He seized them, opened an outer door, flung out their contents, and stacked the utensils in a glowing heap. In an adjoining room were toilet articles of precious weight. They were piled beside the table service. From the niches in the walls he snatched the vases, hurled out the plants and soil, and bore them, an armful of wealth, to the stack on the table. From a chest he tossed out a fortune in jewelled armlets, wristlets, and girdles. From the walls he tore their decorations, bending and crushing them into shapelessness.

He worked eagerly, casting the articles upon the heap with scorn for the object for which they were being collected, and hating them for their worth to his enemies. As he deposited the last he heard steps, and turned to face the unwelcome guest. Cristoval was ushered in by Mocho, who retired at once, closing the door. The cavalier saluted, observing the half-suppressed agitation on the Inca's face. The monarch made slight acknowledgment, noting quickly that he wore the native costume. Manco stood beside the treasure, darkly watchful for the Spaniard's expression at sight of the gold. Cristoval glanced at the pile as he entered, but gave it no further look, regarding Manco with calm attentiveness. Unexpectedly the latter found it not easy to begin. There was a dignity in the bearing of this Viracocha which forbade the tender of the treasure and abrupt dismissal ready to his tongue a second before. The silence had become onerous when he said at last:—

"Viracocha, I have summoned you to say once more that I am in your debt. Lord Mocho hath told me all he knoweth. I am aware of your service to—to one of my kin. Yesterday you added further to my obligation, and I desire to discharge it immediately, and if possible, to your satisfaction."

The bitterness in the words and the curl of lip did not escape the cavalier, who replied, coldly: "Lord Inca, there existeth no obligation to be discharged. You will pardon my denial that any act of mine hath imposed a debt upon the

Inca Manco."

The Inca made no pretence of concealing the disdain with which he received the answer and waved it aside. Stepping back from the table, he pointed at the pile of gold and said brusquely, "Take it!"

But the execrable lighting of the Spaniard's face for which he looked, and had seen so often on those of Pizarro and his companions, was absent. Cristoval ignored the treasure, but the color flashed into his face in resentment of Manco's tone and manner. "Your gold hath no worth to me, my Lord Inca," he said, with slow emphasis. "I ask no favor but your authority to pass, to-night, the guards about the palace."

"Do you reject it?" demanded Manco, with a frown.

"I beg my Lord Inca's gracious leave to decline it."

"It is not enough!" exclaimed Manco, with contempt. "Then I will increase it."

"I fear my lord doth not get my meaning," replied Cristoval, with an even voice that would have cautioned one acquainted with its significance. "I repeat, the gold is of no use to me."

Manco's frown darkened. "Then what will you, Viracocha?" he cried, impatiently. "Name it! It shall be yours. If this gold is not enough, I will load your beast with all he can bear away. But let me acquit this debt before the sun riseth upon it again."

The scorn was now Cristoval's. It burned in his steady eyes as he replied quietly: "I fear, my lord, that you will compel me to speak plainly, and I would not. If I have been of service, I beg you will believe that I should feel it depreciated by the acceptance of reward. It should be unnecessary for me to say more to a soldier, my Lord Inca."

Manco scarcely heeded his words. In his impatience to be done their sense was quite lost. His experience with the sordid and greedy Spaniards made it impossible for him to believe this one less so. He rejoined hotly: "You saved my life, Viracocha! Why?"

Cristoval answered with patience. "I was unaware that it was you, my lord. It calleth not even for your thanks."

Manco flushed, but went on. "You were about to take part in an undertaking to release me from prison. Again, why? Lord Mocho hath said that you would offer your sword to Tavantinsuyu. Why, Viracocha? Is it without hope of reward, all this? Are you of so different fibre from the plunderers of Cuzco?" He turned away with a gesture of contemptuous disbelief.

Cristoval eyed him in silence, struggling to restrain his anger at the imputation of venality. When he spoke the Inca faced him again, and met a look grown intense.

"Lord Inca Manco," said the cavalier, "you have questioned my motives. It is not my wont to defend them—with words; nor will I defend them now further than to say that it was my purpose to offer my sword without thought of reward, and less to aid you and your cause, just though it is, than to rescue one whom you hold dear—the Ñusta Rava."

At the name the Inca's face grew livid. "Ah!" he exclaimed, his voice lowered and husky with passion. "One whom I hold dear! One whom I held dear above all on earth until she came to me defiled by your accursed love, broken-hearted, wearing the symbol of your damnable belief!"

His rage was not more quick than that of Cristoval, but the latter's years gave him better self-control. The cavalier, pausing to hold himself, replied: "Defiled, my Lord Inca! 'T is a black and shameful word, applied to the Ñusta Rava, and by the great Heaven, the man with whom I could fight on equal footing should not leave this room alive with the word unswallowed!"

The Inca snatched the *llautu* from his head and cast it aside. He went out, returning instantly with a pair of the short native swords. He thrust the hilts toward the cavalier.

"Choose!" he cried, hoarsely.

Cristoval's eyes blazed, and he stretched out his hand to seize the weapon. Arrested the motion, and drawing back, stood surveying the maddened youth in silence. Fight this prince, already laden with unnumbered cares, the victim of inconceivable wrongs, and on the eve of leading a life-and-death struggle to save his people? Turn a sword upon the brother of Rava?

"Choose!" commanded Manco, passionately. "Doth the Viracocha hesitate?"

Cristoval grasped a sword, and as the Inca stepped back to guard, threw it upon the table. "My lord," he said, "I have no mind to fight."

Manco's surprise gave way to quick access of anger. "What mean you, Viracocha?" he demanded, hotly. "Is this some new form of insult?"

"God forbid!" said Cristoval.

For a moment the monarch glared at him, speechless with rage and uncertainty. "Do I look upon a coward?" he asked, slowly, the scorn deepening in his eyes.

Cristoval knew that the stigma must follow his refusal, yet he started and reddened at the word. "A coward! No, my Lord Inca, not that!" he replied, meeting steadily the look of contempt and enmity. "Not a coward; and I believe you cannot think it." During a fraction of a second he felt the penetrating gaze which might have been Rava's. It passed, and Manco's brow darkened again. He was about to speak, but Cristoval raised his hand. "Lord Inca Manco," he said, gravely, "we have no quarrel. I divined but now the nature of what you hold as grievance.

I call upon Heaven to witness that the Ñusta Rava hath had from me naught but honor in mine every thought."

"Honor!" repeated Manco, with renewed scorn. "Honor in a Viracocha?"

"Nay, my lord! You have heard me say that I will not fight," returned the cavalier. Manco colored under the reproof, and Cristoval went on, "There is honor even among Viracochas, and something more than lust of gold, God knoweth!" He paused again. "You spoke of the symbol the Ñusta Rava wore. I tell you, Prince, that if you come not to the faith, it betokeneth you will go upon your bended knees on the hot pavement of hell and give up thanks that your sister hath been spared your fate!" Then, with a gesture: "But I say once more, Lord Inca, we have no quarrel. We have a common enemy."

Again Manco's searching look, but he was silent, studying the man before him. Here, assuredly, was a Viracocha who differed from his kind. He had neither swaggered nor sneered. He spoke with a dignity and candor that forced respect. In his bearing was a calm pride and consciousness of strength which had baffled the unconcealed hate and bitterness with which he had been received. The frank honesty of his eyes had lent support to his words. Manco's youth had not given him a knowledge of men, and least of all could he fathom a Spaniard; but his own ingenuous temperament, shamefully as it had been abused, made him quick in an intuition that he had misjudged. But this was in his thoughts as an undercurrent. Before him still was a Viracocha. He tossed his sword beside its fellow, and demanded:—

"Why are you here? Of what concern to you is the rescue of the Ñusta Rava?"

Candidly Cristoval faced the rights of a brother. "Of deep concern, my lord. So deep that I overlook the manner of your questions and answer them," he replied, bluntly. "So deep that I have proffered my service, my life, if need be, to Tavantinsuyu in her behalf."

Hostility returned to Manco's eyes. He surveyed the cavalier for a moment before replying coldly, "The Ñusta Rava is the daughter of an Inca, Viracocha."

"I am a *caballero* of Spain, my Lord Inca."

In silence contended the pride of two races. On the one hand, an autocrat absolute, master of an empire, ruler of multitudes—but an Indian. On the other, a soldier, an adventurer, but a Caucasian—a Conquistador. Upon the monarch, unseen, unfelt, fell the shadow of Destiny.

There was no wavering in the eyes of either. In the stern, self-possessed cavalier the Inca saw and was compelled to acknowledge, an indefinable superiority which eluded him—the genius of a breed of subjugators. Withal, there was no arrogance in this Spaniard's face; only the grave serenity of a lofty mind, a strength of spirit which rose above the distinction of the temporal rank of the

Peruvian and all his might. On his own part, Cristoval beheld a kingliness ingrained: a majesty as natural as the air that Manco breathed.

Cristoval broke the pause. "My Lord Inca, I requested, a moment ago, your gracious leave to pass the guards."

Manco seemed not to have heard, but stood in gloomy meditation. Cristoval was about to speak again when the Inca replied with abruptness, "It is my will, Viracocha, that you remain within the palace."

Cristoval bowed, and again encountered the look of profound scrutiny. Manco inclined his head, and the cavalier withdrew.

CHAPTER XXXII

The Storm Breaks

Pedro was asleep in his chair, but roused when Cristoval laid a hand upon his shoulder.

"Old friend," said the latter, "we are prisoners."

Pedro sat up, regarding his companion with incredulity. "Prisoners again, sayst thou, Cristoval?"

"Prisoners! I asked the Inca's leave to quit the palace at once, and was denied."

"At once! To-night?" demanded Pedro. "Well, then stew me if I'm not glad thou wast denied! Here is our supper, scarce touched. Here are two beds, immaculate. Cristoval, thou 'rt rash, hot-headed, and too impetuous by far! Now what if the Inca had given thee thy leave?"

"We should have taken it and gone," replied Cristoval.

"*Como asi*! Just so," said the cook, in a tone of reproach. "We should have taken it and gone—supperless, bedless, two wanderers by night. As for being prisoners, the news would have kept until morning, and I for one, would have slept none the worse."

Cristoval regarded him moodily. "Gods, but thou hast philosophy, for a captive cook!"

"Philosophy!" retorted Pedro; "'t is common sense. But come! Let us fall to, and thou tell me whilst we eat."

They fell to, and Cristoval recounted the interview. At its close Pedro remarked comfortingly: "Well, if this is durance, Cristoval, I've experienced worse,

and so hast thou. Which bed wilt have? They're alike. Shall we toss for it? I have a *maravedi*."

"*Madre*! Thou'rt a cheerful cook," returned Cristoval, glumly.

They tossed for beds, sought them presently, and while Cristoval lay restless and pondering, Pedro's peaceful snore resounded through the halls of the Incas.

The cavalier was awakened next morning by the voice of Pedro in the outer room, addressing an attendant and apparently amending his salutation into Christian terms.

"Say, rather, 'May the Virgin guard you'; or, more briefly, '*Dominus vobiscum*.' Either is good, and the sooner thou learnest them the better for thy soul. Is that our breakfast? Art sure? Hast not strayed into the wrong room? Hum! Well, it hath little of the look of the prison fare I've—heard tell of, for a surety! Pleased with it, boy! Why, I'm pleased from crop to tail-feathers, and that's clear through! A mere saying, my lad. Heed it not. Ah! My leg? It hath thine admiration? In my country 't is worn as a mark of transcendent virtue. Few attain it. That will do. Just leave the door open when thou goest out."

Presently Cristoval heard a low whistle of surprise, and Pedro stumped hurriedly to his door. "Cristoval!" whispered the cook, "Cristoval! He did it!"

"He did what?" demanded Cristoval.

"Left the door open, or I'm a scullion! Stir thyself!"

The cavalier stepped out. The door was broad open, admitting sunlight, perfume, and the sound of the fountain in the court. "Move, man, and we're free!" exclaimed Pedro, urgently. "There is not a soul in the patio."

"Useless, Pedro!" said Cristoval, turning away. "The place is surrounded by guards, and the valley full of troops. We should not stir five hundred yards."

"Oh, the fiend! We can try. 'T is a flaunt in the face of Providence not to try!" He looked stealthily into the court and drew back with an exclamation. "Here cometh Mocho! Shall I throttle him?"

"No!" thundered Cristoval.

Pedro shrugged. "*Amigo*, thou 'rt an ass!—with asinine propensities for thorns and thistles." He pegged across the room and seated himself with some violence, muttering, "This is what cometh of being a cook."

Mocho entered. "My friends," said he hastily, after their greetings, "we move in an hour toward Cuzco. The Inca hath gone to Ollantaytambo with Quehuar and Yumaquilque, who came this morning. The Antis are on the march."

"We, my Lord Mocho!" said Cristoval. "We—Pedro and myself—are prisoners. The Inca refused liberty to leave the palace."

Mocho shook his head with a smile. "No, Viracocha Cristoval. There was a council at dawn when the generals arrived, and the Inca hath accepted your

service. In truth, you were not prisoners. The Inca could not so soon forget."

Within the hour the two Spaniards were leading down through the park to the valley with Mocho, and the latter said, "Viracocha Cristoval, the Antis are to take the Sachsahuaman."

Cristoval nodded. "Count us with them, Lord Mocho," he said briefly.

A few days later a foraging party of Spanish pikemen and Cañares leaving Cuzco by the Cuntisuyu road at dawn found its way opposed outside the suburb of Chaquill-Chaca by a body of Peruvian archers. The sergeant in command halted in astonishment, then with an imprecation ordered his men forward to cut a way through. Before half-a-dozen paces had been covered a flurry of arrows whizzed into their ranks. The sergeant ordered a charge, met at quarter bow-shot by a volley, and the head of his detail melted. Another discharge, and the foragers reeled, broke, and stampeded toward the city. They dashed through the dim streets crying the alarm and reached the square just as the garrison of the Sachsahuaman rushed into it from the north in wild disorder. The fortress had been surprised by an overwhelming force, and the Spaniards had fled without a blow. A few minutes later half a score of wounded straggled in, some borne by comrades. A number had been left within the fortification, dead or captive, and others had dropped along the road. Now, from the suburbs on the west and south came the distant howling of the Cañares. A soldier burst into the sleeping-room of Hernando Pizarro, admitting with him a confusion of shouts from the square and the blare of trumpets sounding to arms.

"We are attacked!" cried the soldier. "The fortress hath fallen, and the city is surrounded."

Hernando was out of bed at a bound. As he rushed out half-dressed, a horde of retreating Cañares swarmed into the square, some wounded, some naked, many unarmed, and all in panic, their savage clamor drowning the shouts of the Spanish officers struggling to form the companies. For a space it was a scene of madness. The Cañares, part terror-stricken by the suddenness of the attack, part infuriated by wounds and the sight of blood, whirled in the square like wild cattle, breaking the forming lines of the infantry, struck at by angry pikemen, fighting back, and howling. In a moment began a sputtering zip of arrows from outside, with here and there an answering shriek and plunge of some man hit, and the confusion rose to pandemonium. The sputtering increased; became a steady rain of missiles searching every yard of the place, their flight invisible in the twilight, making the vicious whir, or sharp, angry snap as they glanced on the pavement or from the walls, the more sinister. The Cañares broke for shelter in the halls of the palace of Viracocha, followed by the infantry and Candia's men dragging their guns. Here the lines were hastily reformed. A few cavaliers were in the court, already mounted; but a few only, for Juan Pizarro had gone, three

days before, with almost the entire strength of the horse in a fruitless pursuit of the Inca Manco, whose rescue had been reported by the battered Mendoza and his companion.

Hernando had gotten into armor in some fashion, and was now in the saddle, adjusting his helmet while he bellowed commands. His handful of cavalry clattered after him into the hail-swept square. The infantry, not two hundred of them in all, closed in behind. No hesitancy here, but grim resolution to fight whatever odds they might find; an unreserved, deadly willingness to fight, though the legions of all heathendom were arrayed against them.

For an hour the plaza roared, thundered, and trembled; was finally cleared. The warriors of the Inca had fought with courage almost superhuman, but had been met with steel, by the crushing weight of cavalry, by the fire and havoc of guns. They retreated to the streets, and the streets were swept by falconet and arquebus. They were driven to the suburbs—and the attack had failed.

But gloom, almost despair, was with the victors. Toward night, as the city grew quiet, Hernando summoned his officers in council in the square. They gathered about him, wounded, exhausted, and filthy with carnage, scowling sullenly beneath their lifted visors, morose and taciturn. The little said was scarcely heeded, their sombre glances turning to the grim walls of the Sachsahuaman, or to the hills around the city, now dark with the legions of the Inca. Hernando heard the reports of the wounded and dead, made no comment, and the council grew dumb. The storm had broken with such fury, with unexpectedness so entire, and its apparent magnitude was so great, that hearts before unknown to fear were filled with dread. The minds of the counsellors were stunned. The few words ventured by one or another were flat in their inadequacy, and were answered by silence. Hernando at last forced some phrases of encouragement, issued instructions for the disposition of what force there was, and the council gradually dissolved without words of dismissal.

Cuzco was invested. To oppose the thousands Hernando had only his infantry, a battery short of ammunition, with a thousand or more Cañares whom nothing could induce to go into action that day, and whose fidelity in the emergency was doubtful. Of the infantry, only the arquebusiers had signal superiority over the foe, and these were few, their powder limited. What fate had befallen Juan Pizarro and his troopers he feared to guess. Whether they should be able to make their way back to the city was a conjecture which gave little cheer.

As evening came on patrols were kept moving through the deserted streets, saluted with an occasional flight of arrows when they approached the suburbs, but there seemed no disposition on the part of the Peruvians to renew encounter. Night fell as calmly over the brooding mountains as if it were not curtaining the prelude of a weary length of tragedy whose last act would mean the destruction

of a civilization.

For one heart within the besieged city, crushed and broken by sorrows that had searched and torn its every fibre, the rise of the sun upon the outburst of clamor of conflict saw the last flickering of the desire to live. Shocked and terrified by the tumult outside, the yells of fighting men, the roar of charging horse, and the thunder of guns—dread sounds which told her of agony and death for her beloved people—she closed her ears and prayed to die. Life was too full of horrors. Hers had been shadowed by a pall, lifted once by love, only to fall again with deepened blackness. Behind closed doors, with darkened windows, surrounded by cowering and weeping maids, she knelt through the long hours of anguish, offering up shuddering appeals to be taken away.

The Auqui Paullo came, flushed with excitement and fierce cheerfulness. He knew the dire significance of the turmoil, and bade Rava partake his own hope. The army of the Inca was afield, and deliverance at hand. Alas! no deliverance to Rava from her bondage of grief. She waved him away and wept afresh.

Late in the day came Father Valverde from his ministrations to dying Spaniards, and she knelt at his feet, imploring his prayers for her relief. The good priest, shocked at her longing for death, hastened to banish this vestige of her barbarism; prayed beside her for the renewing of her resignation; told her again of His agony and gentle patience, of the Mother bereaved, and gave her support. Once more he spoke of the saintly lives of nuns, and she listened with yearning for their holy peacefulness. He left her at last with new hope and a resolution fast growing. Rava would take the veil.

The night which closed the first day's struggle was without alarm. The Spaniards slept beside their arms, the troopers in armor and at the picket line of their saddled steeds. Guards were doubled, and patrols kept the streets. The stars came out, but they seemed rivalled in multitude and brilliancy by the fires of the besieging army, sparkling in a vast circle on the surrounding hills, and beheld with awe by the beleaguered conquistadors.

To one Spaniard, however,—to Cristoval,—viewing them from the ramparts of the Sachsahuaman, they gave hope and promise. Beside Mocho, and followed by Pedro as closely as his wooden member would permit, he had taken part in the storming of the fortress. Later, they watched the struggle in the streets below, and Mocho pointed out the Amarucancha, beneath whose roof was Rava. With strained nerves and fevered blood the cavalier had seen the conflict raging at the very doors of the palace, hardly to be withheld from descending to join in the battle, and deterred only by the manifest impossibility of reaching its front through the masses in the streets. Sick at heart he had witnessed the repulse, but with new resolution and a solemn, whispered oath. All day he had lingered on the parapet studying the city spread out like a map below him, and at nightfall

the sight of the great girdle of campfires brought fresh courage. With such a host the Inca must triumph.

The next morning news came that Manco had engaged the Spanish cavalry near Yucay. Later, that the Spaniards were in full retreat toward Cuzco, and an order was received from the Inca permitting them to enter the city. On the following day they appeared on the Chinchasuyu road, uncovered for their passage. The highway passed at the foot of a spur of the hill Sachsahuaman, and from the height Cristoval and Pedro watched the entry of the cavalcade. Had it not been for a dozen empty saddles and the litters borne by Cañares in the rear, the return might have been from a victory. Pennons fluttered, plumes tossed jauntily on helmets, and as they passed the lines a trumpeter blew a quickstep.

Shortly after the column had entered the city a *chasqui* arrived at the fortress announcing the approach of the Inca, and Mocho paraded his Antis to receive him. Messengers were sent to the several generals of the divisions surrounding the city, and the afternoon was spent in council with the monarch in the citadel.

CHAPTER XXXIII

The Doomed City

About two hours after darkness had fallen Pedro appeared at Cristoval's door and beckoned him out. The cook's face was grave.

"What is it, *amigo*?" asked Cristoval, as they stepped upon the terrace surrounding the tower.

"I know not, nor can I learn; but something is afoot. Come!" He led toward the rampart nearest the city.

The plain within the fortress was now covered with tents, but as they traversed the encampment its streets were deserted. From the midst rose the pile of the citadel, Moyoc Marca, dimly outlined in the starlight, and showing a single lighted window below the battlements. At the edge of the camp they passed the embers at the kitchens, and beyond these were a few silent groups of camp attendants looking toward the south, where presently Cristoval descried the motionless masses of the garrison drawn up under arms and facing the ramparts. The cavalier looked about in surprise.

"What is the meaning of it, Pedro?" he demanded.

Pedro shook his head and stumped on without reply. Passing between two of the battalions, they reached the margin of the plain, and skirting it, drew near the battlements. Three fires were burning brightly, and the two Spaniards caught the pungent, resinous odor of boiling pitch rising from kettles suspended over the flames. Between these and the parapet was a group of officers, and a few paces in their front stood a cloaked figure, motionless and alone. The firelight flashed on the golden eagle of the helmet, and Cristoval recognized the Inca. Halting at a short distance from the fires, the cavalier looked over the scene in mystification. Again he demanded:—

"What is to do, Pedro? Canst guess? They are heating pitch! *Madre*! Is there to be torture?"

"God knoweth!" said Pedro. "Wait!"

With the exception of a small party of soldiers around the kettles, no man was moving. No word was spoken, unless by these, and their tense, suppressed tones added to the pervading air of mystery. Two were feeding the fires, while the rest were kneeling or bending over some task whose nature Cristoval could not discern. Presently he saw three or four rise to string their bows. Aside from their whispers and muttering and the crackling of the fires, the only sound was the sighing of the rising wind; and now, from the shadowy city far below, the sweet, distant wail of a Spanish bugle blowing an evening call. Out in the dark valley, beyond the dim reticulation of black streets and pale roofs, was the great cincture of watch-fires, glimmering and twinkling as cheerfully as if their omen were as peaceful as the stars. But the night, even in its placidity, seemed portentous, and Cristoval felt a sense of dread as he glanced from the kettles with their wizard-like attendants to the silent, muffled figure of the Inca.

"God's mercy, Pedro!" he whispered, with a sign of the cross, "what is doing? What hell's broth do they brew? Not—"

Pedro gripped his arm as a soldier stepped to a kettle, holding an arrow swathed in cotton, and turned toward the Inca. The monarch made a sign, and thrusting the missile into the boiling pitch, the archer drew it forth and held it to the flames. It burst into instant blaze, and he strode hastily to the parapet, set it to his bowstring, and drew until the flame licked his hand. He shot, and with a fluttering hiss the burning arrow soared high into the darkness, leaving a trail of falling sparks, paused for an instant against the firmament, and fell with ever-increasing swiftness into the city.

Cristoval had uttered an exclamation of horror as the meaning burst upon him, and had taken a stride forward, to be jerked forcibly back by Pedro with a hand over his mouth.

"Silence!" muttered the cook. "Dost think to hinder?"

"They are firing the city!" gasped the cavalier.

"Canst prevent it? Beware!"

"Rava—"

"Safe with Valverde! Come!" Pedro dragged him out of ear-shot of the Inca, warning him to hold his tongue. A second arrow sped its flaming course, then a third; and at once, from a hundred points around the doomed capital, mounted thin pencillings of fire answering those from the fortress and falling like a shower of meteors. Arrow after arrow flashed out from the parapet into the surrounding gloom, and Cristoval gazed spellbound. Below, where the first had descended, was a tiny, wavering flame. While he watched, speechless, breathless, it grew with every second, its base spreading rapidly with ragged outline over the tinder-like thatch of one of the nearer buildings. Beyond, another feeble blaze was springing, and not far from this, a third. The first was now leaping, sending up a tenuous column of smoke which grew ruddy momentarily, and was seized by the wind and swept away toward the eastern hills. The flame waxed with incredible swiftness, lost its brilliance, turned deep and angry, with a lurid veil around it, through which darted red tongues, whipping plumes, and forked lashes. In a moment the smoke was rolling upward in volumes, showing whirling gaps with depths of murky incandescence, masses of black rising heavily after eddying sprays of sparks and burning fragments of straw. Where the first arrow had fallen was a volcano of fire with smaller craters bursting out on every hand.

In the distant suburbs were splashes of flame and towers of smoke in a huge, infernal circle, and the watch-fires on the hills were gradually blotted out by a broken, rufous curtain. Now the roofs of palaces stood out in pallid relief against the inky blackness of the streets, and the golden thatch of the Temple of the Sun was gleaming fitfully in the wavering illumination. From the square, at the first outbreak of the fire, had risen shouts of alarm, the startled clamor of trumpets, then the dismal howling of Cañares. But shortly these had ceased, the beleaguered stricken into dumbness by the terrific vengeance with which they were menaced. The city had grown strangely still, as if waiting, aghast, for its fate.

Cristoval gazed in stupefaction, held in a paralysis by thought of the danger to the loved one within the swiftly growing chain of conflagration. It seemed an age before his tense muscles obeyed his will. A suppressed exclamation from Pedro at last dissolved the spell, and with a groan he dashed toward his quarters.

Mocho was approaching, and the cavalier ran against him. "Whither, friend?" demanded the general, detaining him forcibly.

Cristoval made a wild gesture toward the fire. "To arm—into the city—the Ñusta Rava!" He broke away.

Mocho looked after him, dumbfounded, then hastened to his command and called an officer. "Take fifty, Rimachi," he said, hurriedly, "and follow the Vira-

cocha Cristoval. Obey his orders as mine. He goeth into Cuzco in aid of the Ñusta Rava. Go first to his quarters in the Paucar Marca. Speed!"

Rimachi entered Cristoval's apartment and reported his orders. Pedro followed him in. The cook had come at his best speed, but the cavalier was finishing his arming as he entered.

"Wait for me, Cristoval!" he panted, as he donned his corselet.

"Nay!" said Cristoval, latching his helmet and seizing his buckler. "This time we part, good old comrade. Thou hast risked thyself too often for friendship's sake. I go alone. Farewell!" Pedro wrung his extended hand, swearing and almost weeping at being left behind, but before he could protest, Cristoval was gone.

Outside, the whole world to the south seemed aflame. A monstrous, reddened cloud leaped and surged toward the heavens, apparently against the very ramparts of the fortress. The plain, its tents, the towers, the battalions of the garrison, and every inequality of the ground, were as clearly marked in the ruddy, reflected glow as if by dawn. Cristoval paused for an instant, overcome by the terrible magnificence of the spectacle and the grewsome roar and crackle of the fire, which had grown apace in the short time it had taken him to arm; then consigned himself to the Virgin's care and hurried to the southernmost gate, followed by the Antis.

Here the road drops abruptly down the cliff to the terraces of the Colcampata, several hundred feet below. Part of the way was by steps made treacherous by the unusual lights and shadows, and uncertain by the dense smoke drifting from the western suburbs; but Cristoval descended at a run, and was soon at the foot of the declivity. Here he was overtaken by his party, and paused to consider with Rimachi the possible avenues of entry. In front, the nearest buildings were a mass of flames. To the right, he could see the district called Huaca Puncu, already burning fiercely in a score of places. On the left, he remembered, was the stream Tullamayu, and after a brief consultation they hastened across the terraces. Through gardens and over walls, they were presently following a street to the eastward, stumbling in the murk. At the edge of the ravine was a low wall, surmounted in a second, and they rushed down the terraced bank to the stream. Cristoval was harrowed by a fear that the almost solid belt of fire before him would prove impassable. The few gaps were closing momentarily, forming a nearly continuous sheet of leaping, whirling flame whose heat reached even to where he stood. The narrow course of the Tullamayu presented the only breach, and this was already perilous, dense with smoke and illumined by a storm of falling sparks and burning brands. He glanced about at the Antis. Their faces were alight and their eyes gleaming with the fire, but they showed no sign of fear, and with a word to Rimachi, Cristoval started down the stream.

Shortly they were within the fire-belt, heads bent forward, groping through the stinging smoke and rain of embers, blundering and slipping on the water-worn bowlders, under an appalling canopy. The bed of the stream was pent between walls of masonry with a narrow quay along either bank. The structures on both sides were now topped with spouting flames whipped out overhead by the wind in huge streamers and pennons. The sound of the stream was drowned by the roar and snapping of the conflagration, the crash of falling timbers, and the incessant hiss of firebrands showering into the water. The air grew hotter and more stifling, until they breathed in gasps, but pushed on, dashing water over their apparel to save themselves from being burned alive. Panting and floundering, kneeling from time to time to cool his scorching armor and fill his lungs from the lower air, Cristoval led onward.

At length he could see that the glare in advance was growing less. They had gained the inner edge of the fire-zone. A few yards more, and they were in a freer atmosphere and partial darkness, and they halted, leaning against the walls or crouching in the stream to recover from the exhaustion of the ordeal. Cristoval anxiously counted his men. None were wanting, and they groped on, presently passing beneath a bridge. Below was a flight of steps leading to the quay. Cristoval mounted, and motioned the Antis to follow. The air was thick with smoke beaten down by the wind, but still dangerously light from the blazing buildings they had passed, and the cavalier felt the insecurity. A few yards away was the entrance of a street leading westward, somewhat darker by reason of being parallel to the line of fire, and he ran his men into its shadow. Now he wished with fervency that he had a guide; for he learned that neither Rimachi nor his Antis were acquainted with Cuzco.

Cristoval knew where the Amarucancha must lie, and that the street they were on would lead toward it; further than this he was ignorant. He knew, moreover, that the palace stood beside the stream Huatenay, and trusted that, the rivulet once gained, he could find his objective with little difficulty. Once within with his Antis, he could wait for a favorable moment to escape with Rava.

Cristoval pushed forward through the half-dark, straining eyes and ears. Little could be seen but dim walls looming on either side, with a flying drift of smoke above, racing before the wind and weirdly lighted, curling over roofs, and sucked down in ghostly swirls into the street before them. Now, it happened that, deceived by the apparent length of time during which they had struggled down the course of the Tullamayu, Cristoval fancied himself in the lower part of the city. But the street they were following was the one in all Cuzco which should have been avoided. It was the highway leading from the Antisuyu road directly to the great square. It was deserted now, however, and Cristoval pressed rapidly on, passing cavernous doorways of palaces, many of them standing broad open

as they had been left by their Spanish occupants when the starting conflagration had hastened them to the open plaza. Cristoval passed them cautiously, peering into the dark courts to make sure there were no lingerers. But all seemed vacant, and save for the murmur of fountains caught occasionally, all were silent.

At a broad street crossing he halted, half disposed to make farther toward lower Cuzco, suspecting from the nearness of the fire, now only a few hundred yards to the north, that he was closer to the square than was prudent. But the brighter illumination of the intersecting street decided him to continue his way. He was about to advance when Rimachi seized his arm. The keener ears of the Indio had caught a sound. The cavalier listened with concentration. From somewhere in the obscurity came the ordered tramp of soldiers and the murmur of voices, but in the confusion of sounds from the fire he was unable to determine the direction. Anxious, above all things, to avoid the mishap of an encounter that would be most certain, whatever the result, to abort his plans, he turned to motion the Antis back into the shadow of the street from which they had emerged, when an abrupt challenge from the darkness ahead left no doubt of the source of the sounds. Standing in the half-light of the crossing, he and the group about him were more plainly visible than he had thought. Before he could effect a retirement, he received a second challenge, and a party advanced from the darkness at a run. It was too late to retreat. A score of pikes and halberds charged into the light. With a shout to his men Cristoval drew and attacked.

The Antis, excited by the conflagration, and maddened by burns, needed but the word. They rushed with a yell that startled even Cristoval by its ferocity, and drove into the Spanish patrol with a savage impetus which would have shaken a regiment.

The fight was terribly brief. Cristoval had hardly flashed his blade in the first collision before the party was swept away from him by the charge of the Antis. The Spaniards recovered, resisted sharply for an instant, then broke for the square with the Antis in hot pursuit.

But a stubborn opposition would have been less disastrous than this victory. Already a trumpet was sounding, alarmingly close at hand. In quick realization, Cristoval rushed after his men, ordering them back, collaring a few whom he was able to overtake, only partly successful in staying the chase. Before he ceased he saw the dim lights of the open square a few steps distant, heard the shouts of the startled Spaniards and the uproar of moving cavalry. The Antis in front, aware of their peril, came flying back, and he joined their retreat just as a party of horse entered the head of the street.

It was a dash, now, for life. Cristoval noted the interval before the trot behind broke into a gallop. Weighted by his armor, his speed was slow, and he heard the Antis pass him in the darkness. The street was clamoring with the din

of hoofs, nearing every instant. He stumbled over a prostrate form and almost fell; recovered, and sped on. The fleet Antis had left him far behind, and he was flying alone with death at his back. Now the troop was almost upon him. He was lost!—No! A doorway! He flung himself into its shadow headlong, and the charging column went past with a roar that shook the earth. By the grace of Heaven, he had not been seen. Or, if seen by the foremost troopers, those behind had forced them past, and for a moment he was safe. For a moment only, for infantry would follow; and as the last files thundered by he staggered to his feet and hurried after.

Ahead was the broad thoroughfare where he had stood with Rimachi, and in its light he could see the glint of the helmets of the troop. An instant, and they had vanished into the darkness beyond. Could he cross the lighted space unseen? He was panting with the weight of his steel and the previous exertion, and his pace slackened. When he reached the corner he was stumbling and plunging with weariness, and he paused to breathe and reconnoitre before venturing to cross. Toward the Tullamayu he heard the uproar of the still receding troop, and a glance up and down the lighted street showed him that all had kept on in that direction. But behind was the rushing of many feet. The infantry were following. He dashed across the open, conscious of the fierce glare in the north, already perceptibly more intense, and gained the farther obscurity. He remembered the open doorways, and struggled forward with desperation. As he turned into the shelter of one of them at last, a glance over his shoulder showed him morions gleaming in the firelight at the crossing.

He had strength to swing the ponderous door and place the bar, but no more, and sank down beneath armor that weighed a ton. He lay straining to suppress his heavy breathing that he might listen for the approach of the infantry. He heard them presently, and rose to his knees, gripping his sword. They seemed so long in passing that he fancied they were gathering about the door; and expecting every instant to hear it assaulted, he gained his feet, praying for new strength to fight. But they passed, and the street grew quiet. Still he hearkened, minute after minute, for sounds which might indicate whether the Antis had been struck, until, after what must have been an hour, he heard the troop straggling by on its return to the square. An interval, and a party of the infantry tramped by in the same direction, and he surmised from the smallness of the number that it had divided into squads to search the streets. After this, a welcome silence.

Exhausted, desperate at the catastrophe which had so abruptly blocked his project, the cavalier entered the court to seek the fountain whose plash had been torturing his thirst. The place, evidently one of the numerous palaces, was quite deserted. Doors stood open upon dark chambers, but there was neither light,

sound, nor sign of life, and he traversed the dusky courts in solitude.

CHAPTER XXXIV
In the Burning Palace

On the rampart of the Sachsahuaman, apart from his generals, wrapped in his cloak, and shrouded more impenetrably by something which forbade approach; a dark silhouette against a sky wilder and more terrible than words can describe; unspeakably solemn before the havoc wrought at his command, stood the Inca. In his grim silence and immobility, in his relentless wielding of a power little less absolute than that of a god, he took on the sinister majesty of the spectacle his fiat had created.

When flame followed the fall of the first arrow, he had buried his face in his cloak. Slowly lowering his arm, he had looked on with countenance inflexible as bronze while destruction progressed in leaps and bounds. After this, not the tremor of a muscle. To his nobles, quailing and awe-stricken at the sublime horror of the scene, he was never before so much a king.

Such his aspect. For the emotions sternly repressed, but racking him to the soul—what words! The sacred city, the favored of the Sun, the home and the monument of the loving care of a mighty line of monarchs, perishing under his hand. The city whose splendor had been the work of generations of great kings; for whose glory countless thousands of their subjects had toiled, had fought, had died, given by him to demolition!—doomed by the mandate of one who had received the *llautu* from the profane hand of a ravager; who had suffered the scorn of an ignoble band of licentious and greedy invaders and had lived; who had worn fetters like a criminal and had lain in prison under the eyes of scoffing guards! That he—O, Inti!—that he, still wearing the marks of his bonds like a released slave, should be the destroyer! Could Cuzco but have fallen beneath the hand of a hero, even an enemy, and could he have fallen with it, its defender, he had been worthy to take his place with the shades of his ancestors. But he had himself led the enemy to its palace doors, had seen them plunder its temples, ravish its vestals, and befoul its most sacred spots. And now he was giving Cuzco to the flames! Would the Sun ever rise upon him again?

Ah—but—could he dare to address a prayer to that god while Cuzco remained unpurged? By the great Inti, the fire should do its purifying work! From

cottage, palace, and temple, the stench of the Viracocha should be burned! Should the last wall be levelled to the earth, the last stone of its streets upturned, no vestige of their defilement should remain. Cuzco would rise again, and the Viracochas be forgotten. Let the dead Incas look on whilst he wiped out the stain of the ancient city's dishonor and his own!

When at length the sky was graying and he turned away, facing his generals, but seeing none of them, they beheld a countenance aged as by years since he had last spoken. In a night the torture of mind and heart had moulded lines usually beaten in only by the blows of long and hard experience.

At the door of his apartments he dismissed his attendants with a word. But, alas! a king before men, alone he was a mortal man. He knelt and prayed for tears. Resting upon his shoulders, with the burden of an empire, was now the weight of a monstrous tragedy; but upon his heart, the unutterable sorrow of a brother and a lover. Within that dread circle of fire were loved ones, and among them the sweetest of consorts. No man looked upon his grief. No man but can know what his grief must have been.

The sun rose upon a scene of devastation shorn of its splendor. Around the city was a belt of blackened ruins from which rolled a volume of smoke which partly obscured the fiercer burning within. To the westward, the direction from which the wind had blown, this district was broad. The fire had been driven rapidly across the suburbs toward Cuzco proper, and the houses being largely of adobe, the destruction was complete. Below the fortress, in the quarter of the palaces, the fire had to fight its way across the wind, and its advance had been less swift. Here the buildings were of stone, and through breaks in the murk were visible walls intact, surrounding desolate courts with charred skeletons of trees. To the east the city was hidden in the huge surging cloud drifting sluggishly off toward the mountains. From the ramparts little could be seen of the fire except occasional glimpses of flame through the rifts; and as Pedro stumped to and fro on the parapet, fuming and praying, harassed by fears, he could only guess at the perils by which Cristoval was surrounded. Before the sun had lifted above the mountains the Antis began straggling in, smoked, scorched, and many of them wounded, bearing the tale of their encounter. Ten or more did not return. Rimachi was one of the last to come, and having reported to Mocho, the latter sought the cook with the news of the probable fate of the cavalier. Pedro made no reply, but turning with his face painfully twitching, he hastened to his quarters—to be seen no more that day.

Once more to Cristoval. Assuring himself that he was the sole occupant of the building, he explored the several courts for its exits, and found, in the rear, the door of a passage which led to the broad street he had recently crossed. This might serve as a line of retreat. Patrols were still moving in the streets, and fixing

the location of the passage among the intricacies of dark chambers and courts, he sought next, like a prudent soldier, for the kitchens and larder. This quest was difficult, for the operation of making a light, even could he have found a lamp, would have demanded more time than he could spare. Trusting to his sense of smell, blunted though it was by smoke, he wandered from one room to another, his steps, the rustle of his armor, and the clank of his sword rousing uncanny echoes from the lofty walls of stone. At last he stumbled upon a table still spread with an abandoned supper, and groping among the viands, he hastily made a meal.

A glance at the sky from the court showed a noticeable advance of the fire, though the direction of the wind held it in check and carried the sparks and brands off to the eastward. While he stood he heard the clatter of troopers in the street; but it died away presently, and he made his way to the postern. At the end of the passage he reconnoitred the street, now more brightly illumined than before, and was about to leave his hiding, when two horsemen trotted into the light and halted at the crossing, their lance-heads glittering in the firelight. They were too near to leave a possibility of his quitting the passage unseen. Furthermore, he recognized the unwelcome fact that they were there *en vedette*, and would remain. Evidently, the attack upon the patrol had made the Spaniards vigilant. Cristoval set his teeth. Here was a situation, by the fighting saint! Trapped in a building which would be afire before many hours, with a prospective choice of being burned alive, or run through by a Spanish lance in the effort to escape! For a bad quarter of an hour he watched the troopers with an interest his countrymen had seldom roused in him before, consigning them in vigorous whispers to divers painful fates, until, observing one of them hitch himself in his saddle into a lounging seat, he gave it up and groped back into the palace.

There was one other exit: the door by which he entered. The darkness of that street might favor. He would try it. In the main court nearest the entrance was the fountain, a pool of some ten feet in diameter with steps descending to the water a yard below the level, and surrounded by seats and parterres full of shrubbery. He stopped there and drank deep, for the fire and cinders would not out from his throat. Then to the door. He laid aside his buckler and put hand to the bar. Cautiously now, Cristoval; for with sentinels near, this business should be of an inconspicuous kind. The timber stuck slightly, then yielded, slipped from his grasp, and fell with a crash loud as the crack of doom.

It was answered at once by the sound of a horse spurred to a trot, and snatching up his buckler, Cristoval retreated to the parterres. He gained the shelter just as the trooper pushed open the door. He rode in and halted near the entrance; peered about in the obscurity, called twice or thrice, then rode slowly about the enclosure, looking into the darkness of the open doors. Cristo-

val watched him, praying that he might push on into the interior courts, or that he might dismount. In the latter event he should find what he sought with a vengeance, and that horse would change owners. But the trooper soon returned, scanning the parterres as he passed. At the entrance he halted and surveyed the place again, only half satisfied. Finally he rode out. Cristoval followed cautiously, to have a look at the street. No hope there. The soldier had taken position a few yards away, and there remained, while the prisoner returned to the fountain and had another bad quarter of an hour. There was no choice but to stay where he was and pray that the sentinels might be withdrawn at daylight, or be driven from their posts by the approaching fire. Then, provided he was not roasted to death in the meantime, he might escape.

He sat through the night, going at intervals to the doors in faint hope, returning with disquietude more profound, to watch the relentless nearing of the conflagration. At last came the dawn, more depressing in its ghastly light than the night. He stretched himself beneath the shrubbery. As the morning advanced the wind veered farther to the south, and this, he hoped, would retard the progress of the fire in his direction until the evening.

Cristoval was blessed with a sanguine temperament, and was, moreover, like most men who follow peril, a fatalist. Death had stood so often beside him, and had so often withheld the blow, that he had lost the appreciation of danger while he could look forward to another minute of life. Now, there were hours before him, at least, and faith that good fortune or resourcefulness would open a way of deliverance. Therefore, why not be comfortable while comforts were at hand? He remembered the spread table. He crept from concealment, went to the door for another look at the sentinels, and entered the dining-hall. He had seated himself when he perceived that the tableware was silver. He rose abruptly. "Oho! that meaneth the tenant will return, else the tenant is not a Spaniard." He selected a generous double handful of the victuals and returned to the fountain. Going to another chamber, he brought forth a rug which he deposited beneath the thickest of the shrubbery, and there made his breakfast calmly.

Now began a weary watch, broken by short spells of uneasy sleep and startled awakenings. Once, roused by voices in the court and hurried steps, he saw two Cañares, evidently servants, enter the dining-hall. They came out with the silver, just as a cavalier, a stranger to Cristoval, emerged from another room with a bundle of papers and wearing apparel. The man was in full armor and looked haggard and anxious, but seemed intent only upon the movements of the Cañares, whom he ordered impatiently to hasten. He followed them out at length, and again the court was quiet. After a glance at the whirling bank of smoke to the north, Cristoval stretched himself out once more and soon was slumbering.

Toward midday he started out of a tortured dream and sat up. The sun was

high in the north, rushing, as it seemed to his bewildered eyes, madly across the sky, a mere disc of burnished copper, now deepening into bronze, now flashing into a brazen glare through the scurrying cloud, but unutterably strange and unnatural. Before he had fully gained his startled senses, he was on his feet and had crossed himself a dozen times, only to grin blankly at his own consternation. Another instant revealed the real peril, grave enough. The flames seemed leaping from the roofs across the street, and the sinister roar and crackle were terribly distinct. Cristoval crossed himself again, took up sword and buckler, and ran to the door. The roofs opposite were untouched, but their immunity would be short. The crossing where the sentinels had stood was vacant. A glance in the opposite direction promptly dashed his hope. The street partly cleared of smoke for a moment, and at its foot were cannoneers and one of Candia's guns covering the bridge across the Tullamayu. They were looking alertly toward the suburbs, and one held a lighted match. Cristoval rushed to the door in the rear. A survey from the end of the passage was sufficient. At the first corner to the south was a cluster of pikemen, evidently part of a column which occupied the cross-street. The prisoner slowly regained his concealment. For the next hour he gloomily watched the fire, until, convinced by the rate of its approach that it was farther away than he had thought, he dozed again. While he slept, the wind shifted to the north.

Sometime in the afternoon—late, it seemed from the uncertain light—he was awakened by the report of a falconet, and smiled grimly. "The Inca's forces are attacking," he muttered. "May no man of them fail to duck in time—and may they come this far! It would—Mother of God!"

A crackling sound, heard vaguely, had started him to his feet. He struck aside the foliage. There was no sky!—only a flying mass of gray and white, near enough, it looked, to be touched with his hand. The palace was afire. At a bound he was clear of the shrubbery. The roof over the entrance was a solid flame. While he stood, transfixed, it swept forward right and left with the speed of wind. He dashed through a shower of fire to the doors. The building opposite was a furnace. "Bang!" snapped the falconet at the foot of the street.

He rushed to the rear, racing with the flames roaring along the roofs on both sides of the court, and reached the passage, now full of smoke. From its mouth he saw the pikemen looking toward him at the fire. Should he venture a dash to cut through their lines? Hopeless, hopeless! But to be burned alive! Yet the main court was broad. Would he not be out of reach of the flames in its centre? It was the one chance. A flash of fire overhead drove him back into the palace. The passages and rooms were dense and stifling, and once he lost his way; found it again, and crept the rest of the distance to the court on his hands and knees; reached it, blind, and half stupefied.

Gasping and choking, he dragged himself to the shrubbery, only half conscious of the leaping, blazing tumult surrounding him. The entrance had disappeared, curtained by burning thatch fallen from the eaves. The air was growing hot, and the open doorways which before had been obscure, now showed a dull illumination. For a few minutes the atmosphere was fairly free to breathe, but as the roof timbers began to give way the rooms filled with burning straw from above, and great spurts and volumes of smoke rolled into the court from the doors and windows.

Cristoval lay with face pressed to the earth for its coolness and the stratum of purer air. Overhead the leaves were shrivelling and drooping. Burning wisps of thatch, then sheaves and armfuls, were soaring upward in the blast and strewing the ground about him. He was protected by his armor, but in danger of suffocation, and his breathing grew momentarily more labored, until every inspiration was like a draught of fire itself.

Cristoval was coughing and breathing stertorously, sweating in his mail. Nothing was visible now but the hot, white shroud through which the nearest shrubs showed like dim skeletons. Strangely, at times they were all in motion, going round and round; vanishing for moments, to reappear slowly and resume their wavering reel. He wondered at it very little, occupied mostly with the effort to breathe, the pain of it, and the torture of the heat. He had ceased to think, connectedly, of anything; but a series of rapidly moving pictures traversed his brain, chiefly of Rava and Xilcala, with others interspersed, of no relevancy. His head was aching, and singing wildly—or, was it the whistling of wind through a ship's rigging? It was that, for he felt the roll and plunge. *Madre*!—dreaming! He saw Pedro, then Father Tendilla, then Rogelio. Something was burrowing beneath his chest, squeaking pitifully, and roused him. A *coy*—guinea pig! Another scurried past, and languidly he wondered whither. Toward the fountain! *Jesu*! At once his mind cleared. Why had he not thought of it before? He began crawling toward the water, reanimated by hope which, but now, had gone. Slowly, for his way was strewn with fire, and his steel of crushing weight. Miles away, the pool; hardly to be attained, but reached at last, and he rolled in at full length.

The shock revived him, but before he could struggle to his knees he thought he must drown. Once upright, he found the air cooler and far less stifling. As he knelt, the water came to his breast, and now he was safe at least from being burned to death, if not from asphyxiation. It was minutes before his thoughts became connected, and then he saw the *coys* cowering on the steps in front of him.

Beyond the rim of the pool nothing could be seen for the smoke. On every side was the roar of the burning and the muffled crash of falling beams. The air was full of dropping brands, spitting and hissing as they touched the water,

or starting frenzied squeaks when they fell upon the rodents. Moved by their common suffering with himself, he dashed water over them with his hands, only half sensible of the mercy of the impulse.

The smoke thickened from minute to minute, and the heat, even in the pool, grew maddening; but by frequent immersions of his head and face he retained his senses, wondering in a stupid, dreamy way, how long he could endure.

At last, daylight was waning. The thatch had burned out by this, and the smoke become less dense, permitting occasional glimpses of the flames still tossing about him. He was growing chilled and stiffened by long immersion, and rose to his feet from time to time, first dropping his visor to protect his face. Through the obscurity he could see the dull red of the doorways, and the walls with their topping of fire, but as evening came on the heat grew less intense, and he found that he could stand, dipping at intervals to cool his armor.

Night fell and grew late. The worst of the fire had passed to the southward. Around him the flames barely reached above the blackened walls, though the glare from the doors revealed the desolation of the court. It was hideous and infernal, and he was seized with a frantic longing to be away from its horror, but hours dragged before he could even quit the pool. Slowly, however, the fire subsided, and he mounted the steps unheeded by his fellow refugees. Now he could see the entrance, with fragments of the doors hanging to the hinges and still feebly burning. He would attempt it.

He found his sword and shield, among the leafless stalks of the bushes, and after a final plunge in the pool, left the court. Filling his lungs, he bolted through the door and into the street. It was full of embers, starting into flame and swirled about by eddies of hot wind. He could see but a short distance ahead, but with a hurried prayer he dashed forward through the stifling heat. The end of the street was not far, but before he had reached it his feet and legs were blistered. In his struggles for breath, and in the dread doubt whether he would attain his goal, he hardly felt the pain, but rushed blindly on, ploughing up a spray of fire in his passage. At length, the foot of the street, and he staggered into the open, across the quay, and down the steps to the stream.

At the farther end of the bridge was the falconet with its gunners. The fire had not crossed the rivulet, but the heat had driven them to the opposite side. One of the cannoneers beheld Cristoval rushing through the fiery dusk of the street, and his affrighted exclamation drew the attention of his mates. They saw the arch-fiend, clad in red-hot steel, with blazing eyes, and brandishing a sword of flame, charging toward them through a burst of fire. There was one gasping

yell, and they fled into the darkness.

CHAPTER XXXV

The Lurking Morisco

During the half-hour it took the sergeant commanding the gun to reassemble his panic-stricken cannoneers, Cristoval was passing slowly down the Tullamayu, secure in its shadows. In his thankfulness for escape from death his scorched feet and legs seemed naught, and he was eager only to pass the fire ahead, cross the city to the other stream, and find the Amarucancha. To find the Amarucancha; for not an instant did his purpose flag, nor would while he had strength to creep.

He reached the point where the stream is bridged by the Rimac Pampa, climbed a stairway, and found himself at the edge of that square. The entire district south and east had burned the night before, and the ruins were still smouldering, with small fires here and there in the *débris* lighting up the plaza, but rendering its greater extent the more obscure. To the north-east, the suburbs of Toco Cachi and Munay Cenca were burning fiercely, but the advance of the conflagration thence had been retarded by the wind, so that between the burning zone and the Tullamayu lay an area yet untouched, while the fire which had swept over him was now in the rear. In the west was a huge, roseate bank of smoke, rolling upward in colossal and endless transformation. Overhead were fragments of sky, densely black, with sickly stars briefly seen, then extinguished by the pallid fleece whirled and driven by the wind. Everywhere above the horizon, a stupendous activity impressive in its silence.

Cristoval turned from it oppressed, to listen and reconnoitre before venturing from shelter. About him, gloom and stillness profound, the desolation of vacant streets, the mournfulness of abandonment; and over all, a wan, unnatural twilight. He felt the weight of loneliness and a vague dread of the shadowy thoroughfares and sombre buildings. He shook it off with resolution, and stole out into the street. Not far ahead an intersecting way admitted a narrow illumination from the north. He was within fifty paces of this when a dim figure crossed the light and vanished in the darkness beyond. It appeared and disappeared so quickly and silently that he was uncertain lest he had been deceived by a swirl of smoke. He paused uneasily, unresolved whether to advance or go back. "No Spaniard, that," he reflected, "and *cierto*, not a sentinel! A mere rag of a figure—if

not a rag of mine imagination. But what an unholy, shivery manner of gait!—a flit, and 't was gone. Murder! I had liefer seen a pikeman." He stood for a moment peering and hearkening, then advanced with drawn sword.

Arriving at the strip of light, he crossed it hastily, and halted by the wall. Farther up the street was another lighted spot, and he watched it with vigilance. Again the form, seen for an instant, and lost in the gloom. Now, Cristoval's courage was proof as his own mail against tangible danger, but volatile as ether before the uncanny or mysterious. The fleeting form was both. The cavalier was daunted, and admitted it to himself. But he braced himself with a sign of the cross and stole forward. "After all," he muttered, "belike 't is naught but some poor devil of a native, burned out and homeless. But the fiend take a man who moveth with so ghastly locomotion! Neither a walk, trot, nor canter. Anyway, he seemeth to have as little appetite for me as I for him, and man or spook, I'll not crowd him, I swear it!"

At the next corner he halted, inspecting the dimly lighted street for signs of soldiery, but no living being moved. The spectre-like stranger had vanished. While the cavalier stood, he heard distant cavalry. It was wholesome and earthly at least; and although it called for caution, yet it was in some sort reassuring, and he went on in greater ease of mind. A few minutes later he entered another square flanked on the left by a large edifice recognizable by the glow on its gilded roof as the Temple of the Sun. He had his bearings, and knew that the Huatenay was not far beyond. The plaza was the ancient Coricancha, or Place of Gold.

Half-way across he heard horses once more, approaching, and not distant. The great door of the temple stood open. He hurried to its shelter as a patrol of cavalry trotted into the square. They were coming in his direction, and he entered the building. The darkness was absolute, but opposite was another door, faintly lighted by the reflection from the heavens. He stole toward it with reluctance, awed by the vastness of the hall, whose walls sent back sepulchral echoes of his furtive tread. High up indistinctly outlined windows revealed the loftiness of the interior, which seemed to be unceiled. The place was lugubrious, as if tenanted by ghosts of votaries of the ancient faith, mourning its desecration. So thought Cristoval, and hastened his steps—then stopped. There had been a movement in the doorway in front of him: a mere blur, and gone, noiseless as a shadow. There was a trickling chilliness under his back-plate, and again he made a sign of the cross. The place was unholy—accursed by pagan rites. He must out of it! Should it be to face the patrol, or—the other? The open air of the court was nearer, and he quickened his pace to gain it, assailed by a multitude of whispered reverberations; chased, as he knew, by devils, spooks, goblins, and lemures.

In the court, he was sweating, but cold. It was bare, ghostly, and surrounded by buildings with broad, open doors into which he did not look as he sped across

toward a gate that stood ajar. Outside, he breathed more freely. He was in a garden with trees and shrubbery, and these, even in the dark, are always friendly. There were avenues, but the ground had been upturned by his countrymen for buried treasure, and he could follow none. He turned across what had been a lawn, descending from terrace to terrace, burdened by the sense of being watched by the lurking stranger; nor paused until he had placed distance between himself and the unhallowed temple. Now he could hear the ripple of a stream, and knew that he was at the Huatenay; but kept on, looking for a stout bush he could have at his back, and with a vigilant outlook for the other tenant of the garden. He was now fully aware of his burns, but dared not remove a jambe to ease them. He seated himself presently, but after a minute's rest the sensation of being under espionage became unendurable. It chafed him, and with the irritation of his burning feet and legs, roused a bloodthirsty desire to hunt the lurker and determine whether he was substance or shadow. He thought better of it.

A few minutes, now, would bring him to the Amarucancha, and impatience pushed him on. He had gained the lowest terrace when the mysterious form appeared again, directly in his path, a hundred feet away. It rose as if out of the earth, retreated a few paces, and vanished into the shadow of the gully, leaving Cristoval in dismay.

"*Santa Madre!*" he gasped, and stood irresolute, wishing with ardor for a crucifix. The figure was so wholly spectral that the thought of following it into the darkness started his courage oozing as quickly as it did the perspiration. Yet there was no help for it unless to return through the temple. The stout cavalier was in a wavering frame of mind. Then it stole over him that this shadowy creature was interposing between him and Rava. He sprang down the bank with an oath. Were it Satan himself he would dispute such hindrance.

He stumbled among the bowlders, straining his eyes for a sight of the figure, furious to test its reality. But he plunged forward resolutely. Above the temple he came to a stairway leading to the quay, and mounted it, intending, if the streets were quiet, to leave the stream. As he raised head and shoulders above the parapet, an arrow, coming with terrific force, struck the bars of his lifted visor and splintered with a crash that made his ears ring within his helmet. At the same instant the figure rose a few yards ahead and sped away through the darkness. Notwithstanding the shock, Cristoval's dread vanished in a flash. "Aha! thou flitting, gliding, misty son of an imp of perdition, then thou 'rt real!" He dropped his visor. "By the saints! 't is a burden off my mind. I thought thee a ghost, but that was no ghostly arrow, my word for it! And 't was good archery. *Bien*! I'll keep thee in mind until I can teach thee thou 'rt shooting at a friend." Convinced now that the stranger was a native bent on vengeance on his own account, Cristoval descended again and pushed on up the stream, infinitely relieved

in spirit. But thereafter he kept his visor closed.

At length the black buildings on either bank came to an end at the great square, and with beating heart the cavalier recognized the pile on the right as the Amarucancha. He crept cautiously up the steps by which the Inca and Mayta had descended on the night of their attempted escape. Here he could look out upon the plaza, so near that he heard the Spaniards' voices. The fire had eaten from the direction of the Sachsahuaman to its margin, and like the Rimac Pampa, it was partly illuminated by burning ruins. In the middle were awnings and tents occupied by his beleaguered countrymen. Near the camp was the picket line with the steeds saddled, and in front of it, a detachment standing to horse, ready for instant action. Cristoval took it in at a glance, then his eyes sought the palace before him. Immediately opposite was a door. Would it be locked? Locked, no doubt!—and would he dare to knock? First he would try its fastenings. Cristoval was shaking at the knees, and so intent that he had forgotten prudence. He was about to steal across the quay when he was arrested by the tread of an approaching sentinel. The cavalier retreated down the steps with a flash of sudden heat over his body. Ten thousand devils! Here was a condition unforeseen. Standing in the water and leaning against the shadowed wall, he thought with diligence and many whispered interjections. With the square so near he could not overcome the sentinel without an alarm. The attempt might serve as a last resort; but he put it aside to debate a hundred impracticabilities. After a time he crept up the steps again and stole a look at the soldier. The latter was keeping close to the palace wall, and for a pikeman his vigilance seemed preternatural. Had he divined his surveillance by a pair of watchful eyes in a head simmering with plans for his quick extinction!—but he had not. He paced so many paces to the south, turned with a glance at the sky; paced so many more to the north, turned with a glance at the sky; and so for an hour, when he challenged the relief.

Meanwhile, Cristoval descended and stood meditating furiously. Assuredly the chance for entrance here was slight. He picked his way carefully down the stream, ascended by the first flight of steps to the opposite bank, and started toward the square in the shadow of the buildings. At its edge he descried another sentinel, and turned back. At a bridge passed going up, he crossed the rivulet. At the farther side he glanced back up the street toward the western line of fire, now sweeping rapidly forward, and once more caught sight of the flitting figure crossing the light, slinking toward the plaza, but lost at once in the darkness. "Aha! my friend," muttered Cristoval, "thou 'rt off the scent. Keep off it, thou heathen, or I may warm thy legs with the flat of my blade."

He moved up the quay with a slight hope of finding an unguarded door into the palace. Twenty paces more and he was startled by a long-drawn yell of agony from the direction of the square. The stranger had attacked a sentinel.

"Holy Mother!" he exclaimed, "the skulking archer hath scored."

The whispered words had not been said before a second cry arose, fiercely exultant, "*Allah il Allah!*" Cristoval started at the words, and crossed himself.

The cry was answered by a shout and a rush of soldiers. Cristoval glanced about for a stairway to descend to the stream. None at hand, and no time to search. He dropped his buckler over the parapet, lowered himself by his hands, and let go. An instant to regain his shield, and he fled down the rocky bottom as a platoon galloped along the edge of the square, divided at the quay, and a party clattered toward him, following the bank on his right. It divided again at the first street, but as he blundered on through the darkness a squad passed him, going down the stream. The square was in an uproar.

Far off somewhere Cristoval heard the cry again, "*Allah il Allah!*" and stopped. "José, as I'm a Christian!" He reached the temple garden, blown by the flight, and threw himself upon the bank, nearer despair than he had been since entering the city. Only a miracle would admit him to the Amarucancha.

He lay for an hour listening to the patrols, now near, now far, before he rose heavily and looked about. It was necessary to seek a shelter for the coming day; but where he should find security at once from the fire, from Spaniards, and from the equally hostile Morisco, was a question which taxed him to answer. He now had a wholesome dread of buildings, and finally decided upon the garden itself, whose thickets would afford concealment against any but a systematic search.

He found a coppice on one of the upper terraces; and having removed his jambes and sollerets, bandaged his blistered feet with his torn-up kerchief, and crawled into the lair. Physically tortured by burns, mentally by anxiety, he lay broad awake until after sunrise, watching the advancing fire, laboring with the problem before him, and wondering at the presence and hostility of José.

It was late in the day when he awoke and looked out. A strong westerly wind was blowing, and he saw at once that the conflagration was making rapid headway toward the quarter of the palaces. Would reach it by nightfall, if not before. He groaned at his helplessness, forgot his pain, forgot the hunger and thirst now assailing him, and lay the day through, feverishly watching the progress of destruction.

The hours dragged. The air was hot, dry, and stinging with the reek of burning. His throat was parched, his lips split and bleeding, and his face, from the heat in the palace, was raw and so badly swollen that his eyes were almost closed. His burns were maddening. But all his torture of body was a trifle, was nothing, to the agony of beholding the inexorable approach of the fire to the Amarucancha.

By evening he was feverish, and lay reënacting every minute circumstance of the preceding day and nights; went through new struggles quite as real and of

worse torment; and suffered horrors unspeakable.

When night fell he awoke bewildered, unable for a time to untangle the actual from his delirium, and lay staring at the ruddy light, straining to comprehend its meaning. It came like a flash, and he sat up, groping for his arms. Greaved and shod, he staggered out, aching and giddy. His first glance was toward the north.—God of Heaven! The Amarucancha! The fire had crossed the stream!

The temple loomed black against an appalling background of flame. He reeled and went upon his knees, weak with fear; was up and rushing forward, crashing through shrubbery, colliding blindly with tree-trunk and branch, until he reached the court; across it, and into the hall of the temple, its ghostly terrors forgotten. Through the entrance streamed a broad light from the Coricancha. The centre of the city was a vast furnace, a hell, with flames leaping and whirling with the roar of breaking surf.

The long night which followed seemed as unreal in its horror as his delirium. Cristoval went fire-mad.

When he came to his senses, hours later, it was as if awakening from a hideous dream. He had indistinct memories of insane dashes into flame-swept streets, beneath infernal, incandescent canopies, past doorways belching red-hot blasts; of terrible repulse and flights for life; of renewed attempts, and bewilderment in fiery labyrinths whence escape seemed impossible; of weeping, laughing, and shouting frantically for Rava while he battled; of a long detour, later, through dark, fuliginous thoroughfares, hot and stifling as ovens; of finding himself wallowing in a stream, drinking and praying; and at last, of bursting from the darkness upon a squad of startled soldiers and of fighting with the fury of a maniac. How he escaped he knew not; but while he fought, welcoming wounds that seemed to ease his burns, he heard again the shrill, weird cry, "*Allah il Allah!*" saw a pikeman fall with an arrow in his brain, then another and another; and fled alone, unpursued.

After this, dim wanderings through a Cimmerian wilderness of streets, black, desolate, stinking of dead embers, and of eternal length and intricacy, but cool. At last he heard a fountain; staggered into a ruined patio, drank deep, and dropped into the nearest corner, asleep in an instant.

High noon roused him to consciousness of suffering. His swollen eyes would hardly open, and as he moved and groaned he heard a voice beside him:—

"*Allah akbar*! I thought thou wouldst sleep to thy death. *Hola*! Canst see, Cristoval? Dost know me?"

Cristoval's smarting eyes came open with a start, and he stared up at a lank figure in burnoose and turban, bending over him. "José!" he exclaimed, thickly, his lips cracking with the effort, and he sat up, feeling for his sword.

"No need for that, my friend!" said the old armorer. "But look thou, Cristo-

val: call me not José. A curse be upon the name! I am Abul Hassan Zegri. Be thankful that 't is Abul Hassan Zegri, and not one of thy countrymen. What, Cristoval! Dost doubt me? Man, had it been my purpose to do thee harm, I would have saved thee the trouble of awakening!"

Cristoval regarded him distrustfully a moment, and offered his hand. He was in a roofless, blackened apartment, off the court he had entered in search of water. The armorer had dragged him from the fountain into better concealment.

"Canst drink?" asked Abul Hassan, tendering a smoke-stained vessel.

The cavalier drank with avidity, nodding his thanks. Never a draught more delicious; never a drinker more grateful. The Morisco watched him in glum silence, brought more water, and more, and still not enough. "Ho! Let that suffice, Cristoval," he said, at length.

Cristoval groaned, but yielded. "*Madre!*" he mumbled, conscious of his weakness, "what aileth me?"

"What aileth thee! Thou 'rt a fool—a madcap," replied the Morisco, bluntly. "What hare-brained motive hath possessed thee, Cristoval? For two nights and a day I've seen thee in the city, careering like a santon pursued of devils."

"*Por Dios!*" growled Cristoval; "thou wast not far from putting an estoppel upon it, Abul Hassan."

"When I split an arrow on thy casque? I did not know thee, Cristoval, save as a Spaniard—and thou hadst followed me. For what purpose?"

"I was not in purpose to follow thee. It was a chance."

"Then it might have been a costly chance, for I had it in mind to kill thee, until I found thee killing pikemen. What dost seek in Cuzco?"

"The Ñusta Rava."

"Ah!" Abul Hassan studied him narrowly, then asked, "Hast friends outside, among the Indios?" Cristoval nodded.

"As soon as thou canst move we'll seek them," said the other.

The cavalier shook his head. "I must find the Ñusta Rava," he answered, with resolution.

"*Galimatias*! Bosh! Thou'lt find the garrote. Dost know how long thou hast lain thus among these cinders? This is the second day. I found thee yester morning. But, canst eat?"

The Morisco had a pouch well supplied, and the cavalier broke his long fast. He wasted no time in words while a morsel remained of his prudent allowance; but finished and refreshed, he asked, "And thou, Abul Hassan, why art thou in Cuzco?"

"I am here to be near mine enemies."

"Thine enemies!"

"The enemies of my race," said Abul Hassan, with a quick flash in his eyes;

then, regarding the cavalier steadily, he added, with increasing energy, "and of my faith! For, hear me, Cristoval, I am no more a Christian! I am a follower of Mahomet—an unworthy Mussulman whom Allah hath punished for his apostasy!"

Cristoval stared at him, horrified, and crossed himself. At the gesture the old man spat upon the ground in sudden rage.

"Ah! The Cross!" he cried, his face drawn in repugnance. "The Cross! The sign accursed! The sign which hath been stamped upon every atrocity the minds of fiends—of Christians—can invent! The sign under which murder, torture of body and soul, wreck of hearts and minds, have been works of piety! I scorn it, spurn it, and hate it with a living hatred!" He spat again and turned away, his gaunt form trembling with passion.

Cristoval had gained his feet, suspecting a madman. Abul Hassan controlled himself, and faced the cavalier. "Forget the words, Cristoval—if thou canst. I would not offend thee, but—I have suffered much. Behold me, an old and broken man, but hunted, hunted! Once I had loved ones— O, Allah, thy wrath is hard to bear!"

He bowed his head, and Cristoval said hastily: "Say no more, old friend! I owe thee much, and thy words shall not stand between us—nor thy faith, for, by Heaven! I've known other gallant men who were not Christians. Let it pass, Abul Hassan." Cristoval changed the subject, and presently the Morisco resumed his usual composure.

All that day they remained in hiding. Food and rest restored some of the cavalier's strength, but realizing the futility of a hope to accomplish his purpose in his present condition of body, he agreed reluctantly to the wisdom of leaving the city. Late in the evening they started, but though they were in the western suburbs, Cristoval was so crippled by his burns that notwithstanding his companion's assistance they were long in clearing the ruined outskirts. In the open country at last, the Morisco left him concealed while he went to the Peruvian lines for help. He returned with a *hamaca* and bearers, and Cristoval was borne to a hamlet among the foothills on the western margin of the Bolson of Cuzco. Here they found simple medicaments, and when Pedro appeared, two days later, he found his friend much as he had come upon him in Xilcala.

The cook stumped into the cottage without a word. Cristoval was lying, smeared to his eyes in grease, with bandaged limbs, and Pedro looked him over with great severity.

"Well, stew me!" he exclaimed, with bitterness. "If thou 'rt not done brown, Cristoval, then I'm no cook to judge! Broiled to a turn! Roasted with a crust!—and a complexion like a boiled ham in the summer sun. Damnation, man! thou'rt overdone, dost not know it?" He paused, regarded the cavalier for a moment with

increased sternness, then resumed reproachfully: "Ah, but no! Thou hadst no need for Pedro, an experienced cook who would have taken thee out in time, and mayhap saved the gravy—but must go and cook thyself, like a bedeviled Phoenix!" He paused again, and Cristoval smiled slightly, waiting for the storm to pass.

"Grin!" blurted the cook, with irritation. "Thou 'rt as cheerful-looking as a smoked herring. But what the fiend dost think I have had to grin about these several days? 'T is the second time I've mourned for thee as dead, and twice too often!"

Cristoval extended a bandaged hand, and presently the severity faded from Pedro's countenance. He touched the hand, swore a little, and seated himself. "Well, curse it! I'm glad to see thee once more, Cristoval, cooked or raw. But I tell thee, old friend, my belt hath gone loose from worriment!"

CHAPTER XXXVI

The Barricades

The fire had burned itself out and left two-thirds of Cuzco in ruins long before Cristoval was in condition to mount. In the meantime, it had required all of Pedro's persuasion, entreaty, expostulation, and threats, to keep him on his couch. Haunted by the conflagration and visions of Rava in the perils which he had just escaped, he taxed the cook's abundant patience to extremity. The Spaniards' daily sorties were inflicting heavy losses upon the Inca's devoted troops, most of whom, for the first time confronting cavalry and firearms, were led by ignorance into useless sacrifice. When Pedro brought accounts of these engagements the cavalier groaned and fumed, fumed and groaned, and at last declared vehemently that he would lie inactive no longer. The brunt of his unrest fell upon Pedro, for the old Morisco, having seen him in good hands, had stolen away with replenished quiver, to lurk among the ruins and spread death and terror among the ancient enemies of Granada.

One day, intelligence came that the Sachsahuaman had been stormed by the Spaniards and taken. Juan Pizarro had lost his life leading the assault. Mocho and his Antis had been relieved a few days before, and Mayta, the new commander of the fortress, driven with a remnant of its defenders into the citadel, and seeing that the place was lost, had wrapped himself in his cloak and plunged from the

battlements to death.

Pedro brought the tidings,—a double sorrow to Cristoval, for Juan Pizarro had been steadfastly his friend. The cavalier rose abruptly. "Look thou, Pedro! To-morrow I ride. These poor devils of Indios are throwing brave lives away for want of knowledge. 'T is as if they were children dashing themselves over a precipice without warning. They know not even where a Spaniard is vulnerable in his armor. Why, man, were they mine enemies 't would sicken me to see them fight at such hopeless odds! And now, with Juan dead, Rava will be more than ever in danger. I go to-morrow."

Pedro scrubbed his forehead vigorously and growled: "Cristoval, thou 'rt an unringed bull-calf, and I'm of a notion to choke-pear and strait-jacket thee. What canst do in thy condition? Thou'rt sore-footed from thy burns, and wilt shed thy blisters like a lizard his skin before thou 'rt in the saddle an hour. Thou 'rt bad enough, and not over-amusing as it is; but what wilt be with legs like two peeled carrots?"

"No worse than now," replied Cristoval, doggedly, "and at least not idle."

"But what dost think to do?—to fight thy way to the Ñusta Rava?"

"That, if possible. At any rate, to teach these people that cavalry is not to be stopped with bodkins, nor chain-shot with wisps of straw."

"Well," admitted Pedro, thoughtfully, "it would be a God's mercy."

The next morning, with Markumi and Ocallo following, they made a long detour of the Peruvian lines to the camp of the Antis, east of the city. Although the ride was full of pain, the activity was a relief to Cristoval, and as the sun rose upon the valley full of martial sights and sounds, his spirits rose with it. Near midday they were guided to General Mocho, who was on the lines with his troops. They found him with a group of officers on a rise of ground in advance of his battalions, overlooking the ruined suburb, Toco Cachi. He hastened forward to meet them, greeting the cavalier with warmth. The latter lost no time in broaching the subject. Mocho interrupted to summon his officers. They gathered round, listening intently while the cavalier, with his usual brevity and clearness, laid the project before them.

While Cristoval and Pedro refreshed themselves, Mocho went to the pavilion of the Inca on the heights east of the city. Soon *chasquis* were flying to summon the generals in council.

Evening came, with notes of evening calls from trumpets, conchs, and drums, and the movement of battalions relieving those on the line around the city. Then, night with its myriad stars, myriad fires on the hills, and silence. But in Cuzco's blackened purlieus the besiegers were toiling through the hours.

Near midnight Cristoval returned with Pedro from observing the operations which his counsel had set afoot, to have a few hours' sleep. Toward morn-

ing he was roused by Pedro.

"Come, Cristoval! Up and helm. The thing's a-ready to simmer. Stir, man! Thou hast piped, bassooned, and hautboyed until the night hath shuddered and my mule hath wept. Stew me! Cristoval, had I a sleeping-voice like thine I'd gag myself with a saddle-bag, or wear a coffin for a night-robe. Wake up, thou scorched hurdy-gurdy! 'T is the prime hour of chilly misery and the last watch of ghosts and goblins. Ah, curse it! I would I were a barber, and no cook. See what it hath led to, this culinary art! *Hola*! Art awake at last? Well, here is a bite I've spread for thee. Eat, and ballast thy treason, since thou 'rt on treason bent, whilst I look to our saddles."

He went out into the darkness where Ocallo and Markumi waited with their steeds, while Cristoval, now alive, attacked a cold luncheon laid by his thoughtful comrade. He finished hurriedly, and left the tent.

The two Spaniards were quickly in saddle, and with Ocallo and Markumi following, crossed the camp toward the Antisuyu road. This highway, connecting the capital with the eastern provinces, becomes the street in which Cristoval and the Antis encountered the patrol on the first night of the fire. A few minutes' ride brought them to the road, now occupied by a waiting column. Turning toward the city, they were presently in its outskirts. Here they found Mocho with his staff, and dismounting to join them, Cristoval felt his arm touched. He glanced round and beheld a tall figure, clad and armed like the Antis, but wearing a turban.

"Abul Hassan!" exclaimed the cavalier, extending his hand. "I am rejoiced to see thee, old friend. Dost take part with us? I would thou hadst a horse and thine accoutrements."

"With the help of Allah I shall have both before the sun setteth again," replied the Morisco, calmly. He motioned toward a group of twenty or more men with lassos standing near. "Thy herdsmen, Cristoval. I have heard of thine expedient—a most excellent one!"

"I pray it will prove so," said the other, "and that we soon shall see thee mounted. When equipped, seek us. We'll find thee occupation."

The Morisco nodded grimly, and Cristoval and Pedro passed on to Mocho. In front were men at work in the darkness, and the general gave his hand, saying, "The task is well advanced, Viracocha Cristoval. Let us move forward."

He led the way into the street, which had been made, in pursuance of Cristoval's instructions, a confusion, of half-burned timbers, pieces of furniture which had escaped the fire, and all manner of *débris*. Heaped, lashed together, and interlaced, they formed an entanglement difficult for men on foot, and for cavalry barely surmountable. The adobe walls on each side had been pierced with loopholes for the archers, and the side-streets barricaded against flanking.

The party picked their way slowly, climbing over here, bending to pass

under there, while Cristoval inspected, commended, or advised, until they had penetrated far into the suburb, where the workmen were still toiling. Until near dawn they directed the Antis pouring silently into the suburb and occupying the ruined buildings along the obstructed way. Cristoval saw the men with lassos properly placed, and the party returned to the outskirts.

A few minutes later, a company of warriors made its way through the entanglement into the city, going forward to draw a Spanish attack.

Cristoval and Pedro stood near the group around Mocho. The sky was light when far in the distant streets they heard the war-cry of the Antis. Immediately followed the hoarse shouts of the Spaniards, shots, and trumpets calling to arms. The sounds were faintly borne on the morning breeze, but full of portent, and echoed in many a warlike heart among the ruins of the suburbs. Mocho moved forward, giving Cristoval a wave of the hand as he passed, and a rustling and shuffling rose in the road back of where the two Spaniards stood as the waiting warriors took their places in column.

As Cristoval mounted, he heard a grunt and a sigh from Pedro, then the creaking of the saddle as the cook swung from the ground, and the two picked their way slowly down the littered street. Arquebuses were crackling, and now, the heavier and sharper report of a falconet. The firing ceased, and arose the nearing din of cavalry. The decoying party of Antis was flying before it in a dash for the fatal entanglement upon which the Spaniards were blindly rushing. The Antis reached it; were dimly seen by Cristoval as they leaped into the *débris*; then came the crash of breaking timbers when the pursuing troop struck the obstruction, a confusion of yells and Spanish shouts of warning, drowned by the war-cries of the tribesmen behind the walls as they delivered their terrible volley. A wild, tossing disarray of horses and riders, plunging and falling among the snapping beams, ridden over by the resistless torrent from behind. Men and animals down and struggling in the wreckage, crushed beneath those borne onward by the momentum of the charge, and assailed by the hordes of Antis rushing from the buildings. Riderless steeds, maddened by fear and wounds, careered wildly forward, or turned to the rear and added to the chaos. Troopers retaining their seats were blinded by the tempest of arrows and javelins, and could only shelter themselves behind their shields, bending low over saddle-bows to avoid the hail. Still they were forced on up the narrow, encumbered street, which roared with tumult indescribable.

Now Cristoval heard a Spanish voice rising above the clamor: "Forward! Forward! Forward!" and the notes of a trumpet, broken and faltering before it could blow the command. The column must fight through, or be crushed by those in the rear. The leading riders pressed on, sabring at the multitude crowding from all sides. Cristoval advanced with Pedro to meet them. A lasso serpentined

through the haze of flying arrows, settled over the foremost trooper, and jerked him from his saddle, to be lost among the Antis as if swallowed by the sea. Other sinuous lines shot out, fastening upon the Spaniards and dragging them to quick obliteration. Those in advance paused, fear-struck by a weapon against which their blades were powerless. They saw comrades totter and go down; turned in panic, and Cristoval was among them.

Fell and relentless purpose in this cavalier; his arm nerved and strength doubled by thought of Rava. The nearest troopers, dismayed and disordered, opposed feeble resistance to the furious onslaught of Cristoval and his comrade; while those behind, aware of a new check to the advance, the cause of which they could not see, raised the cry, "To the rear!" It was caught up at once; and now, panic and disorder tenfold.

As Cristoval fought he heard a cry rising shrill, "*Allah il Allah! Allah il Allah!*" and Abul Hassan was beside him, mounted on the steed of some fallen Spaniard. Into the fray the Morisco, reckless of want of armor, fighting with the ferocity of a demon.

The retreat was more disastrous than the advance; but slowly the troop fought back to the open street, shook itself free, and fled. The jaunty sorties were to be made no more.

At Hernando's council that night, once more glum taciturnity. From dawn there has been, on every hand, sharp repulse unexampled since the siege began: many saddles empty for result, and a general call for surgery. Every street by which many a brisk sally has been made in previous weeks, now impassable for cavalry; and barricades pushed within bowshot of the square. The abrupt change in the tactics of the besiegers is ominous. The presence of Peralta—for the identity of the cavalier seen, and felt, fighting among the Antis, is not doubted—is significant, and the price on his head is doubled.

Toward evening Cristoval was joined by Pedro at the edge of the barricade. The cavalier had laid off his helmet and was begrimed to the roots of his hair with ashes and black dust from the charred timbers, his face streaked with perspiration, his reddened eyes gleaming strangely through their surrounding sootiness. He turned to his comrade and said with a grim smile:—

"Aha! Pedro, we seem to have put them on the defensive, yonder in the square. What sayst thou?"

"Why, I say first," returned Pedro, eying him sharply, "that if I caught myself with a grin as weird as that of thine, I'd wear a wooden face as well as a wooden leg. Untwist thy features, man! Thou hast the look of a devil. Ah! Now, I'll reply to thine observation by saying that I'm hungry; and as for those knaves in the square, we have them where they will stay for a spell, or longer, without being told. So let us go and eat."

Cristoval, about to reply, noted a sudden silence among the Antis. Every one of them was on his knees and bending toward the three or four nobles who had just drawn near.

"*Madre*! The Inca!" exclaimed Pedro, then he growled beneath his breath, "Now look at these pagans! Every man doubled up like a razor, and everything dropped without a word of warning! Suppose the Inca had come about this morning, Cristoval! We had been undone."

Cristoval made no answer, for an officer recognized as Quehuar was beckoning.

The two Spaniards halted a few paces from the monarch and saluted, awaiting his pleasure to speak. His countenance, more bronzed and sterner in its lines, wore a trace of friendliness not there before. The Inca studied the grim, murky visage of the cavalier before he spoke.

"Viracocha Cristoval," he said, at length, "General Mocho hath told me of thy gallantry to-day—and thine, Viracocha Pedro—and I see evidence here of thy zeal and soldierly skill. My warriors owe thee a measure of success and hope thus far wanting. What thou hast accomplished hath mine appreciation and gratitude, as hath all thou hast done hitherto. There is more that I would say to you, Viracochas, but at a fitter time. To-night you will sup with me, both."

The Inca gave a hand to each, and turned to continue his tour of the suburbs.

The two Spaniards supped with the Inca at dark, in the open, at a table lighted by a circle of fires. Of the score present several were officers met at Ollantaytambo; among the strangers the Villac Vmu, now in warrior's garb. A number besides Mocho bore marks of recent fighting. The formality imposed by the presence of the monarch was lacking, and he met his guests with a revelation of his personality unexpectedly agreeable to Cristoval. As guest of honor the cavalier had opportunity to correct the impression gained at their first interview, that the young potentate was a mere barbarous tyrant. By the end of the meal, when Manco pledged first him, then Pedro, clinking their cups of *chicha* with his own, a friendliness was established which neither Cristoval nor his host could have foreseen.

In quiet moods the resemblance of Manco to his sister Rava was pronounced, and there were moments acutely painful to Cristoval, when some inflection of the Inca's voice, some gesture, or an evanescent expression of his eyes, brought a quick vision of the loved one. But the Ñusta Rava was not mentioned. Indeed, the captives within the city were not referred to, nor any of the losses sustained since the beginning of the siege. This was demanded by Peruvian stoicism; and for all said that night the misfortunes of Tavantinsuyu might have been unfelt. As they scorned manifestation of physical pain, so they hid mental suffering beneath an exterior of grave impassibility.

At Mocho's tent, some hours later, when Cristoval was taking leave for the night, the general said abruptly: "Viracocha Cristoval, thou hast done for us today that for which words cannot thank thee. I will not try. But the Antis, their officers, and their general, are thine. Command them. Lead them whither thou wilt, and thou'lt find the last living man of them behind thee."

The cavalier replied with a grip of the hand. He had few words. But when he went to his quarters he felt a sudden hope. With those fierce battalions might he not search every nook of Cuzco? Mocho knew the object of his quest when he entered the burning city, and his tender was significant. That night there was little sleep for Cristoval.

At dawn he sought the prisoners, found one whom he knew, and questioned him concerning the Ñusta Rava. Was she alive? Alive, and safe in the Acllahuasi with the rest of the royal household, Father Valverde guarding like a hawk. All had been removed from the Amarucancha before it burned, and the Acllahuasi was one of the few buildings to escape the conflagration.

Cristoval waited to ask few more questions. With Mocho and Pedro he held council for an hour. At the end of it the two Spaniards mounted, and making a detour of the suburbs, entered the Rimac Pampa, crossed the Tullamayu, and reached the square called Coricancha, in front of the Temple of the Sun. This quarter was held by the Piros and Conibos, and once more Cristoval greeted Matopo, whom he had not seen since leaving the Urubamba. From the Coricancha a street led north to the square occupied by the Spaniards, and from the barricade thrown up by Matopo could be seen the Acllahuasi at the head of the thoroughfare, with the Amarucancha on its left, across the way. Plainly visible, also, was a Spanish breastwork defending the square, with a falconet scowling from its single embrasure.

That night Cristoval and Mocho consulted with the Inca regarding the captives within the city.

Day came with a heavy sky and threat of rain. During the morning sorties were attempted by the Spaniards, evidently for reconnaissance, for after brief skirmishing in the littered streets, the attacking parties withdrew. The afternoon was spent by Cristoval in making a tour of the suburbs with the Inca, inspecting the barricades, suggesting improvements, and perfecting or advancing the investment.

With darkness came rain and a rising wind. The night would favor. Toward midnight Cristoval rode with Pedro to the Coricancha. The square was massed with Antis, and in advance, near the barricade across the street to the Acllahuasi, was a picked body, among them their general, equipped with captured arms and

armor—a resolute band, which Cristoval surveyed with satisfaction.

CHAPTER XXXVII

A Night Attack and a Deliverance

The rain fell drearily, driven and swished by flaws of the wind, which, as the night deepened, increased to a gale, moaning and whistling mournfully through the ruins. The hours lagged, measured by the brusque challenging of the Spanish sentinels at each relief, distinctly heard above the storm. Still the cavalier withheld the word for the advance, biding the night's most sinister hour.

He waited with apparent patience. But outwardly calm, within was a turbulence of mingled hope and anxiety, eagerness and doubt; throngs of dear anticipations, and clouds of dark misgivings. He was a lover with the possibility of meeting his beloved ere the night was spent; but while his heart palpitated at the thought, it sank at the attending uncertainties, and at all that must intervene. He turned abruptly, not daring to dwell upon a happiness so unassured. Mocho looked toward him. "Do we move, Viracocha Cristoval?"

"In God's name, yes! Let us go!"

Mocho muttered a word to the nearest Antis; as it passed to the rear of the column a movement followed, barely audible. Cristoval unsheathed his sword and laid aside belt and scabbard. Pedro imitated with a sigh and murmured, "Well, this is what cometh of being a cook! Would I were—" He did not finish. He had muffled his peg, and followed the cavalier noiselessly as the latter stole out through a breach in the barricade to the open street. Mocho, Abul Hassan, and the squad of mail-clad Antis, were close behind; then, the main body. With the advance were two men armed with sledges.

Cristoval moved forward in the darkness with caution, pausing at moments to bate his breath and listen. Along the wall of the roofless palace of the Priesthood of the Sun, past black doorways full of subdued echoings of the dismal plash and drip in the courts within, until they reached an intersecting street. Only this short distance covered! He seemed to have travelled an hour. Looking back he found his party close upon him, motionless, dimly seen in the faint light of the crossing. Forward again, counting his steps. Three hundred paces, and he halted. Here was the Acllahuasi, its thatch saved from the fire by miracle. On his left, the Amarucancha—blank walls with a few roof-timbers vaguely outlined against

low-hanging clouds. The gate of the convent must be near, and he waited to allow the tribesmen to pass the barricade. The movement of those nearest him ceased; there was no sound from the rear, and for a time, as he stood looking back into the gloom, Cristoval feared the Antis were not following. A figure appeared before him as silently as a phantom, and stretching forth his hand, he felt a quilted tunic. At once another was beside him, and a third, and the cavalier could see the stealthy movement of hundreds, creeping forward with the still tread of pumas. Slowly they massed, and touching Pedro's arm, Cristoval advanced.

In front, through the cleft between the black walls on either hand, was a pale flickering from the square, where the fires were struggling in the rain, ruddily lighting the mist when a blast started a few scattered sparks, subsiding to a feeble glow until the buildings melted into obscurity. He could descry the breastwork across the head of the street, and the embrasure from which a falconet commanded the approach. He looked in vain for a sentinel. But presently, the faint ring of a grounded halberd: the sentinel was there, and awake.

Groping along the wall on his right, he came to a recess,—the gate! Pedro and Mocho halted beside him. Passing his hand over the doors, Cristoval felt the padlock, which rattled slightly under his trembling fingers, and he drew back. Mocho pushed the two sledge-men into the gateway, and they placed themselves with hammers poised.

The Antis were now moving past, led by Abul Hassan, and a detail detached themselves and halted, ready to follow into the Acllahuasi. Minute after minute fled, and the warriors crept on toward the square, while Cristoval waited, shivering with excitement until he clenched his teeth to prevent their rattling. Hours, hours, he stood before the gates behind which he should find joy or despair, listening for what would be the signal. The movement of the Antis was hardly audible above the wind and rain, though as one after another brushed past he heard their breathing, strained with the tension of coming battle. The street was dense with them, their bent bodies and constrained, fearfully slow advance as expressive of fierce intentness as if it could be read in their faces. But, gods! would they never reach the square? Had the Morisco halted? Cristoval leaned forward and glanced up the street: a quivering level of brazen helmets, half luminous in the reflection from the firelit haze ahead.

As he looked, a shout rose from the sentinel, hoarse and startled, cut short by the deafening war-cry of the Antis as they rushed.

"Strike! Strike!" shouted Cristoval, and the gates thundered and crashed under the sledges. Stroke after stroke fell upon the resonant panels, shattering them to fragments. The street bellowed and howled. From the square, wild shouts, the sharp blasts of a trumpet, the roar of the assaulting Antis. A shot, then a second, and a broken fusillade. A flash lighted the dripping walls, and an

ear-stunning report rent the heavy air. The rampart was high, and before the Antis were over a soldier had seized a brand, rushed to the piece, uncovered the vent and fired. Unheeding wounds and death, the Antis were on the parapet, and the gun dismounted. They were over the work and into the square, driving the half-formed infantry before them. But for days no horse had been unsaddled, no trooper out of his armor. In a moment the earth was trembling with their onset, and the Antis were hurled back to the barricade. Here they stopped and fought, hand to hand. At other points, now, the yells and turmoil of assault, the flash and roar of guns. A few defences were carried, and the Peruvians plunged into the square, to be met and broken by flying squads of horse, driven back into the streets and slaughtered by the artillery.

But the Antis held the rampart, and the gate of the Acllahuasi was broken through. Followed by Pedro, Mocho, and a score of warriors, Cristoval dashed into the enclosure. The darkness was pitchy, and he went headlong into a copse of shrubbery, stumbled through into a path, lost it at once, and lost himself in another thicket. Half a minute had separated him from his friends. He groped about in bewilderment, blundering on. Heard voices, and shouted: answered, as it seemed, from every point of the compass. One voice was Pedro's, but Heaven alone could have sent a clue to its direction. He was in a great garden, dark with foliage intersected by a maze of paths. He crashed forward into another gravelled walk, and brought up against a wall. He was across the enclosure, and felt a pavement beneath his feet. He could discern doorways, numbers of them, all alike; some open, with empty dark chambers, some closed. He followed to the right, trying the closed ones, finding them unlocked and the rooms vacant. No sign of life, and he hurried on with sinking heart, sick with the fear that he had come too late. The night was hideous with the clamor outside, but he gave little heed, intent only on his quest. He heard a step, and ran against someone in the gloom, who sprang back with a familiar exclamation and engaged him. "Pedro!" he shouted, and the cook responded: "Thou, Cristoval! Heaven be praised! Where the fiend are we? Where are the others?"

"Only the fiend knoweth. Come!" They hastened along, throwing open doors, but finding everywhere darkness and vacancy. Cristoval's hope was fast going. "Oh, my God! Oh, my God!" he muttered over and over. "Where is she? Rava! Rava!" he called. "Answer, in the name of Heaven!"

Suddenly a gruff voice commanded in Spanish, "Halt!" Cristoval sprang forward. Again the summons, "Halt!" and a burly form loomed in the darkness with a mace raised to strike. "Halt! I command you in the name of the Holy Church!"

"Father Valverde!" cried the cavalier. "Hold, man! I am—"

The mace descended with sturdy force, dexterously caught on Cristoval's

buckler. In an instant the priest's heels were kicked from under him, and Cristoval strode past, while Pedro seated himself upon the prostrate ecclesiastic. Without hesitation Cristoval tried the door Valverde had been guarding. It was fast, and he hurled his weight against it. At the second assault it yielded, burst open at the next, and the cavalier found himself in a dimly-lighted room, facing a group of shrieking women clinging about one who confronted him with unwavering, courageous eyes, but with no sign of recognition.

He stepped forward and halted, strove to speak, and failed, and stood overcome, while the women, made hysterical by the tumult beyond the convent walls, wailed at his dread appearance. He had forgotten his lowered visor, his bared sword, and the seeming menace of his attitude, and could only murmur hoarsely as he advanced: "Rava! Rava! Dost not know me—Cristoval?"

She cowered away, glaring in terror and anger, but with no word. He halted again, and lost his voice, standing before her helpless in a sudden fear. "Rava!" he cried in desperation. "Rava! in God's name, child, hast forgotten me?"—Then thought of his visor and raised it.

Her expression changed slowly to one of wonder and unbelief, and she raised her hand to her heart, growing suddenly more pallid. In the semi-darkness of the room she was uncertain until he spoke her name again. Then she stretched forth her hands, took a step forward, and sank with a sob into the arms of the Ñusta Ocllo.

In a second Cristoval had her in his own, pressing his lips to hers, to her forehead, and to her eyes until she opened them; but quite too choked himself to speak—this stalwart cavalier!—and half blinded by something he feared she would see.

"Oh—is it thou, my Cristoval?" she murmured, raising her hand to touch his swarthy cheek, only half-convinced by her eyes. "Ah, my love, I thought thee forever lost!" and in a passion of weeping she put her arms about the steel-covered neck, pressing her cheek upon his breastplate, insensible to its cold and hardness, conscious only of a joy beyond belief.

They were oblivious of those around them, of the din of battle coming through the open door; forgetful of all but one another, and might have remained fatally so, had not the Auqui Paullo rushed in, followed at once by Pedro and Father Valverde. The bishop had been disarmed, and was flaming with rage. The youth, wild-eyed, and pale with the excitement of the night, halted at the astounding spectacle of his sister embracing a Viracocha. Before he had recovered, Mocho dashed in and seized his arm.

"Auqui Paullo," cried the general, "there is no moment to lose! Assemble the women and get them to the gate. Hasten!"

Mocho in armor was unrecognized. Paullo wrenched himself free and de-

manded angrily, "Who art thou?"

"Oh, Supay!—I am Mocho! Fly, Paullo!—Cristoval; do not tarry. Lead the Ñusta to the gate."

Paullo stared for a second, then hurried out to collect the rest of the household. Mocho turned to the wailing women. Cristoval was gently forcing Rava toward the door when Father Valverde, as suspicious of the cavalier as of any other soldier, interposed. Planting himself in front of the two, he commanded sternly:—

"Peralta, forbear! Release the maiden. She remaineth here."

Cristoval surveyed him in astonishment and anger. "Remaineth here, priest! Art mad? Out of the way!"

"Release her!" commanded Valverde, advancing to restrain her. Cristoval interposed his buckler and thrust him roughly back.

"Release her!" thundered the bishop. "Pass me on pain of the wrath of the Church, her holy guardian! Rava, beware this man, and remember thy promise! Peralta, this maiden is for no man."

The cavalier laughed in his face. "Stand aside!" he cried, savagely. "Thou'rt in peril, Valverde!"

Valverde raised his hand in menace. "*Excommunicabo te*—" he began solemnly; and Cristoval blanched, then replied, fiercely:—

"Excommunicate and be damned! I defy thee! By what right this interference? Aside! lest I forget thy gown." He strode past. Valverde, white with passion, would have sprung upon him, but Mocho, furious at delay, thrust himself between with his sword at the bishop's breast, his eyes blazing with vindictiveness. "Back, Viracocha, or by the great Inti, I will lay thee open!"

Valverde recoiled, and Cristoval hurried to the door with Rava, followed by the women, whom Mocho drove after them with scant ceremony.

They were soon at the gate with all of the household that could be collected. But many of the terrified women had hidden themselves, and there was no time to search. Outside, the conflict was still raging. The Antis were holding the breastwork with desperate valor and determination, Abul Hassan at the front, for the hour a madman, a Moslem fanatic: pity the Spaniard who came within reach of his terrible blade. Ocallo and Markumi, with the other armored Antis, fought beside him, tigers. At the gate the street was a mere madness of warriors struggling to the places of those who fell.

Mocho and Cristoval forced themselves into the throng, leading the convoy of women surrounded by the detail which had followed into the Acllahuasi. It was minutes before they could make an avenue through the tribesmen, but at length they gave way, and leaving the two Spaniards to take the rescued to the rear, Mocho turned back to the rampart, which must be held until the women

were in safety. Slowly Cristoval forged through the press, keeping close to the wall, and at length the worst was past. A hundred yards more, and they were at Matopo's barricade and through the breach: Rava was delivered from her peril.

Cristoval sought her in the crowd of hysterical women, and reached her side. No time for words. He embraced her once, and before she knew his purpose he was gone. Now she was safe, his duty lay elsewhere. The Antis must be withdrawn.

Once more to the front, crowding, staggering, almost fighting his way through the mass, Cristoval became aware that Pedro was behind. He turned and shouted into the cook's ear: "Back, Pedro! For the sake of Heaven, go to the rear!"

There was scorn in Pedro's voice as he leaned forward and roared, "*Infierno!*"

Of damnable obstinacy, this cook! Cristoval pushed on, every step more difficult. Here was an officer. The cavalier seized him by the shoulder, bellowing and gesticulating that the Antis must be retired. Hopeless! Mocho was at the front. Retreat and leave their general?

Forward, then, the cavalier, and at last the breastwork. Here was hell's own fury. The work had been lost and retaken repeatedly by the Antis, and was half demolished, its crest a rampart of dead. Mocho's men had just been swept from it and the Spaniards were in the street. The square and its approaches at other points had been cleared, and many of the troopers had dismounted to fight here. Their weight had turned the tide, and Mocho had lost some dozen yards. Cristoval reached the point of contact, Pedro close behind and roaring a battle-cry. In the pressure, the foremost of the foes fought shield against shield in a swaying, howling death-struggle of men bereft of reason, the more horrible for the darkness. Cristoval could see nothing, or, vaguely, a wild surging around him. Knew that he was in touch with the enemy only when his buckler rang with the blow of a mace. Then he fought.

For the rest, a mere delirium, hardly to be remembered. He heard Mocho's war-cry, the Morisco's howl, and knew they were alive. Pedro was beside him. Their two fresh blades in the narrow thoroughfare turned the tide once more, slowly at first, then with a rush, and Cristoval was atop of the breastwork. Battled here a brief minute, and was hurled back by a fresh charge from the square—but with the memory of having seen a spark of fire!

A spark of fire! Trivial! But what if it were a lighted gunner's match?

Cristoval gave voice. Found Mocho, and roared a warning. A Spanish trumpet was blowing the recall, and the charge had been arrested. Mocho was ordering back his men, but as well shout at a mountain torrent. They bore forward with resistless pressure, and Cristoval was forced against the rampart, fighting

them back and shouting with all the strength of his lungs. Futile! They passed and were mounting the rampart. As he stood on the *débris* at the foot of the scarp he was head and shoulders above the work, and glancing up, saw again the spark of fire, just as he felt himself seized by a strong hand and dragged back toward the wall of the Acllahuasi. Pedro shouted something, drowned by an explosion that shook the earth, and in the flash he saw—horror not to be told. A gun had been dragged to the top of the breastwork and fired in the very faces of the Antis.

Horror not to be told, not to be imagined, while falconet and arquebus raked the street. Pedro held the cavalier with firm grip as they crouched beneath the spurts and flashes of the fire overhead, their ears benumbed by the repeated shocks.

At length the rush and yells of the retreating Antis died away, and the arquebus-fire was stopped; but the falconet still roared, though with longer intervals between the shots. Cristoval counted the seconds intervening. There would be time enough to allow a dash to the gate of the Acllahuasi, where they would have cover until the firing ceased. He spoke to Pedro,—no fear of being overheard, for the night was full of voices raised in every intonation which agony could wrench from human lips. Between explosions they reached the gate through the stinging atmosphere, but as they turned into its shelter Cristoval halted his comrade with a hand upon his arm. From the enclosure came the sound of Spanish voices, and lights were flitting. Valverde had reported the invasion, and the place had been entered through another door. A party was coming toward the gate. No alternative, then, but to keep the street, count the seconds, and before each discharge, throw themselves upon the pavement behind their bucklers. These, faced with steel, might deflect the slugs and fragments with which the gun was charged.

The intervals lengthened to near a minute, the firing being a mere warning against renewed attack; and the street had not ceased to reverberate after the next explosion before the two were away. Poor Pedro's speed was not high, and Cristoval moderated his own, counting as he ran. "Down!" he cried, at the limit of the period of safety, and they went upon the ground full length. Now the report, and the deadly blast flew over. Cristoval was up and speeding, the cook close in his rear, then down once more and waiting with nerves a-quiver. Again the report, but this time with a thick patter of the projectiles on every hand as the charge spread with the increase of range. With a call to Pedro, the cavalier sprang to his feet and dashed on. Twice more he dropped and covered himself: gained the barricade, and was through the breach. He turned with a shout to his comrade. There was no reply.

Cristoval called again, answered by the moaning of the wind, a sound unnoticed since they had left the barricade, he could not have said how many hours

ago. Some one laid hand upon his shoulder:—Mocho, bandaged. Cristoval gave his hand a silent pressure, and shouted again. There was a flash far up the street, the report, and the barricade sputtered. Antis gathered round, and the cavalier turned to them, seeking hope against despair.

"Hath he been seen—the Viracocha Pedro? Quick!—hath he been seen?"

They communed among themselves, and the question was passed back. Mocho answered after a silence, but Cristoval was straining his eyes toward the square. He knew the reply before the question had left his lips. "God have mercy! I fear for him!" he was muttering. "Oh, God have mercy!"

Once more the street flashed and roared, and Cristoval started forward. Mocho halted him.

"Stay, friend!" cried the general. "Hast lost thy mind? Whither?"

"I must find him," said Cristoval, and was gone.

The way was littered with wounded and dead, grewsome obstacles over which he stumbled as he crouched along, groping among the bodies for one in steel, but counting with diligence. He had not gone twenty paces before Mocho was beside him. The cavalier dragged him into a doorway: "Lord Mocho, thou must return!"

"With thee: not before!" replied the general. The falconet spoke again. Cristoval stood irresolute, then exclaimed: "Rashness, my lord!—but I am grateful. Come! Keep close, and drop at my word."

They sallied forth on their desperate, almost hopeless errand, searching for a few brief, fevered seconds, then prone to wait for the deadly flurry. Thus they proceeded slowly, far up the street. The interval between the shots had grown—near five minutes, was the cavalier's rough guess—and they covered the ground more rapidly. At last the firing ceased. The searchers were in front of the Acllahuasi, and turned back. They must hasten, for dawn was at hand, and through the powder-smoke the mangled forms on the pavement were indistinctly visible, a grievous sight to Mocho. Should the veil lift, the hunt would end abruptly. Now, however, it went on without interruption.

Somewhere near the cross-street a suppressed exclamation from the cavalier drew Mocho to his side. He was bending over a prostrate form in armor, and the general, as he neared, heard a sound very like a sob. Pedro lay face downward and quite still, but as Cristoval gently rolled him over he groaned slightly, and they knew him to be alive. Silently they raised him and started on their return.

In the last few minutes the light had grown appreciably, and the street was almost clear of smoke. In the direction of the square they heard voices: a Spanish search-party, looking for their own wounded. Cristoval glanced back, and they pressed on. The barricade was but a few yards away when there was a shout near the Acllahuasi. They had been observed. Another shout, and the

report of an arquebus.—Poor marksmanship, thought Cristoval. A second shot, and a ball struck the pavement close by, and with a vicious sing and spat hit the barricade. A third, and Cristoval stumbled to his knees with a quick catch of breath. He staggered up at once, his face white. "It is naught," he replied hurriedly to Mocho's startled question, and glanced anxiously at Pedro, from whom the jolt had started a groan.

They passed the barricade, laid their burden on the ground, and kneeling beside him, Cristoval rapidly removed the armor. There was a ragged hole through Pedro's corselet beneath his right arm, one more ragged and terrible in his side where a projectile had torn its way, but a hasty examination showed that it had passed entirely through. Cristoval worked quickly, cutting away the clothing, and while water and bandages were being sought, laid aside his own helmet, conscious that a numbness in his shoulder had given place to pain. But he finished with Pedro's wound, and rose, somewhat giddy, to ask assistance in disarming. Matopo was beside him. Cristoval grasped his arm.

"She is safe, Matopo—the Ñusta Rava?" demanded the cavalier. "Speak! Thou hast seen her in safety?"

"She is safe, Viracocha Cristoval," answered an even voice behind him, and turning, he beheld the Inca. Paullo was at his side, and near by, a group of nobles. Manco extended his hand and continued: "She is safe—I thank the great Inti, and thee!"

Cristoval took the proffered hand, but the reaction from hours of strain was upon him, with the realization that he had found his love and led her out of danger. The agony of months was ended. "Sapa Inca," he began, unsteadily, but could say no more, and Manco, as he released his hand, felt it shaking.

The young monarch eyed him gravely, his sombre eyes growing thoughtful, then kindly, when he said as if in obedience to an impulse:—

"Viracocha, should I try to tell thee my gratitude the words could but make it seem unequal to thy gallant service. Once, I offered thee a gift. Now, I offer thee another which hath no value but the honor which it beareth with it, and the esteem which I wish it to express." He drew from his bosom a *llautu*, woven of vari-colored cords and threads of gold and silver. Braided in the fringe were strands of the imperial red of which his own diadem was made. He stepped forward, and pausing slightly, said, "I beg thou wilt accept it, Viracocha Cristoval."

The cavalier replied earnestly, with a quick rise of color, "My Lord Inca Manco, I accept it most gratefully and proudly."

"Then I make thee an Inca of Tavantinsuyu by Privilege," said the monarch, and placed the *llautu* upon Cristoval's head. He touched the red in the fringe. "This, my Lord Cristoval, I bestow as a mark of especial confidence. Thou knowest its significance and power, for I am not the first to give it thee." He turned to

Pedro. "For thy brave comrade I shall find another expression of my gratitude. He must be brought to my headquarters, where there are tents for you both." He made a slight gesture to stay Cristoval's words of thanks, and giving his hand once more, added: "The Ñusta Rava, my lord, will thank thee for herself."

As the Inca moved away, his nobles gathered round the cavalier with words of friendship. Paullo had taken both his hands, saying something eagerly, but his voice seemed strangely far away. The earth was rolling and whirling, and Cristoval heard some one exclaim, "Great Inti, he is hurt!" Mocho was supporting him, and he knew no more.

They found a wounded shoulder, not dangerous, but much blood had flowed, as they discovered by his saturated clothing.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

A Tie of Mingled Blood

Cristoval became languidly conscious of the swaying of a litter; then he was being lifted to a couch in a tent softly aglow with morning sunshine, and heard friendly voices around him. He opened his eyes, and with an effort whispered an inquiry for Pedro.

"He is being cared for, my lord," said an officer, bending over. "He is badly hurt, but hath asked for you. Otherwise, his mind seemeth to wander, for he muttered something which Markumi translated as a request to be stewed. We did not heed him, Lord Cristoval."

Cristoval smiled faintly and dozed again.

When he awoke the tent had grown dim with the declining day. As he lay with partly open eyes he became aware of clasping something in his hand that pressed his own and trembled. He raised it weakly, and his eyes travelled from a wrist to a rounded arm. A face hovered over him, lovely as a vision, with dark eyes deep with tenderness and solicitude.

"Rava!" he whispered; and she knelt, pressing her cheek against his own, her form, as he passed his arm around her, quivering with a passion of joy. He would have spoken, but she pressed her fingers upon his lips, murmuring an injunction and nestling closer. Cristoval was content, and lay marvelling that contentment could be so perfect.

But if he could not speak, he could listen, and he hearkened to whispered

words, mere incoherencies, broken by faintest of sighs, coming from the depths of a heart which beat with love without reserve. They are not to be set down here, those sweet, disordered fragments, nor are their like to be comprehended save by the ear into which they are breathed.

The interview was short. A mere swift glimpse of happiness, and she had torn herself away, lingering in a final caress, and gone. Cristoval was left with the memory of her presence and touch, ineffably sweet, until submerged in the pain of helpless longing.

The next morning the old man who attended him brought news. Pedro was low, and his chances for recovery not yet determined, but there was hope. Abul Hassan had crept into Matopo's barricade during the night, mortally hurt. Ocallo and Markumi had both been wounded, the former seriously. Not a man in contact with the Spaniards came out unscathed, and the total losses of the night were grave. What the enemy had sustained could only be guessed, but they had since lain inactive, though apparently doubly vigilant, and strengthening their defences.

Before midday Rava came with Paullo and remained an hour or more. She forbade Cristoval's speaking, and talked little herself, but it may be said that the silence was not constrained. The day dragged after her departure, but the cavalier slept, and was without fever. The following day they came again, and Rava remained long. By a blessed fortune Paullo was called away on three several occasions, and the moments were not lost. Still she permitted few words, touching his lips and bidding him wait. As she left she looked back with a swift, bright glance, full of some meaning which he could not fathom, but withal, most agreeable to remember. Later, came the Inca with Mocho and the Villac Vmu, but their stay was short. Pedro, said Mocho, was better.

The day passed slowly, quietly. Night fell, and Cristoval prayed for fortitude to endure the wait for the morrow and Rava's visit; his patience inversely proportioned to his gaining strength. He slept to awake toward midnight stronger and more refreshed. The attendant dozed with his back against the tent-pole. Cristoval was staring at the feeble light, musing on the fatuity of a number of demented moths there courting a painful death, while he wondered whether their singed wings would smart as he had smarted after his own encounter with fire; and whether, furthermore, they too fancied themselves impelled by love. He forgot the moths in counting the hours before seeing her again. His eyes were closed. They opened at a faint rustle, and he beheld an apparition. Within the tent door stood Rava, her eyes dark with excitement, but smiling as she touched her lips for silence. The attendant glided from his seat to his knees in an ecstasy of amazement. She whispered, and he vanished as if he himself had been an apparition. Cristoval saw a flush of color mount to her cheeks. The next instant she

had extinguished the light, and was kneeling beside his couch in the darkness. No phantom, this, but living, palpitating flesh and blood, warm arms that crept about his neck, and a heaving bosom to which his head was pressed.

Rava drew away and whispered breathlessly, passing her hand over his face: "Oh, Cristoval, what canst think of me? But I could endure no longer, and now I will tell thee why I have come—"

The pressure of Cristoval's arm told his thought. "What can I think, my own! Only of thy love and mine, and my gratitude. God make me always worthy of the joy thou givest, dear heart!"

"Worthy of it, Cristoval! Of what hast thou not shown thyself worthy, over and again?—and thy gratitude, my love! Ah, then what must mine be to thee? But I must tell thee why I have come to-night: It is to say farewell—Nay! but hear me—not a long farewell—to-morrow I go to Yucay."

The darkness deepened for Cristoval. "To-morrow!" he groaned. "No, no! It cannot be, Rava. How can I live? The hope of seeing thee hath kept me alive. Thou'lt not leave me!"

She touched his lips again. "Be patient, Cristoval. Yucay is not distant, and it is the Inca's wish that I go. Bethink thee! This is a camp."

"Ah, true!" he said, sorrowfully. "No place for thee, and there might be danger. Thou must go, though it is despair for me, Rava. But say we shall meet soon again."

"Could I leave thee else, Cristoval?"

They were silent until Cristoval asked: "Is there other reason for thy going, Rava? The Inca knoweth my love for thee. Is not that in part the cause?"

"I know not. He knoweth mine for thee."

"Hath he said?"

"No: he hath said naught of thee to me, and from his silence I am sure. I know not what is in his mind. He is as tender as he used to be in earlier days—he parted from me in anger, Cristoval, months ago, in the Amarucancha, when he learned I had become a Christian. His anger hath gone, but he regardeth me always with strange sadness and gloom. I fear it is because of our love."

Cristoval partly raised himself. "Rava, dost think he will forbid our marriage?"

"Oh, my own, I do not know! By the law of Tavantinsuyu I can be married only to one of royal blood. Manco holdeth the laws as sacred as the ancient rites. In these perilous times he would dread their violation as like to provoke the wrath of Inti. I know not!" she moaned, pressing her cheek to his. "I know not, Cristoval!"

The cavalier's arm tightened in its grasp. "And if he should forbid," he whispered, sharply, "if he should, then we must fly again. Wilt go with me?"

"Thou knowest, my own! But whither? The uttermost parts of the empire would be searched."

"Once on the coast—" said Cristoval.

"We should never reach it!" she replied, pressing him closer. "We should never reach it, my love—but, we can die together."

They said little more, but clung together as if the morrow's parting would be final. Minutes passed, when Cristoval felt her shudder as she raised her head in a sudden recollection. "Cristoval, oh, Cristoval!" she faltered, "Father Valverde threatened thee!"

"Ah!" muttered the cavalier, gloomily. "Thou didst guess his meaning? I hoped it had escaped thee. The words were Latin."

"I know. I have had time to learn much since Xilcala. But, oh, my heart, dost think he will excommunicate thee?"

Cristoval hesitated. "If he should," he said, with courage, "thou'lt pray for me, child. I'll have no fear that the Virgin will not hear thee."

"It is dreadful, dreadful!" she murmured, sobbing.

"Nay: think not of it. It were more dreadful, far, to have obeyed his command to leave thee." And in Cristoval's mind an eternity in hell was naught in comparison. The certainty itself would not have forced him to relinquish her.

It seemed but a moment before her trusted maid came to whisper that the sky was growing light. A sweet, bitter instant of parting, and Cristoval was alone.

Before the sun had touched his tent the cavalier heard preparations for departure,—hastening steps, the rattle of camp gear, and soon, the marching of the escort and the commands of its officers as it formed on the parade in front of the Inca's quarters.

Accompanied by Paullo, Rava went first to Pedro's tent to say farewell.

"God bless thy sweet life!" said Pedro, weakly, as he pressed her hand. "I shall miss thy visits sorely—and another will miss them more. But thy going is sudden—doth Cristoval know?"

Rava colored, replying, "I am on my way to him now, Pedro. Shall I take him a message?"

"Why, my greetings to him as a noble. Doth the *llautu* become him?—No doubt of it!—Poor boy, poor boy!"

"But he is hurt less than thou!" said Rava.

"The wound in his shoulder? Ah! But he hath another below it—and harder to cure." Again came Rava's color, and she took her leave somewhat in haste.

The parting with Cristoval taxed her to the extreme, and only Paullo's presence saved her from breaking down. As it was, her distress and the cavalier's depression were apparent to the youth, and he gently and wisely hastened her departure, but resolving to accompany her a part of the way himself.

Rava had never confided to her younger brother her attachment for Cristoval; and he, though staggered by the revelation of it on the night of the rescue, had thus far refrained from questioning; but on the journey with Paullo beside her in her *hamaca*, she confessed, with an account, sufficiently heartfelt, of the cavalier's golden qualities. The youth, already predisposed toward his brother's gallant ally, listened with sympathy, promising to aid the lovers to the full in case of the Inca's opposition. He gave what hope he could, though this was slight, and Rava pursued her journey with heavy heart.

To Cristoval the succeeding days were of torment. The fighting was incessant, and the Inca rarely at his quarters, though he sent frequently to ask for the two Spaniards, and to express his good wishes. Opportunity for an interview, feverishly awaited by the cavalier, was not offered, and he tossed in an agony of suspense. At last his attendant informed him that Manco was in council with his generals. Directing the old man to report their departure, Cristoval struggled with his impatience. It was late when the orderly announced that the council was dissolved.

"Give me thine aid, Tocache," said Cristoval. "I will rise."

"But, my Lord Cristoval, you will do yourself injury," deprecated the old man. "Whither would you go?"

"To the Inca's tent. Come! Help me to my feet and to dress."

"My lord—"

"Nay, Tocache; I must go. I am strong enough, man, and thou shalt lend me a shoulder to lean upon."

Tocache demurred earnestly, but shortly Cristoval was clad and sandalled, and with the other's support, left his tent. The Inca was standing with Paullo and the Villac Vmu when the sentinel announced his visitor, and he turned in surprise when the cavalier, uncertain in his steps and quite pale, entered the tent and saluted.

"Thou, my Lord Cristoval!" exclaimed Manco, advancing. "Thou 'rt welcome, my friend, though I fear, imprudent. What hath brought thee at this hour?—but sit. Thou 'rt weak—too weak to have ventured." He led the visitor to a chair. Having greeted the Auqui and the priest and seen the Inca seated, Cristoval sank into it. Manco observed him with evident interest while waiting to hear his errand, which proved a difficult one to begin.

"Sapa Inca," said Cristoval, at last, unable in his weakness fully to control his voice, but approaching the matter with his usual directness, "I have come to you concerning the Ñusta Rava."

Manco's animated expression vanished, and he regarded the cavalier with no sign of emotion as he answered, in tones equally impassive, "What of the Ñusta Rava, my lord?"

Cristoval felt the ill omen of the change, but did not flinch, and his voice steadied at once. "I have spoken to you of the Ñusta Rava before, my Lord Inca, at Yucay. I think you cannot be unprepared for what I am about to ask."

Manco felt the candor of his eyes and their demand for it from him. "My Lord Cristoval," he said, frankly and regretfully, "I am not unprepared—for what I fear thou art about to say. I confess to thee that I have foreseen this very moment, which bringeth me infinite pain." He rose and crossed the tent; returned and seated himself. "But, my lord, I will not anticipate thee. Thou wouldst ask—"

"The hand of Rava, Sapa Inca," replied Cristoval.

Manco looked upon him thoughtfully before answering. "It is what I had reason to expect, and, with mine obligation to thee, to dread. Thy service to Tavantinsuyu hath been such that any return in my power to make must be inadequate."

"Nay, pardon me, my Lord Inca," rejoined Cristoval, quickly: "I beg you will not think that in this request it is in my thoughts to presume upon any service it hath been my fortune to render. That hath already been doubly rewarded by this mark of your confidence." He touched the *llautu.* "I ask no further return."

"That was not my meaning, my Lord Cristoval," replied Manco, gravely. "I was about to say that mine obligation and gratitude make it hard to answer thy request in the way I am compelled. Compelled—for it is beyond my power to grant. It is the ancient law of Tavantinsuyu that a princess must marry one of the royal family; or, in the event of a prince being wanting, then one of nobility by birth. This law is as old as the empire, and hath been violated but once. I dare not, whatever mine inclination, my Lord Cristoval," his eyes grew kindly "repeat its violation. My august father set aside a law as ancient as this one, and it hath been followed by calamities, of part of which thou art a witness to-day. May the great Inti forfend that I do aught further to provoke his wrath. I must refuse thee, my lord."

Cristoval rose unsteadily, his face more white than it had been left by his wound. Manco rose and took his hand. "My friend," he said, "believe, this grieveth me to the heart. I thought to tell thee these things when thou didst plan to take the Acllahuasi. I did not, for I knew well that it would not have altered thy purpose, nor dulled thy courage."

"I thank you, my Lord Inca," replied the cavalier, and added with an effort: "I will not urge aught that is against your conscience—God forbid! With your leave, I will return to my tent."

Paullo, who had listened with color coming and going, stepped forward. "Stay, Lord Cristoval!" he cried. "All hath not been said." He snatched the varicolored *llautu* from Cristoval's head and, his dark eyes blazing, threw it aside. While the cavalier's face flushed at the seeming indignity, and the Inca's with sur-

prise and anger, he lifted his own yellow diadem and placed it upon the Spaniard's brow. Seizing Cristoval's hand, and facing the Inca and the Villac Vmu, he said gravely, "My lords, I call upon you to witness that, by virtue of the law of the Inca Tupac Yupanqui, I claim brotherhood with the Lord Cristoval, an Inca of Tavantinsuyu by Privilege." He drew his dagger, and with a quick movement slashed his own arm; then, glancing into Cristoval's astonished eyes, wounded him at the wrist and, pressing together the two gashes, joined the ruddy streams. "Thus," he continued, solemnly, "have we a mingled blood! Only thine edict, Sapa Inca, can dissolve this tie and abate the princely rights of the Auqui Cristoval, whom I have made a brother."

It was a long minute before the monarch recovered from the prince's unexpected action. The pause was hardly less dramatic. Manco looked from one to the other, bereft of utterance, while the cavalier stood silent, scarcely comprehending the significance of what had happened. Paullo, gripping Cristoval's hand, with eyes still afire, waited for Manco. The Inca's brow was clouded. Notwithstanding his gratitude and friendship, the thought of admitting the Viracocha into the pure Incarial line taxed his generosity. Had Paullo's move been less impetuous he would have arrested it. But the thing was done, and to be undone only by his own formal decree. Erect and attentive, Paullo watched his brother with something nearing defiance, while the Villac Vmu, after his first start of surprise, had remained with his eyes upon the ground. To Cristoval the situation became intolerable, and he said quietly, doffing the yellow *llautu*:—

"Sapa Inca, consider this as not having occurred, I pray you. Could I have anticipated the Auqui Paullo's purpose it should have been prevented.—Paullo," he continued, turning to the youth and placing his hands upon his shoulders, "I thank thee more for thy generous intent than for thy deed. Thy good-will hath taken the lead of thy sober judgment; but I shall cherish the memory of it, do thou be sure, and shall feel myself thy brother no less dearly bound to thee than thou wouldst have made me. My Lord Inca Manco, I crave pardon for his warm-hearted folly. Let it end thus, and permit me to retire."

Manco regarded him with grave thoughtfulness, wholly inscrutable. At last he said abruptly to Paullo, "Assist the Lord Cristoval to his tent, and have the nobles summoned at once." He bowed dismissal and they left the tent.

During the remainder of the night the grim old warriors were gathered about their young lord in council. Toward dawn Cristoval was roused by a summons. The lamps were burning low when he paused at the door of the Inca's tent, glancing at the circle of faces, some familiar, many strange, but all turned toward him in stolid dignity and silence. Paullo greeted and led him to the Inca. For the solemn expectancy about him, Cristoval might have been approaching to receive the sentence of death. Manco met his eyes in a swift glance, deep and

inscrutable as before, and took from the Villac Vmu the yellow *llautu.* He placed the diadem upon the head of the cavalier, saying as he did so:—

"Witness, my lords! and give your homage to the Auqui Cristoval. It is my will."

CHAPTER XXXIX

Again the Señora Descends

AS soon as Pedro was sufficiently recovered he was sent to Yucay. On the morning of his departure the Inca, with Cristoval, Paullo, and Mocho, entered his tent. Manco said farewell with a few warm words of commendation and gratitude that brought a mist before the eyes of the wounded cook, unclasping a gorget of pearls and emeralds. "Accept this, brave Viracocha Pedro," he said, "as a part expression of mine esteem and appreciation. It is but a trifle, but with it goeth much good-will."

Pedro gasped at the princely gift and stammered, part in Quichua, part in Spanish: "Why, stew—Nay, Señor Inca, I deserve it not! I am but a—a comrade of this man Cristoval. What fighting I have done, I tell you frankly, hath been mainly out of friendliness for him, and for the sake of being along to keep him out of trouble. This, my Lord Inca, is beyond my merits."

The Inca understood the gist of his words, and shook his head with a slight smile. "Not so, Viracocha! Thy merit is the greater for thy friendship. Thou shalt keep it. Farewell, and a quick recovery. Thou'lt find good friends in Yucay." He gave the cook his hand and departed abruptly to avoid his thanks.

Cristoval remained after the others, and Pedro stared at him blankly. At length he said slowly: "Now, spit me through the middle with a church-spire—I'd be less surprised! The man is reckless, Cristoval, or knoweth not the market-worth of gems. Do thou draw him aside and advise him that 't is a grand-duke's ransom, this bauble, and hand it back."

"Absurd, Pedro!" said Cristoval. "Rest thy mind, for 't is but a part of what he intendeth for thee."

"But I tell thee, Cristoval, it will burden my conscience. Had I come by it in honest looting in a Christian war—but this is akin to thievery. Thou'lt take it back to him, *amigo*!"

"Assuredly not, Pedro! Wouldst give him offence?"

Pedro looked troubled. "He knoweth not its worth, Cristoval. Moreover, should Pizarro learn that I have it, I'd not be safe a blessed minute. I should be invaded, overrun with fire and sword; given up to wrack, sack, and devastation; left a waste and ruin more ruinous than thou see'st me now. I've suffered losses a-plenty, my friend—not counting legs—without this novel liability. Do thou restore it."

"Gods, thou'rt a worried cook!—for a cook with a fortune in hand."

"Ah!" sighed Pedro. "*Crescentem sequitur cura pecuniam*—Horace, Cristoval. Meaneth, care followeth upon increasing riches. Stew me—"

"Oh, *Madre*! Have done with thy plaints. Now be still whilst I give thee a message to Rava."

"God bless her!" said Pedro, and after a pause, "I listen. But make it not over long, and prithee, adapt its terms to the grossness of my texture. No endearments, Cristoval, and no poetry!"

Cristoval blushed. "No, no!" he said quickly. "It will be short, and suited to thy decorous taste, count upon it."

"Then I'll compass it. But as well put sugar-lumps and lollipops in a mess of boiled cabbage as to fill me with blandiments for recitation. I'm no troubadour, Cristoval. Bear that in mind."

"No fear, thou Spartan cook!" growled Cristoval, with a trace of embarrassment. "I intend it all to be prose."

By the time his message ended, Pedro's *hamaca* and escort were waiting. In parting the cook said earnestly: "Now, Cristoval, in the name of all the names of all the saints on the calendar, have a care for thyself! Thou'rt as prone to misadventure as an unweaned calf. Remember, thou hast one to be anxious for thee besides myself—and relatives! Dost know how many, since thine adoption?"

"Thou meanest—"

"Thy foster-brothers, sisters, cousins, aunts, uncles, and what-not—dost know how many?"

"I do not. I had not thought of it, Pedro."

"Not thought of it! of course not," returned Pedro, with irritation. "'T is what I have said—always charging into trouble, head down and eyes shut!" He regarded the cavalier with great disapproval. "On my soul, I know not whether 't is prudent to leave thee, with thy capacities for indiscretion! However—well—with the aid of the Indio who hath attended me, I've figured this multitude kin of thine, Cristoval, and Heaven fend thee from ever having them dependent upon thy support! Man, we counted three hundred, and more to tally, and without considering the concubines the Señor Inca is entitled by law to acquire—and all of them royal, by the eternal broiler!" His expression changed to commiseration. "Thou 'rt the worst relative-beridden Christian in my knowledge, *amigo*! and but

one among them who is not a pagan! I tell thee, Cristoval, if thou dost rightly by thy family, thou'lt give over soldiering and turn missionary! But farewell, old friend, and God with thee! It grieveth me to leave thee."

Cristoval watched the *hamaca* out of sight, stood looking into Pedro's vacant tent, and returned slowly to his own.

In the palace of Yucay, in a chamber from which he could overlook the verdant and beautiful valley, ministered to by solicitous attendants, and visited by Rava, Pedro mended steadily. His gentle hostess spent many hours beside his couch with her maids about her, busy with embroidery and going white and red over it as he recounted Cristoval's adventures, enumerated his virtues, and mildly deprecated his rashness. Rava had daily messages by *chasqui* from her cavalier, and repeated the news, or brought the bearer himself. She had not seen Cristoval since the removal of the barrier between them, but in her happiness and implicit faith in her prayers for his safety, she waited with patience for what now seemed assured. Of the ultimate triumph of the arms of Tavantinsuyu she had no doubt.

One morning she came into Pedro's room with more than usual animation and said with a smile: "Pedro, to-day thou shalt see two of thy friends. I have sent for them, and have word of their coming. Canst think who they are?"

"Two friends of mine, Ñusta Rava? 'T is easily guessed. One is Cristoval, but who the other—"

Rava shook her head archly. "Not so good a friend as Cristoval—but I will tell thee. One is Father Tendilla, and the other—"

Pedro rose suddenly upon his elbow and startled her with his expression as he whispered with explosive force, "Bolio?"

Rava surveyed him with concern, and replied gravely: "Father Tendilla and my dear Margarita. I thought it would give thee pleasure."

Pedro sank back and drummed on the coverlet with his fingers. "Oh! It doth, Ñusta Rava. It doth give me pleasure. So would a fly-blister, had I lumbago—a figure of speech, Señorita, give it no weight. Hum! The señora!" He startled her again with a spasm intended for a smile, and resumed with some constraint: "Ha! The señora, did you say, Señorita Ñusta? Stew—Well, the señora is a good soul, my head on't. A bit rampant and superheated, look you, but altogether good-hearted, and I'll—I'll be glad—be glad to see her once more—baste me with hot tallow if I'll not—prithee, let that pass too: it hath no significance. *Infierno*!—I—I mean, *Paraiso*! But," he raised himself again and continued earnestly, "but, Ñusta Rava, would you as lief have the servants tell her I am full of holes and like to leak red gore in a thousand places if so much as a finger be laid against me, or my nerves be wrought upon? She is impulsive, Señorita, surcharged and double-shotted with impulse, and when she findeth me in this present state there

is no knowing what sympathy may lead her to say, or do.—Pure exuberance of feeling, mind you! but I misdoubt me if my wasted frame would stand the stress.—And kindly have her told I am subject to spells, of late, and ofttimes bite. And that—but, no: never mind it—I'll advise the servants myself." Pedro lay back, quite breathless, muttering: "The señora! The señora! Ah! diablo! This is what cometh of being—But she is a kindly-hearted woman, and 't would be graceless in me to deny it."

Rava, bewildered by his agitated effusion, much of it in Spanish, gathered that he desired the señora to be warned of his enfeebled condition, and having promised, withdrew. Pedro lay the rest of the morning starting at faint sounds and perspiring freely.

At mid-afternoon a guide, two mules with riders, and a baggage-carrier lightly burdened, ascended the zig-zag road through the park to the palace. The leading animal was bestridden by a lady in native attire, but wearing a Spanish sombrero in its last stages, riding with the dignity of a *generalisimo*, a battle-axe at her saddle-bow. Behind, rode the good Father Tendilla, his cassock yet more seedy, but the same gentle-visaged priest. They were received with ceremony by a detachment of the guard, but the lady rode past with elevated chin, and followed the guide into the outer court. Rava was waiting with her attendants. Upon espying her, the señora emitted a shout, muffled by the vigor of her exertion in dismounting—on the wrong side—and in a second was embraced, sombrero and all, and joyfully wept over, weeping herself, and quite inarticulate.

"Oh, my honey-jar, my lady bird!" cried the overjoyed señora in Spanish. "God bless thy dear heart, what a happiness to see thee! But I'm covering thy pretty robes with dust! Oh, thou sweet baby! 'T is thou—and handsome as a rose! Dainty as a fairy! 'T is good for one's eyes to behold thee—now, is it not, Father? Come, let him see thee, love. Is she not an angel?" The señora stopped suddenly and glanced sternly about the court. "Ho! They've lugged off my mule and my cleaver—"

"Thou'lt have no need for them, my daughter," said Father Tendilla, quickly, and gave Rava his blessing. The señora forgot mule and cleaver in a fresh outburst of delight, and Rava presently led to her apartments. Here the effervescent lady was struck by the thought of Pedro, of whose wounds she had learned at Ollantaytambo, and demanded to be conducted to him forthwith. Rava sent one of her maids as guide. The damsel endeavored to give warning of the injured man's condition; but the señora's understanding of Quichua was limited, and her eagerness, moreover, made her deaf, so the words created slight impression.

Pedro heard the firm, rapid step, invoked a saint, and waited with beads gathering upon his brow. As the lady swept—nay, swooped—across the room with a cry of mingled joy and pity, the cook saw that his precautions were inef-

fectual. He could have sworn that in another second he should have been embraced; but with rare presence of mind he raised a warning hand, fetched a dismal groan, rolled his eyes, and gritted his teeth in so unearthly a fashion that the lady was brought up with a shriek.

"God's mercy, Pedro! What—"

"Sit down!" commanded Pedro, in a voice supernormally strong for one, as he seemed to be, *in articulo extremo mortis*. "Sit down!—No!—Farther away!—On the floor—anywhere—but sit, woman, or I perish!"

He continued his ghastly symptoms until he saw the señora seated, completely unnerved but foiled! Then he recovered quickly, sought his kerchief, wiped a clamminess from his forehead, and observing her pallor, said gently: "It is past, Señora. Be not alarmed. But hold! Stay where thou art, or it will come again. Move not a finger!"

"*Santa Maria*! Pedro, dear," she said, tearfully, "I thought thee dying. Thou 'rt dreadfully hurt, my love?"

"I am a very sieve, Señora!" replied Pedro, in a hollow voice. "So full of holes that I cannot cast a decent shadow! So weighted with copper slugs, leaden balls, and scraps of iron from Candia's guns that I could be molten up and cast into a fair culverin of bronze."

"Ah, pity of Heaven!" sobbed the lady, rocking herself. "I fear thou liest to some extent, Pedro, but I knew harm was to come of it when I left thee with that bandit, Cristoval. But may I not come nearer, *chiquito*?"

"Presently," said Pedro, softened, "but approach by easy stages, and not too near. I am better, my dear. Take heart, now, there's a good soul; and we will talk—but at a distance, look thou! or I'll be thrown into a fit. Hast been well?"

"As well," said the señora, drying her eyes, "as a lone woman in an infidel country with naught but a cleaver to give her courage o' nights and a helpless innocent of a priest to look after like a baby, and not a dress fit to put on her back save this, borrowed from a heathen woman whose name I cannot pronounce, could be."

"Ah!" said Pedro, with sympathy.

"Thou didst wrong to leave me, Pedro, and see what it hath come to! But who fired the gun at thee? I'll seek him out, as he liveth!"

"Now, toast me on a bodkin!" retorted Pedro. "Dost fancy I went back to ask his name? It would have escaped me by percolation had I heard it. I was a-leak on all sides, top and bottom, like a lobster-pot fresh-hauled. So thoroughly did he riddle me, Señora, that I could not have held a secret grief, or a good intention. But let the man go, my dear. He that loaded the gun hath half the responsibility."

"I'll find them both!" said the lady, with resolution.

The entrance of Father Tendilla ended the conversation, and Pedro heaved

a sigh of relief. Thereafter, the señora usurped the role of nurse, chiding him gently for exaggerating his hurts when she learned their real extent, but caring for him faithfully.

Week after week the siege went on, fierce, bloody, and relentless. Sorties were attempted, savagely opposed. The defences of the Spaniards were assaulted, fought over with the fury of hate and desperation, and the assailants repulsed. To the Peruvians, the loss in each attack was sickening, but they returned with valor undaunted, until the Inca in humanity ordered a cessation and determined to reduce the enemy by famine.

Cristoval, in the meanwhile, yet unfit to resume his armor, gave his time to training a number of warriors in the riding school and the use of arms on horseback. Fearless, agile, and adaptable, they acquired the horseman's art with the readiness with which it was learned by the tribes of the North American plains, and by constant drill the cavalier produced a squad of riders, equipped with captured arms and mail, which was destined to prove formidable. The Peruvians, trained with the battle-axe and shield, easily exchanged these for mace and buckler; but Cristoval soon found that for a skilful use of the lance months would be required, and he was forced to see that weapon laid aside. Of all his pupils, none was so apt as the Inca Manco.

Thus Cristoval passed his convalescence, striving by incessant activity to hold his impatient longing. Twice only, after his strength returned, he rode to Yucay for a few brief hours of happiness.

The winter months passed and spring was at hand. Within the beleaguered city conditions grew desperate. Provisions, which had long been growing scanty, were almost exhausted, and the Spaniards faced starvation. They had hoped, watched, vowed many a pious vow, prayed many a fervent prayer, for reënforcements from the coast; but the expeditions sent by Francisco Pizarro for their relief had been entrapped in the mountains and driven back or annihilated. A few weeks must seal the fate of the besieged, and Hernando was already importuned by his cavaliers to lead in a final effort to cut through the investing lines and escape with his starveling remnant. Not he! He swore, and the stoutest of his men swore with him, to fight while strength remained to wield a blade.

But while the Spaniards were meeting in gloomy council the Inca was confronted by a situation no less grave.

Near the middle of a chill, clear night in the early spring, in the fifth month of the siege, Cristoval, now fully recovered, rode across the parade in front of the Inca's tent, and dismissed his native troopers. For a week he had been guarding the Cuntisuyu road, suspecting a Spanish design to break through the lines. He had laid off his helmet when a messenger summoned him to the Inca. Cristoval found Manco alone, pacing his tent with bent head, his face more deeply clouded

than the cavalier had ever seen it. His expression lightened at sight of the man who had become nearer a comrade than any had ever been before, and he said gravely: "I have sent for thee, Cristoval, to entrust thee with a mission which, in other circumstances thou wouldst have found most welcome. Now it will be as painful to thee, I know, my friend and brother, as it is to me. It is this. Thou wilt ride to Yucay—wilt set out to-night. Arriving there, thou'lt conduct the household forthwith to the security of the fortress at Ollantaytambo."

Cristoval started. Was Yucay insecure? In Heaven's name, what could make it so, with the Spaniards held like starving rats? Manco read his question, and answered it bluntly:—

"We must raise the siege, Cristoval!"

Cristoval was aghast, unable to believe.

"We must raise the siege!" repeated Manco, steadily.

Cristoval put out his hand for the support of the table. When at last he spoke his voice was harsh and unnatural. "Raise the siege! Raise the siege—at this moment—when victory is within your grasp? By God, man, it must not be! Who hath advised this folly?"

Manco raised his hand. "It must be! I have held council all this day and to-night."

"Your counsellors—have they been stricken with madness?" cried the cavalier. "Do they not know—"

"My friend," interrupted the Inca, placing a hand upon Cristoval's shoulder, "my counsellors know what it is not possible that thou shouldst know—that Tavantinsuyu is menaced by a foe more ruthless than the one in yonder city. This hour hath been long foreseen, and now it is come. Hunger is abroad!"

"Your stanchest ally!" interjaculated Cristoval.

"An ally, but one ready to turn most cruelly against us! Hear me, Cristoval! It is not yet with us, with the army, though thou hast seen the meagre fare our braves have had these many days, and hast been in want, thyself. But there is a graver peril. Thou knowest, the season of planting is at hand. The fields are waiting. Every province of the empire hath been denuded of its men, and only women, children, and the feeble, are left to till the soil. The time is short, and if the grain be not sowed, a calamity will follow, blacker in its horror than that of war, which taketh only lives of men. Starvation recketh neither of sex nor age. The siege must end."

Manco spoke with calmness. His face had paled, but otherwise his emotion was unbetrayed. Cristoval heard him in silence. The Inca's words, he knew, were final, Rhadamanthine; once spoken, not to be opposed by human tongue. Manco resumed:—

"So it must be, Cristoval. The magazines are exhausted—I learned it finally

to-day,—and even the archers are in need of arrows. My warriors will march to their provinces with famine attendant, but—they must go. I am defeated! O, great Inti, why—" His words ended, and he turned abruptly away. Cristoval sank into a chair and bowed his head upon his hands. To disband the army now would mean disaster irremediable. He sprang up with fiery, urgent words, but they were stayed by Manco who faced him again with every trace of agitation gone: "I said, defeated! Forget that the word was spoken. Whilst life is spared me, and I have a warrior left to follow, there shall be no defeat. But now, Cristoval, thou wilt go. By midday to-morrow thou'lt have overtaken a force which marched to-day. At Yucay, all will be in readiness. Word hath gone forward, and as soon as the palace is abandoned it will be stripped of all that yonder vultures crave. Having seen the household safely at Ollantaytambo, thou'lt return. I will remain near Cuzco with some force, for the enemy shall find that peace is not yet. Now go, and Heaven speed thee. Farewell."

As Cristoval left the tent he turned. The Inca stood in thought, his dark, handsome face as calm as if his brave heart were untouched by disaster, untorn by myriad cares and sorrows. He waved his hand, and Cristoval left him to the brooding silence of the night—and God alone knows what hours of anguish.

As the cavalier rode forth in the starlight he looked upon a dark, prophetic vision of the future of the fair empire for which he had been fighting. Tavantinsuyu was doomed. Doomed—he saw it now—from the moment Pizarro had set his foot upon its soil. The Spaniards would crowd to its shores like ravening wolves, and before the army could be recalled to the field it would be too late. He knew the indomitable resolution of his countrymen, their resources, and their driving rapacity, too well to hope the Inca could ever regain the advantage now to be put aside. Unless crushed at what was yet its beginning, the conquest would never be abandoned. And too thoroughly did Cristoval know the nature of his race to foresee anything but cruel oppression for the conquered. He looked with clearer prevision than could the stricken monarch into the blackness of the years to come.

The meeting of the lovers at Yucay was in joy and grief. Cristoval strove to inspire a hope he could not share, but when Rava took sorrowful leave of the palace it was with an intuition that she would never enter it again. At Ollantaytambo their parting was in grief alone, and the cavalier rode back to Cuzco followed by many a tearful prayer.

Pedro's fighting days were done, and as he stood on the rampart of the fortress, watching his old comrade's departure, the receding figure grew dim to

him by reason of something more than dust and distance.

CHAPTER XL

Glory and Peace

We shall be brief with the last scenes of the tragedy of Tavantinsuyu. It was night when Cristoval arrived at the heights overlooking Cuzco, and the city lay dark and silent below. But the vast circle of the fires of the besieging host sparkled no more. The army had vanished. He found a remnant among the hills, picked warriors of the empire, led by Manco, and chosen to die in its last burst of glory.

There were long weeks of fighting about the city; fierce dashes by the Spaniards, driven by famine from their lair among the ruins, more fiercely resisted by the watchful Manco, to be many times hunted back with shattered ranks. The Inca's small body of horsemen grew as steeds were captured from the foragers, and it met the raiders in more than one sharp encounter and pursuit ending only in the environs of the city.

But at last came reënforcements from Francisco, and Manco withdrew to Ollantaytambo to rest and recruit his battle-worn warriors, leaving Cristoval with his riders and a small command of Antis to watch. Not many days later, it was learned from a captured Cañare that the Spaniards were planning an attack in force on Ollantaytambo. Assured of the information, Cristoval joined the Inca for its defence. They had not long to wait. With a strong body of cavalry and infantry, Hernando made a stealthy detour through the mountains in the valley of the Urubamba. He approached the fortress under cover of darkness and attacked at dawn, confident of taking it by surprise. Before midday his column was flying for Cuzco, defeated, demoralized, and in utter rout, with the Inca in hot pursuit.

Once more Cristoval's band of horsemen and Mocho's Antis were scouring the valley of Cuzco, lurking in the hills and passes, striking now here, now there; and intercepting, scattering, or destroying, the parties which need of food or greed of plunder led from the city. Informed by vigilant scouts of every move of the enemy, and guided by men familiar with every ravine and mountain trail, he struck often and with terrible unexpectedness. Repeatedly the Pizarros sent, and even led, in chase, always fruitlessly, or with disaster. If the swift-moving band was encountered, it was in some position of its leader's own choosing which more

than offset the Spaniards' advantage of numbers. The cry, "*El Renegado!*"—for so Cristoval became known—grew to be one of terror; and raised suddenly in a party of marauders, it carried panic. Impelled by the wrongs of his adopted people—those suffered in the past, and blacker ones which he knew were to follow—he fought with reckless fury.

One night, while in bivouac a few leagues from Cuzco, a *chasqui* brought Cristoval a summons to Ollantaytambo with his command. The first thought of the cavalier was of the joy of seeing Rava. The next, an undefined disquiet. Before dawn he was on the march.

It was late when he entered the fortress, to be taken immediately to Manco's chamber. Paullo was with the Inca, and both embraced the cavalier with affection, the Inca adding a warm appreciation of his zeal and intrepidity. Paullo retired to apprise Rava. Manco regarded the march-stained soldier in rusty armor and said with less than his usual calm, but without the former gloom:—

"Cristoval, my brother, I have sent for thee to entrust another mission. Once more thou wilt take my loved ones to a place of safety. At dawn I leave with a few followers for a stronghold in the mountains of Apurimac, there to await the moment for reassembling my army. For the present, Ollantaytambo must be abandoned, and my few remaining troops disbanded. My last granary, my last armory, my last resource, have been exhausted.—But, my friend," he went on, with increased energy, and taking the cavalier by the arm, "think not that Manco hath succumbed!—nor that his sword will sleep through the months of waiting."

"Then I should be among your followers, my lord," said Cristoval.

"Nay! Thou'lt serve me better for the present in another way. Safeguard my dear ones. It is a trust which I can confide to thee as to none other. Paullo is but a boy. I ask the greatest service thou canst render, for thy sword, now, can aid me little."

"But when the time cometh—"

"Then I will call upon it, brave Cristoval," replied Manco, taking his hand. "But now, concerning a refuge: I have thought of Xilcala. I was there when a boy."

Cristoval flushed with sudden feeling, and the valley with all its beauty, its dear associations and memories, rose before him.

"It is remote from Cuzco," continued Manco; "and as I remember it, could be easily defended."

"A handful of men could hold it against an army," replied Cristoval, positively.

"Then to Xilcala, and Heaven guide thy way! Mocho will escort with his Antis, and thou'lt take thy riders, to hold them there until I call thee. They cannot serve me now, for I shall be in the mountains. Mocho will join me with his men

in Apurimac. And now, go to Rava, who will be waiting. I will be with you in an hour." He paused, and regarding the cavalier earnestly, added, "I would, Cristoval, see you both happy—before I say farewell."

Cristoval flushed again. "God bless thee, Manco!—God bless thee! I—I will say a word to Rava."

Rava waited alone. As far as her door, but not beyond, we will follow the eager steps of Cristoval, then await, with what patience we may, the consequence of their meeting and tender duologue.

And the consequence was this. Within the hour Cristoval tore himself away, and in a condition of agreeable agitation, sought Pedro, who had expected his comrade's arrival, and had not retired. The cavalier's mood, as infectious as it was agreeable, seized upon the cook; and the cook, after interjections of the sort peculiar to himself stumped out in quest of Father Tendilla. The good priest was asleep, but straightway became broad awake, fell prey to the infection, and arose precipitately. From Father Tendilla, Pedro went to the door of Señora Bolio, not without trepidation. The Señora was likewise asleep, but after the fourth knock came to the door—far from being forgetful of her cleaver—and opened it to the slight degree consistent with modesty, or caution, or both. Pedro imparted his item of intelligence.

The señora uttered a cry of delight, and, both incautiously and immodestly, threw wide the door. "Is it so, Pedro? Is it so? Oh, the dear angel of a girl! Oh, Pedro, thou 'rt the best and wisest of men!" And in the exuberance of her joy the worst befell Pedro. He was embraced. "Pedro, thou 'rt a love!"

"Fiends, woman!" cried the cook, wrenching himself free, "'t is no doing of mine! They brought it upon themselves."

"Oh, do I not know that, thou simple! But had it not been for thee, they never would! I will come at once, Pedro, dear."

Pedro retired, not only agitated, but disarranged, mentally and otherwise.

Between midnight and dawn, within the dim, starlit ramparts of the ancient stronghold of Ollanta, was a Christian wedding. Strange the place, yet more strange the assemblage gathered to witness: A stern-visaged young pagan monarch with softened eyes beaming beneath a crimson *llautu*; about him, a score of grim, war-worn nobles of Tavantinsuyu with scars fresh from recent conflict; a throng of dark-haired women in loose-flowing robes and adorned with barbaric splendor. A Spaniard with but one leg, and a Spanish señora were there; the former glowing pleasantly with the sentiments of a genial heart; the other weeping with that mixture of feminine emotions inspired by such occasions, which must forever remain inscrutable to man.

Again a declining day in the fair Vale of Xilcala. Approaching by the gorge and nearing its head, is a column of the Inca's warriors, some of them mounted and clad in Viracocha mail, and escorting a train of *hamacas*. It is led by a cavalier whose armor bears many a mark of hostile blade unknown when he rode out from the valley, long and stormy months ago. The command halts at his signal, and riding back to one of the *hamacas*, he dismounts and assists its precious burden to alight. Together they walk forward to the edge of the lake, and Rava looks long and dreamily over its unruffled surface and mirrored mountains. There is the rocky promontory with its crowning of roofs and soft-gleaming walls; the gently-sloping shores with their fields and groves; the *andenes* clinging to the lower steeps, and the pinnacles towering above; and far across the valley, a hazy canyon from which these two—long ago, it seems to them now—looked out over the welcome peacefulness. The sheltering peaks are touched with rose; blue, transparent shadows are stealing up the eastern scarp; and across the still reflections creeps one thin, silvery arrow in the wake of a balsa urged shoreward by a fisherman. His distant, plaintive song floats across the lake and breaks into the murmur of the near-by stream. No other movement in all the tranquillity; no other sound, unless the whispered, liquid notes of the rippling on the pebbles of the beach.

Rava sighs, "Oh, Cristoval, is it not beautiful!"

"Most fair!" says the cavalier, as he said long ago, and passes a steel-clad arm about her as he meets the deep eyes, now brimming.

There they dwelt—Cristoval and Rava—remote from the dreary scenes of the wars among the Spaniards which followed close upon the fall of the Empire of the Incas. They found peace and happiness in a love enduring as their lives. Happiness, it is true, with a deep, life-long undertone of grief, for Tavantinsuyu and its last Inca; but their sorrow drew them nearer, as sorrow must. They found, too, palliative in alleviating many an ill brought upon the people outside their valley by the subjugation, and the twain—after their marriage, the Autauchi Cristoval and the Palla Rava—are remembered in undying tradition.

There, withal, dwelt Pedro, beloved comrade of Cristoval, and his genial head was silvered for many a long year. And all the children of the valley, when, from Father Tendilla—who gathered his last flock in Xilcala—they had learned about the saints, fixed upon Pedro as the vicar of the Patron Saint of childhood. There, moreover, dwelt the señora, the guardian angel of Pedro. A somewhat surcharged and superheated guardian angel, perhaps, but gradually moderating, under the influence of the repose of the valley, to a mild and kindly warmth. On one or more occasions, in the early days, she requested Pedro's hand in marriage

with affectionate impetuosity; but he gently though firmly refused, and compromised with a promise never to leave the valley by stealth.

And in support of all which precedeth thou mayst find, Reader, in that peaceful valley, the *Palacio del Autauchi Cristoval*; and in its great hall two suits of armor, side by side, one perfect the other wanting in a jambe and solleret. They are cherished with almost equal pride and reverence by the De Peraltas, who dwell there still, and from whom thou mayst learn, though it may be with less detail, the history which endeth here.

THE END

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