

CHAPTER X

SHRINES OF THE SACRED PLACES

WHEN new things cast shadows across the Indian mind, every cloud touching the moon is watched at its birth and at its first hours of the circle, also the stars. And for those other worlds,—the planets—is it their brotherhood to the earth that is sealed by a living sacrifice as they come and as they pass again from the visible path in the sky?

The Reader of the Stars lives often above the mists of the earth dews. The door of the high priest Po-Ahtun-ho faces the way of the South that the shadows of the moon and the shadows also of the sun, make reckonings for him of that which must be noted. So it has been since ancient days.

But for the Reader of the Stars there is a door not like another door; even to the stranger who runs as in a race, the house of the stars is seen and noted, and known as the sacred place for high prayer, and the record of the God things.

In Pu-yé the Ancient — and the deserted through centuries, the dwellings of high priests are marked beyond shadow of doubt, and each Te-hua man knows as well the dwelling of the Ruler of five centuries ago in Pu-yé, as he knows the door of his own brother across the court of the village. And the door of the stars is still beautiful there in Pu-yé.

Day time or night time the lines of ancient dwellings look ghost-like in their whiteness. Only medi-

cine men with prayer rites ever sit alone in the deserted rooms. The men from the river villages on the way for the pine of the hills used in their sacred dances, do halt to scatter prayer meal at sacred places where the water once ran: — there is ever the hope that if prayers enough are thought, the springs in the Mother Mountain may make fertile again the fields of the high levels,— for in the days of the carving of Pu-yé from the white cliffs there were certainly many streams and wide harvests in the land that is called now the desert lands.

And to the west is Tse-cōme-u-piñ, the sacred mountain where the lightning plays, and westward also, but not so far, is the Cave of the Hunters where prayers are made to the Trues — the guardian spirits of the Sacred Ways, and the wild things of the forest, symbolizing sacred ways and sacred colors. These places of prayer and of sacrifices are here to-day — and the way to them is marked by the symbols of stars and of planets — many eyes see them — but the readers of them are not so many to-day. A Te-hua man will tell you they are the forgotten records of the Lost Others — and will sprinkle prayer meal craftily to make amends for the truth which is half a lie. The unspoken pagan gods of the Lost Others have endless life, and eternal youth, in the land.

All is as it was in the ancient day, except that the dwellings have changed from the ancient places, and the priests go over more ground to reach the high places of prayer.

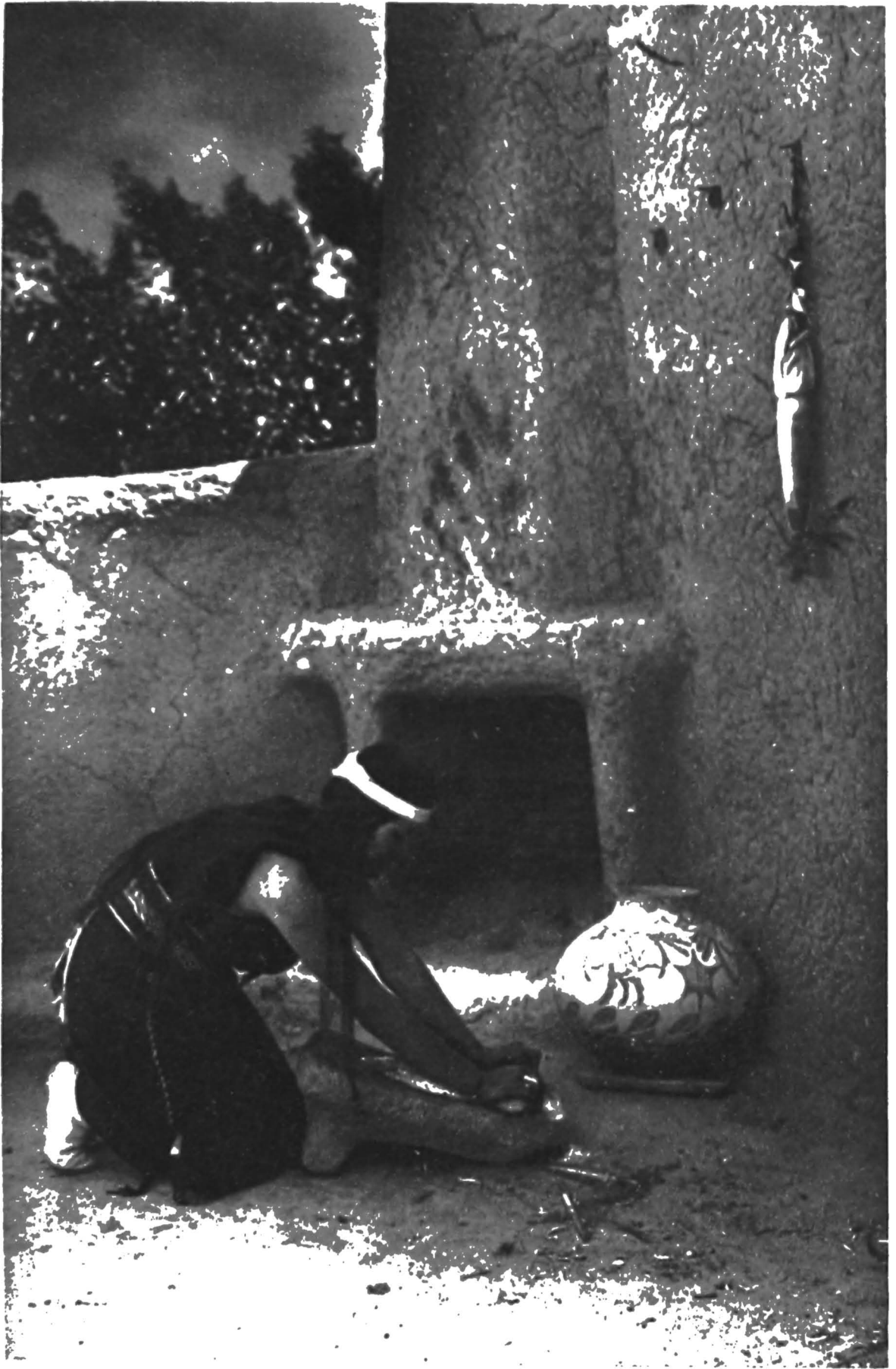
In the valley of the Pō-sōn-gé many vigils were kept through the nights of the Springtime, as messages from the south brought word of the steady, and thus far, harmless advance of the white strangers. The treachery at Tiguex in the day of Coronado was

a keen memory. It would take much wisdom to avoid war with the iron men of the white god, yet keep their own wives and daughters for their own tribe.

Many arrows were made — also spears and shields. Men went hunting and women dried the meat, pounding it into shreds for the war trail if need be. From earliest dawn were heard the grinding songs as the corn of yellow and blue and red and white was ground by the maidens keeping time to the ancient carols — and ever above the head of the worker was hung the sacred and unhusked ear, which, when resting, she contemplated, kneeling, and the thought in her heart must be the sacredness of the life-giving grain, and the prayer of thanks that it was given by the gods to the people.

Tahn-té, going from the river bath of the dawn, crossed the terrace of Yahn Tsyn-deh, and caught brief glance of her face thus lifted above the grinding stone. The steadiness of the quiet prayer was contrast decided, compared with the last wild prayer she had come to make at his feet: — begging for magic of any nature since the laws of the clans forbade that she be wife to her cousin to whom she had given love.

Almost he halted, moved in his mind to speak to the girl who had been more of comrade than had any other woman. But he remembered the evil prayer she had spoken that day, and this was not a time to give to thought of her anger. It was bad to have the evil wish of a woman, but to the other man must go the cares of the village loves and hates. All things had worked together to make him the wearer of the white robe — to place him outside the lines of village joys or sorrows, — his every demand was for



YAHN AT THE GRINDING STONE

vision of the strongly felt, yet unseen powers. Was he the son of a god? — as in the heart of him he still thought: — then to him belonged the fasting and the prayer of tribal penance, and the loves and the hates of the children of Te-hua were luxuries not for him. He was enemy to no man — and he could be lover to no woman!

The old men of his own orders had taught him much of the strength of magic which comes only to the priest who seeks no earthly mate. But the ten years of study of the white man's magic as spoken in their books of their gods, had taught him more. He had been witness that their gods were strong for war, and for worldly power. His people had need of all that power if the strangers came again and again like this into the country of the Pō-sōn-gé.

The picture of Yahn, kneeling by the fireplace on the terrace, her eyes lifted to the sacred corn, brought quickly to him the memory of a more childish Yahn who was not unhappy even in her wars.

And now — through the madness, which he was warned came to all men — now she was a woman through that madness: — and a forsaken woman whom all Te-hua watched for the revenge she would take.

They knew Ka-yemo could not marry with the daughter of his uncle, but they knew also that he could not be driven into taking the daughter of another man as wife, — and Yahn knew this also. Many robes, and blue jewels had weighed down the love of a boyhood!

Tahn-té thought of this, and of the girl, as he passed through the village to his own dwelling. Other maids greeted him, and followed him with kindly eyes. By all women Tahn-té was told in

many ways that the wearer of the white robe need not live in a lonely house!

Yet he was not lonely, and when the marvels of the inviting eyes turned towards him, he was always conscious of an ideal presence as if the god-maid of the mesa had stepped between, and made harmless the sorcery of the village daughters by which he might otherwise have been enveloped.

Once, when he had confessed as much to the ancient Ruler who had been his guide and guardian, the old man had voiced approval and interpreted clearly for him the dream presence which was as a gift of the gods, and clearly marked him for other loves than that of an earth maid.

“But — if the dreams came like a maid also — but a maid so fine that it was as a star — or a flower — or a prayer made human — then —”

“It is like that?” asked the old man, and the boy answered:

“Sometimes it seems like that — but not when I awake. Only in my sleep does she come close, yet that dream has kept guard for me many days until the others laugh and say I have no eyes to see a woman, I do see — but —”

“That is well — it is best of all!” said Kā-ye-fah, the Ruler. “If my own child had come back to me I might not have said it is well. My heart would have wanted to see your children and the children of Kā-ye-povi — I dreamed of that through many harvests — but it is over now. She did not live. The trader of robes from the Yu-tah brought that word, and it is better that way. I was dying because my daughter would be slave to Navahu men — and when word comes that she died as a little child, then the sun is shining for me again, and I live again. But

always when I think that the little child could be a woman, then it is good to think that your children could be her children. Since it is so — so let it be! The dream maid of the spirit flower, and of the star, can be my Kā-ye-povi, and you will have the mate no other earth eyes can ever see, and your nights and your days will not be lonely. Also it will be that your prayers be double strong.”

From that day of talk, the dream maid of Tahn-té had been a more tangible presence — never a woman — never quite that, but in the smile of certain children he caught swift glimpse of her face and then music rang in the rustle of the corn or the rush of the river. When the dream vision was beyond all measure sweet, he was certain of the wisdom of the Ancient — for the dream and the thoughts of prayer were double strong.

They were double strong that morning as he came from the river bath, and the face of Yahn — and the thought of her love — brought strangely that dream face to him in which there was no madness such as the Apache had shown him when at his feet in prayer.

The tombé sounded softly from a far terrace where special prayer was being made for the growing things, gray doves fluttered home with food to their young, and little brown children — not so much clothed as the birds! — climbed ladders to look in the dove cotes on his roof, and see the nurslings there lift clamoring mouths for worms or other treasure.

A woman weaving a blanket of twisted skins of rabbits worked in the open with her primitive loom in an arbor before her door, beside her a man whirled a distaff and spun the coarse hemp of which the warp was made. Maids and mothers with water jars on their heads walked in stately file from a spring near

the river's edge — and above all the serene accustomed life of that Indian village, could be heard the drone of the grinding songs — in the valley of Pō-sōn-gé there was ever corn for the grinding, and the time of hunger had come not often to Povi-whah.

Tahn-té felt a certain consciousness of the great content to which the grinding songs and the steady beat of the prayer drum made music. He knew better than the others, the worth of that peace, and quiet plenty, for to the south he had seen hunger stalk in the trail of the white conquerors, and no woman weaving a robe could be sure that it would ever keep her children from the cold. The men of iron had entered doors as they chose and carried thence all manner of things pleasing to their fancy.

But the life of Povi-whah was a different life, and Tahn-té was glad often to know that it was his land. The great medicine Mesa of the Hearts stood like a guardian straight to the east and at morning its shadow touched the terraces.

Strange mystic rites belonged to that place where the Ancient Others had made high sacrifice. Great medicine was there for the healing of all the nations — and the secret of it was with the gods. He was glad as he looked at it that it was so close to his own people — if a day of need should come they would have the sacred place more close than any other people.

As he breathed a prayer and walked to his own door he met Po-tzah who was the Feeder of the Wind that fanned the Wheat. He was the first boy friend of Tahn-te in the valley and always their regard had been kind.

“ This is a time of much striving and I am glad to

see you, and see you here at my door," said Tahn-té the Ruler. "You come from the ceremonial bath after a night of prayer. I go from the bath for the making of many days and many nights of prayer. If my mother should return before I come down from the mountains —"

"She will be in the house of my wife, and she will be as our mother," said Po-tzah his friend and clansman.

"Thanks that it is so in your heart," and Tahn-té took the hand of his friend and breathed upon it. "My mother must not hear much talk of any trouble to come. If she thought there was danger she would not go from me, and in council it is decided that when the men of iron come into the valley, the young wives and the little maids must live for a season in the ruins of the wide fields of old, and my mother — the 'Woman of the Twilight' is to be the keeper of them there, and they must not be seen of the strangers."

"They take many wives — if they find them — and are strongest?" asked Po-tzah thinking of his own wife of a year, and the little brown babe in its cradle of willow wands swung from the ceiling of their home. Tahn-té smiled mockingly.

"Their priest will tell you they take but one. But their book where their god speaks, gives to all his favorites many wives, and helps his favorites to get them with fighting and much cunning, and in the days when I was with the christian men who said prayers to that god, I saw them always live as the book said — and not as Padre Luis said. That man was a good man — a better man than his book — He was good enough to be Indian — for that is what the Castilians call us — and all our brother tribes."

“ They call us the same as the Apache or the Hopi people? ” asked Po-tzah in wonder. “ Why do they that? ”

“ The Ancient Father in the Sky has not wished them to know who we are. He has darkened their minds when they tried to see. They are very proud — that people! All they saw that was good in the villages, they argued long about. They are sure that some of their tribe in some older day did find our fathers and teach our people,— in what other way could we know to spin and weave, and live in good houses! ”

The Priest of the prayers to the mighty Wind of the Four Ways laughed at the very curious ideas of the white strangers.

“ Perhaps they taught our fathers also to eat when they were hungered and take wives when the time came! ” he scoffed.

While they spoke, Ka-yemo crossed a terrace and halted to look at them, and Po-tzah commented on the fine beads now worn by Ka-yemo since he had taken a wife — but Po-tzah thought the wife very ugly and very stupid, and he would rather see his own wife even if her father had been a cripple and a poor man,— and the girl have never a garment but a poor one of her own making.

“ Ka-yemo is the most beautiful man in the village, ” said Tahn-té,—“ He has fine looks plenty for one house. ”

“ Tahn-té ”— and his friend came more close and spoke softly, “ you are Po-Ahtun-ho, and you know wise things and many things. Do you know enough to care nothing that Ka-yemo and his friends are not your friends? ”



KA-YEMO

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“Why is it that you think in such a way?” asked Tahn-té quietly.

“He knows the white strangers will deal with one man of the tribe if they come,—and that will be honor for that man. He knows the words of the strangers. If you were not the most wise he would be chosen to make all talks, and he would be a great man. Not much has he said;—but his friends say things! Already they ask what magic touched the old men when you were made ruler. They say the Po-Ahtun-ho for all time was born in the place where he says prayers.”

“And I was not born in this place,” said Tahn-té, as he looked at the river valley, and remembered the desert sands of Tusayan, and the island of rock on which he had lived and been happy once. “It is true, Po-tzah. But the people forget when they say no other Ruler was born apart from his people. Po-se-yemo came from a cave in the cliff. He came down from the mountain to the people. He taught them to listen to mountain thoughts. I come from a rock in the desert, and the old men say I brought the Sign that the god made my way. We are yet young, Po-tzah, when we are older we will know whether the way of the gods is the way for this people. I know the words of Ka-yemo — but they are not to be talked of. Alone I go to face the Ancient Father — Sindhési. I go to the mountain of the Stone Face — I go to dance the dance for ancient wisdom. The old men know that the time has come for that.”

“Alone? No one in our day has danced alone before the faces! No one has danced in that place since the time of the fire across the sky, and that dancer did not live. You can dance there — Tahn-té?”

“ I can dance there — By the arrow I have said it.”

His friend looked at him with a strange new regard. Each knew what it meant to be chosen for that dance of the ancient days.

There are two things a man may not do and have breath to live. The sacred arrow is held aloft when an oath is made. If the thing which he has told is a false thing the Sun Father gives lightening to the arrow, and the man of the oath speaks no more, and lives no more. He dies there in that place. All Te-hua men can tell you that is how it is. No one asks another to make an oath.

Also no one asks a medicine man to dance before the ancient picture of the stone in the hills. Only the unmated can dance there. It is the dance to the Supreme Father who is named not often. He is that One who gives earth creatures to the world without earth matings. Thus Po-se-yemo, the mountain god, was given to a maid as her child, and only the eagles and the shadow of the piñon tree knew. He also gave the two sons of wonder to the Apache goddess who slept on the mountain alone under the shadow of a rock reaching out. Water dripped from that rock and brought the birth dream, and the dream came true there in Apache land. Those two sons became the divine warriors. You can see to-day the giants who were demons and who were slain by those two sons who worked together for good on earth. The blood of the giants flowed through long valleys and turned to stone, and the heads of the giants are also stone now, and lie where they were severed from their bodies in the land of Navahu. Thus it has always been when the Ancient Father has sent the God-Thought to the earth. Only the Wind, or the Sun, or the Mist of the Cloud has been mate to the mother.

Yet the sons have been strong for magic and works of wonder.

Thus there has been through the ages, one sacred place where men may go for highest medicine — if they go before it is not too late!

Not since these two men were born had a man danced there, and the last man who did so had danced without the truth or the faith in his heart. No one ever knew if he found great medicine dreams, for he died there. After many days they went — and they found him dead.

“Yes: — it is so,” said Tahn-té the Ruler as he met the eyes of his friend. “All may know that I go to the fast, and the dance, and that I dance for them. It will be told from the house tops to-night, but when it is told I will have reached the hills.”

“I may not dance, but I also will fast, and I will work with you,” said Po-tzah. “Others will work with you when they know. Speak for our children to the god!”

Then he breathed on the hand of Tahn-té who was to do high work and high penance for the tribe, and Tahn-té felt glad music in his heart because of the words of his friend, and when he laid aside his white robe and left his house, he spoke to no other man, but went silent to the shrine on the mesa where the Arrow-Stone clan build the signal fire to the mountain god in the night time. There he said the prayers which were long prayers, and the people who had noted him as he passed (nude but for the girdle and the downy breast feathers of the eagle) halted at their work among the corn and the melon vines and watched him at the shrine. From the terraced roofs also the women turned from their weaving, or the shaping of pottery, and looked after the tall bronze figure girded,

and white plumed. They could see his wide-stretched hands scatter the sacred meal of prayer, and then they saw only a brown runner on the mesa outlined against the western sky. He had entered the ceremonial run in which there is no moment of rest from the mesa of the river to the mountains of the pine.