

CHAPTER XIII

A PAGAN PRIEST IN COUNCIL

LITTLE else was spoken of in the camp of the Castilians, but the witchcraft of the noble steed. The more pious picketed their own animals at a respectful distance from the one healed by sorcery.

Don Diego took the healing as a sign that the Evil One walked openly between the rows of the adobe dwellings, and that the field camp was a safer haven than a house whose every corner was, without doubt, a matter of unsanctified prayer in the building.

Others there were who had grown weary of drenchings of summer rains, and Yahn, hearing their arguments, warned them that old Khen-yah the rain priest was making medicine for more corn rains — they could easily hear his tombé if they but hearkened.

“That we can easily do without any strain to our ears,” agreed Don Ruy — “but what of that? Is a piece of hide tied around a hollow log to serve as thunder from which the rain must come, whether or no?”

The girl did not grasp his raillery and liked it little. When Don Ruy spoke to her — or spoke of her, she felt she was being laughed at. Only her determination to be in some way a power through these strange people, kept her from betraying her anger.

“The rain comes,” she stated coldly. “The drum of Khen-yah never rests in quiet until it **does**

come. One night and one day he has made medicine — soon it must come.”

“Then I cast my vote for the cover of a solid roof, gentlemen,” decided Don Ruy. “I’ve had one taste of their red magic — it was speedy and effectual. If the old magician should decide to send us a flood, the sorcery would not be so much to my liking.”

After some further discourse all agreed to accept the offered dwelling, though Don Diego warned Don Ruy it was unwise to speak in so light a manner of the power of the Evil One when it was rampant in the land. Already he had taken up the valiant battle for converts. His success was gratifying in that one woman had without understanding, yet with pleasurable smiles listened to the credo, and had accepted with equal gratification a string of blue beads of glass, and a rosary.— It was Säh-pah. She had found courage to slip alone into the camp while Yahn talked in the village. After the little matter of the beads she at once became as a shadow to Don Diego, who had great confidence of leading her away from her false gods. When he stated his pious hope to the official interpreter of Don Ruy, that damsel seemed little gifted with the devout apprehension or sisterly affection so much to be desired in females. She was angry because of the blue beads, and later, when the sulkiness had departed enough that her tongue found again its right usage, she stated that the pious Don Diego would find little trouble in leading Säh-pah to any place he chose — nor would any other man who wanted a convert!

Whereupon the eager and pious gentleman gave thanks — let the others discuss civil or ecclesiastical rule among the savage people — or even risk their souls in dealings with sorcerers, but he had made the

only convert on this first day, and thus it was recorded by the secretary on the first page of the "Relaciones" pertaining to the chapters of Povi-whah, in that part of the "Province of New Spain in the Indian Island which is refreshed by the majestic stream called in the savage language Pō-sōn-gé, but the same called by the Castilians the Rio Bravo and the Rio Grande del Norte."

Yahn Tsyn-deh took with all seriousness her office as an adjunct of the Castilian camp, and Ka-yemo who also gave help in the tradings for corn, and for wood, and the various needs of the camp, found her there always except when she slept, and he went back and forth like a tethered beast, and dared not command her. He had not thought about her except to laugh in anger ever since a dawn when he had walked out of her dwelling because of her witch's temper and her tongue of a fiend:— and that day he had gone straight as the ravens fly, to the house of his oldest relative, and told him he wished to be married as early as might be to Koh-pé, the daughter of Tsa-fah. Then to the wilderness he had gone hunting, leaving all of trouble behind him while the two clans made the marriage.— When he came back again to his people all was decided — and he laughed loud in the face of Yahn — and passed her by, and carried fresh killed rabbits to the door of Koh-pé.

That was how it had ended between them. Not once afterwards had he spoken to her until he met her as she walked triumphant and very proud beside the Castilians at the gateway. Triumphant and very proud did she continue to walk, and insolent were her eyes when she let them rest on the husband of Koh-pé. In vain he talked to the governor that she might be

banished with the other women who were young. Ka-yemo found himself laughed at by the Te-hua men; — was he angry because the Castilian capitan of war could give the girl beads of red shell and bracelets of white metal — while he — Ka-yemo — had not given her even meat from the hunt all those summers and winters when she had been his love?

So the men laughed — and told him each new gift given to the one woman who knew Castilian words — and he laughed also as one does who cares little, but in his heart was growing rage such as he had never known could be in him. The man who was sentinel of Povi-whah while the stars shone was visited in the night by Ka-yemo the chief of war, and the governor Phen-tsa was well pleased when he heard it. To be married had, he thought, made a stronger man of Ka-yemo, for never before had he watched with the sentinel through the night, except the nights of the young moon when it was part of his work to watch, and to make reports of the things in the sky to the Po-Ahtun-ho.

And no one guessed that while his visit to the sentinel on the highest terrace had been brief — his walks past the dwelling of Yahn Tsyn-deh had been many, and first and last had he halted and lay flat on the roof and put his soul into his ears to know that she slept soundly, and — alone!

Then, angry in his heart with everybody — he went to the kiva of his clan where all the boys and the men slept — and the sun was high and even the youngest boy had gone out to eat before he wakened and looked on the world. When he did so he found that many visitors were abroad. From Po-ho-gé — and Oj-ke — and Na-im-be and even far Ui-la-ua were

men sent by council as if to a feast. The presence of all these men meant that they burned to know why the men of iron had come to the North.

They all spoke first with the governor, as was courtesy, and then on his good report of their good intent — they all approached the door of the Castilians, where smiles and greetings were exchanged, and those who breathed on the hand of the adventurers were asked also to kiss the silver figure on the cross of the padre, which they did with all courtesy since their hosts required it, and then with smoke to the pagan gods of the four ways, they all entered into converse of great intent, though the meanings at times were not so clearly understood each by the other, for all the help of Jose and of Yahn.

To tell an Indian that the Sacred Four Ways means not anything to the greatest of all gods, is a thing of confusion, more especially so when told that a sacred three is the real combination by which entrance to the paradise of an after life is made beyond all question a thing of certainty.

To the adventurer of the 16th century dire mishaps were to be expected if the Faith was not thus clearly borne, and set plainly before the heathen. Let him reject it if he choose, and die the absolute death of body and soul for such rejection, — let the search for gold or jewel be postponed as may be, but the first duty under authority civil or ecclesiastic must be the duty to the faith in the One God and Him crucified: — it opened the portal in a god-fearing, orthodox manner to any traffic deemed of advantage to the adventurers who bore the faith, and the cross; — on the hilts of swords!

The visitors listened with ceremonial courtesy to the words of the padre — and heard of the glories

of the great Castilian king, the chosen of God — the pure and undefiled, and, of the still greater monarch above the skies, served by this king and by all righteous people to all ends of the earth.

In reply to which godly disquisition, the spokesman of Na-im-be and Te-tzo-ge invited the followers of the True God to a feast where only strong men could come. The women of the dance in that feast were strong and were young. Four days would the dance and the feast last. The padre who spoke for the high god could choose which of his men could enter the dance for that time.

The padre heard without special wonder, he had known many primitive people; but Don Diego was lost in amaze as the details were spelled clearly for his understanding.

“It is worship of Pan driven out of Greek temples to find lodging in this wilderness!” and he crossed himself with persistence and energy, and marvelled at the quiet of Padre Vicente. Or, “it is the ancient devils of Babylon to which these heathen give worship — Saint Dominec hear them! They would instruct their very gods in creation! — Blasphemy most damnable! — Blasphemy against the Ghost!”

Whereupon he went in search of his secretary to make record of the abomination, and found that youth witnessing the pagan baptism by which Ysobel was made a daughter of her husband's clan — each way he turned he found primitive rites bewildering and endless! All work done was done in prayer to their false gods. From the blessing of the seed corn laid away in the husk, until the time when it was put in the earth, — and the first ear ready for the roasting fire — at each and every stage he was told of special

ceremonies required,— and as with the corn, so with the human plant — at each distinctive stage in the growth of a man or woman child, open ceremonial thanks was given to their deities whose names were too depraved for any Christian man to remember.

Where the pious Señor Brancedori had expected a virgin field for a wondrous mission, he found an ancient province with ceremonies complicated as any of ancient Hebrew or Greek tradition. Each little toddler of the clan put forth a baby hand to touch the head of Ysobel in sign of welcome, and one woman came whose brow was marked with piñon gum — and he was told that the sign was that of maternity; — all who were to be mothers must wear a prayer symbol to the Maiden Mother of the god who was born of a dream in the shadow of the piñon tree!

“Do I myself dream while wide awake, or do I hear this thing?” he demanded of José, in sore distress to divide the false from the true, and impress the last on those well satisfied minds. “Is it miracles as well as sorcery their misled magicians make jugglery of? When did this thing happen of which the shameless wenches parade the symbol?”

Yahn asked of an aged Te-hua man the question, and the man squatted in the sun and began ceremoniously:

“*Han-na-di Set-en-dah-nh!* It was in the ancient day when the people yet abode in the cliff dwellings of the high land. It was the time of the year when the stars danced for the snow, and as the time of the Maid-Mother came close, the sun hid his face a little more each day, and the longest night of all the nights in the year was the time of that birth of the god Po-se-yemo. The sun went away on the south trail and would not look on the earth until the god-child

was born, for the Maid-Mother was much troubled, and the sun was sad because of her trouble. That is how it was, and each year the people remember that time, and make ready for the twilight trail if the god in the sun should not come again from the south,—but each time the sun god listens to the prayers and comes back and all are very glad. *Hanna-di Set-en-dah-nh!*”

Maestro Diego seated himself in a disconsolate mood at this artifice of Satan thus to engraft heathen rubbish on the childish minds of the natives:—for that they did lean on that faith the mark of the piñon symbol was a witness before his eyes! It was a thing to dishearten even a true believer, and he feared much that Padre Vicente passed over many signs of the devil worship each hour — not realizing that it must be dug out, root and branch, ere the planting of the cross would mean aught but the Ways of the Four Winds to these brown builders of stone and mortar, and weavers of many clothes!

Juan Gonzalvo found him there disconsolate.

“Not any wondrous thing of the Blessed Twelve can you recite to the animals and win even a surprise,” he lamented to this pious comrade in the cause.—“To tell them that the eye of their creator watches them from the skies is to bring only a retort that the great god has as many eyes as the stars — and sees through all of them at once! Their deceitful visions are such that even the miracles make naught of wonder in their darkened souls. They are not of doubting minds like to Thomas the tardy! — they accept all the records of the Faith as they would accept a good dinner — and then tell you that the fair victuals in the pot had been cooked by themselves time out of mind in a different, and more seasonable way! Everything

but Satan himself do they believe, him they deny previous acquaintance with until told by me of his reality! — but in secret there is not any doubt that they do give him worship since he of course inspires their devilish heresies. Padre Vicente has the work of a saint facing him in this place, since only a miracle can make them Christian men!”

Gonzalvo was of the opinion that the good padre was disturbed over temporal things requiring prayer and thought. Between their visitors of the morning, discourse had been made of the fruitless quest of Capitan Coronado for the smile of the sun which became yellow metal in the earth. It was secret speech, for neither of the interpreters had disclosed it. The quick ear of Padre Vicente had caught the meaning. Also the visitors from other villages were plainly here to see what action the Po-Ahtun-ho of Povi-whah was to take, and there were some who deemed him too youthful to be a leader — which the padre gave agreement to. Also it was clear to his reverence that the youthful magician was the guardian of the gold, and must in some way be bought or mastered.

While they talked, and weighed as might be the complications to be met, a messenger from the governor came to them, and touched them with a slender wand of office that they follow him. As they did so, José came to them, and said that at last it was plain the Cacique meant to see both red and white visitors in the kiva of the Po-Ahtun. No secret things could be spoken to him,— all must hear the talk with the strangers! José was to go, and Ka-yemo the war chief, every one who knew both Te-hua and Castilian words — every one was to go but the damsel Yahn-Tsyn-deh.

The governor and the Ka-yemo appeared dressed

in their most gorgeous robes of fur, feathers, and painted skins. Also Ka-yemo wore much of the wealth of his wife in shell beads about his neck.

Taking a timely hint, Don Ruy appeared in unusual magnificence. He carried the standard of Spain and walked beside the padre who bore the cross. Behind them came Chico the secretary bearing the embroidered vest and cap of Don Diego with which they made him grand when they discovered him on the way.

Half the Castilians marched in order in the rear and formed for guard at a respectful distance under Capitan Gonzalvo. Seeing that all was well, he mounted the steps to the roof, and was the last to descend into the sanctuary.

One Te-hua sentinel stood on guard for his people at the place of council, and the serene life of the village went on as if no mail clad men were within its walls, only the children who were small, and the boys who were curious, loitered close and wondered of what the men of the beards wore their armor, for the water bottles woven of reeds and plastered with gum of the piñon had that same glazed surface. Strange things must grow where these men grew!

In the circle of the council home it was an impressive line of men who faced each other in silence. Chico half in earnest, announced in a whisper to Don Ruy that the ladder of the entrance would be his choice of a seat; — so as to be nearest the outside world in case of trouble.

Shadowy it was in the great room where only the way of the sky gave light, and the only seat was that built around the wall — and to Don Ruy was like to pictures of the old Roman ruins. The walls were white, and there were lines and strange symbols in

pale green, and in yellow: — the colors of the Summer People. An altar of stone was directly under the ladder, and the light from above fell on the terraced back of it — typifying the world of valley, and mesa, and highest level. A ceremonial bowl of red ware echoed this form on its four terraced sides. It held white and yellow pollen, and the sacred corn of four colors formed a cross with the bowl as a center; — all this was placed before the statue of a seated god carved from red stone. The arms were folded and the pose was serene — waiting! But as fragrant bark was tossed on the sacred fire below him, — and a flame awoke for a moment, the eyes reflected the light in a startling way — as though alive! Then the strangers saw that the eyes were of iridescent shell set in the carven stone, — and more strange than all was the fact that the god of the altar was a weeping god, and the tear under each eye was also of the strange shell mosaic. It was the Earth-Born God who had been driven out by the proud hearts of the Lost Others. Weeping, he waited the Sign in the Sky by which he was to return. His name meant Dew of Heaven — and the Dew and the Sun must work together for the best life of growing things, and of human things.

Among all the swart elderly faces it was an easy matter to pick the man who had given back to him the steed. The eyes of Don Ruy sought him eagerly, and more than ever wondered at the youth of him, and the countenance fairer than many a Castilian of their land. The other glimpses of him had been brief, and when kneeling by the horse, his face had been all but hidden.

He wore no ceremonial festive garb as did the others. The white robe of deerskin was folded about

him, and he gave no heed to the different visitors who entered. His eyes were on the floor as though in meditation, and in silence he accepted the sacred smoke, and then glanced towards the place where the governor sat always when in council. After that one little look there was no longer silence. The padre, watching the impassive young face, observed that one glance was all that was required of command. And the governor of Povi-whah arose and spoke.

He told to the brothers and neighbors of the coming, and the kindly coming, of the Castilians to bring back in safety one Te-hua man who had been carried far south as a slave. The man of the grey robe was the priest of the Castilian god, and that god had sent him to say that all men must be brothers, with the god in the sky for a father. These new brothers brought good gifts and tokens from their king. The king said his children would also help fight the wild Apache and Navahu and Yutah in the day when they came to kill and take captives.

Smiles went over many faces in the circle. Nods of approval gave good hope for the Castilian cause.

Then the governor of Kah-po arose.

This coming of the strange brothers was good, he agreed. It was much for nothing. How many fields for corn would the Castilian brothers ask for such help in battle?

The padre lifted the cross, and stood up, and the Castilians knelt on the stone floor with heads low bowed.

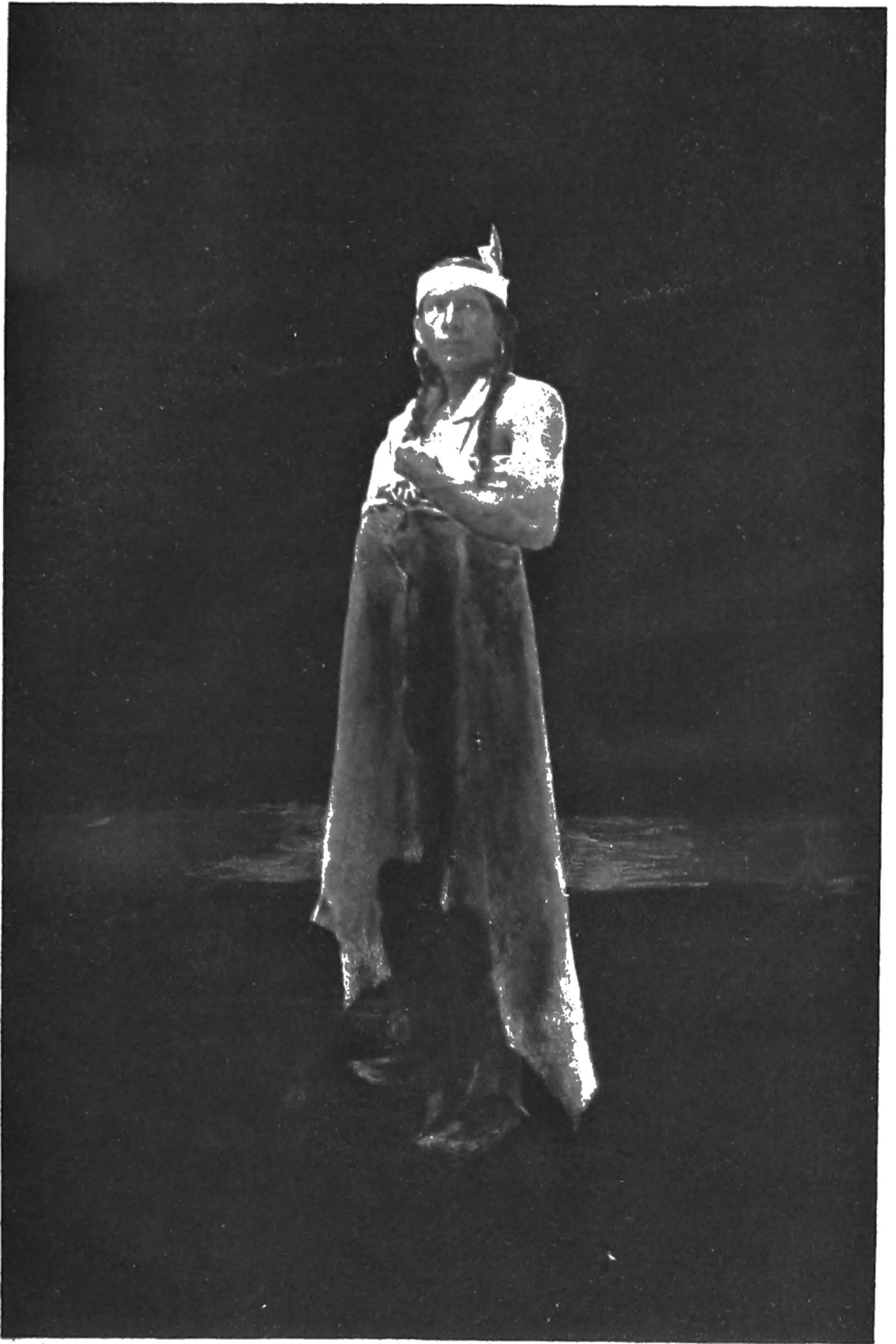
“Of fields of mortal man we ask no more than the corn we eat —” he said — “but the great god decreed that each soul for salvation must be written by the priest in the great record. Baptism must they accept, — and new prayers to the true god must they

learn. Out of the far land had the true god made the trail that the faith be carried to the Te-hua people. Under the cross he wished to give the sacrament of baptism.

The kneeling Castilians impressed the pagan men more than might have been hoped. They were strong — yet they were as bidden children under that Symbol. It was big medicine! Ka-yemo found his own head bowed lower and lower — the spell of the older days was working! — when he lifted his eyes, it was to see the brief glance of Tahn-té rest on him. He sat erect again as though a spoken command was in that look. All this saw Don Ruy, and all this saw the padre, and his teeth locked close under his beard.

Many were the exchange of thought over faiths old and faiths new in the land, also of the ancient republics, the Pueblos, and the interest of the majestic ruler who was king of Spain and the Indies was made manifest by his subjects. Of many things did they speak until all the old men had spoken, and it was plain to be seen that the Castilians were not unwelcome. The winning courtesy of Don Ruy made many friends, and the wise brain of the padre made no mistakes. Yet of the one central cause of the quest not any one had spoken, and the silent Cacique had only designated by a glance or a motion of the hand who was to be the next spokesman. He was the youngest of all, and he waited to listen.

Then, when the smoke had been long, and silence had been long, Tahn-té the wearer of the white robe arose. For a space he stood with folded arms wrapped in the mantle of high office, and quietly let his gaze rest on one after another of those in the circle, halting last at Ka-yemo whose glance fell under his own — and whose head bent as under accusation.



*T*AHN-TÉ STEPPED FORWARD

Tahn-té smiled, but it was not a glad smile — he had seen that the old magic of the gray robe was holding the war chief in thrall to the strangers.

Then Tahn-té stepped forward from the seat of council — and threw aside the white robe, and slender and nude as the Indian gods are nude but for the girdle, and the medicine pouch, he stood erect, looking for the first time direct and steadily into the eyes of Padre Vicente. The circle of the council room might have been an arena and only those two facing each other and measuring each other.

While one might count ten he stood thus silent, and Don Ruy could hear his own heart beat, and Chico clutched at the embroidered doublet of Don Diego, and wished for the sound of any man's voice.

Then Tahn-té smiled as the eyes of Padre Vicente wavered, as Ka-yemo's had wavered — the boy who had tamed serpents felt the strength of the hills with him. Always he felt strong when he stood alone!

From the medicine pouch he took the gift of the rosary, and held it aloft that all might see, and the silver Christ on it caught the light from the opening in the roof, and swung and circled like a thing alive.

“Señores” — he said in Spanish though slowly, as one little used to the speech — “one of those among you has done me the honor to send me a gift and a message. I was making prayers at that time, — I have not been free to return thanks until now in the council. I do so, and I speak in Spain's words as this is not a Te-hua matter. It is a gift from a Christian to a Pagan, and the message told me a king would be proud to wear this strand of carven beads. Señores: — I am no king, kings give royal bounties to each giver of a gift. I stand naked that you see with your own eyes how little I can accept, — since

in return I can give not anything! Take back your kingly gift, Señor Priest: — I cannot exchange for it even — a soul!”

He stepped lightly as a panther of the hills across the open space and let fall the beads into the hands of Padre Vicente.

“That you may save it for the king, Señor!” he said gently, and bowing with more of grace than a courtier who does homage, he returned to his place.

Padre Vicente turned gray white under the tan. Don Diego crossed himself and muttered a prayer. Juan Gonzalvo uttered an expletive and half smothered it in a gasp as the face of Tahn-té caught the light for one instant.

“Blood of Christ!” — he whispered — “look at his eyes — his eyes!”

Don Ruy caught the arm of the man and pressed it for warning to silence. When he turned a more composed face to the circle, the secretary was looking at him and there was something like terror in the face of the lad. Each knew the thought of the other — each remembered the words of Juan Gonzalvo at Ah-ko, — also the basket of the sacred first fruit at the portal under the dove cote — also the blue eyes of the Greek — blue with lashes so long and so heavy that black might be their color. The pagan priest would need all the help of his gods if Juan Gonzalvo caught this thought of theirs!

Padre Vicente recovered himself, kissed the crucifix and slipped it within his robe.

“The words of this man are the words Satan is clever in coining when the false gods speak and reject the true,” he stated quietly. “My children, we must not hold this against the weak human brother. The devils of necromancy and sorcery are stubborn — but

ere this the stubbornness has been broken, and the saints have rejoiced! It is plain that devilish arts could not prosper where the Image remained — hence it has been given back! Make no mistake my children, where the word of God, and the Image rest,— there the pagan powers must ever grow weak. Thanks be that this is so! Remember it — all of you when you pray!”

Don Diego started his prayers at once, while Juan Gonzalvo leaned forward and stared at the pagan sorcerer like a hound held in leash.

The Te-hua men had heard only gentle tones from Tahn-té and thought little of the strange change in the faces of the Castilians.— Tahn-té many times said surprising things — that was all!

But Tahn-té, listening closely to the priestly admonition as Padre Vicente grasped all the meaning of it. He was being branded as a worker of evil magic — a *sorcerer* — the most difficult accusation of all to fight down in an Indian mind!

He looked from face to face of the strangers — halted at the secretary, but seeing there either fear or sympathy — his eyes sought further, and rested on Don Ruy.

Then he drew from his medicine pouch a second rosary, a beautifully wrought thing of ebony and gold.

“Señor” he said,—“if I mistake not, it was your animal I helped but yesterday. Is it not so?”

“It was in truth — and much am I in your debt for that help!” said Ruy Sandoval with heartiness — “it is no fault of mine that I am late in rendering thanks. You deny that you are king — yet I have known majesty easier to approach!”

“And the animal is now well, and shows no marks of the Christian’s Satan?”

“Sound: — every inch of him!”

“Thanks that you say so, and that you do not fear to say so,” said Tahn-té. “Since it is so, it makes clear that the printed word, or the graven image is no weight to True Magic, even when taught us by pagan gods! For ten years I have read, day time and night time, all there is to read in the books of your church left by Padre Luis — also all the other books left by the men of Señor Coronado’s company, and by Padre Juan Padilla who died at Ci-bo-la. Side by side I have studied the wisdom of these books, and the wisdom of our ancient people of the Te-hua, as told to me by the old men. One has never held me from seeing clear that which I read in the other, and the graven image has only the Meaning and the Power which each man gives to it! It was with me when I took away the sting of the Brother Snake. Padre Luis was a man who would have been a good man in any religion — that is why I kept this symbol of him — not for the crucified god on it! But for the sake of the god, is it sacred to you because your heart tells you to think that way. It is right to be what a man’s heart tells him to be. I give you the prayer beads. I give it to you because your horse helped me to show your people that the pagan gods are strong, if the heart of the man is strong!”

In the “Relaciones” Don Diego wrote that — “The horrification of that moment was a time men might live through but could not write of.— For myself I know well that only the invisible army of the angels kept the beams of the roof from crushing us, as well as the poor pagans, who sat themselves still in a circle with pleasant countenances!”

Ruy Sandoval knew courage of any kind when he

saw it, and he met Tahn-té mid-way of the council and accepted the rosary of beauty from his hand.

“My thanks to you, Señor Cacique,” he said — “the more so for the care given this relic. The Fray Luis de Escalona was known of my mother — also was known the lady from whom this went to his hand. A goldsmith of note fashioned it, and its history began in a palace; — strange that its end should be found here in the desert of the Indies.”

“The end has perhaps not yet been found, Señor,” — said the Indian, — “thanks that you accept it.”

Then he spoke in Te-hua to the people as if every personal incident with the Castilians was forever closed.

“You have listened to fair words from these men — and to sweet words of brother and brother. I have waited until all of you spoke that I might know your hearts. You are proud that they come over all the deserts and seek you for friends. Have you asked them why it is so?”

No one had asked why all the other tribes were left behind, and why the strangers had come to camp at the Rio Grande del Norte.

“We are good people,” stated one man, and the others thought that was so, and a fair enough reason.

Tahn-té listened, and then spoke to the Castilians.

“You have come far, Senores, and my people have not yet heard the true reason of the honor you pay them. The priest always goes — and the tale told is that it is for souls — (Father Luis truly did believe it was for souls!) But your books tell plainly one thing, and the Christian men I knew taught by their lives the same thing, and it was this: — For gold, for precious stones, — or for women — are the real

things which your kings send out companies of men in search of. Women you could find without crossing the desert. This Te-hua man who was first captive, and then slave, would have come in gladness to his people if let go free, yet for five summers and winters did the Castilian priest hold him servant and at last comes with him to his home. Is this because of love? His reverence, the padre, is wise in much with men, — but great love is not his; I cannot see him starving in a cave, and blessing his tormentors as did Fray Luis. So, Señores, the reason must be made more clear. Señor Coronado sought gold — and full freedom was given him to find gold — if he could! Why is your desire to fight for us against the Apache and the Yutah — and what is the thing you ask in exchange? Not yet have we had any plain word as from your king.”

Don Ruy smiled at his logic. Here was no untutored savage such as they had hoped to buy with glass beads — or perhaps a mule the worse for the journey! However it ended, he was getting more of adventure than if he had built a ship to sail the coasts!

“Games have been won by Truth ere now even though Truth be not popular,” he said to the padre.

“It is not fitting that his Reverence should make reply,” — put in Don Diego with much anger. “Holy Church is insulted in his person. If this were but Madrid —”

“To wish for Paradise takes no more of breath,” — suggested Don Ruy, “and if it is beneath the dignity of any else, perhaps I could speak — or Chico here.”

But the latter silently disclaimed gift of logic or oratory, — in fact the turn of things was not toward

gaity. Don Diego was shocked at everything said. Gonzalvo and the padre were plainly furious, yet bound to silence. Only Don Ruy could still smile. To him it was a game good as a bull fight — and much more novel.

“I shall speak, though it be a task I elsewhere evade,” he said, and looked at the Cacique — a solitary nude bronze body amidst all the gay trappings of the assembly. “Senor, it is not women we seek — though a few of us might make room for a pretty one! It is true that the men in armor would help guard your fields, for they have heard that you are the Children of the Sun as were certain people of the south. In the south the sun sent a sign to his children — it was gold set in the ledges of the rock, or the gravel of the stream. If these people of the Rio Grande del Norte can show these signs that they be given as proof to our king — then men in armor of steel will come many as bees on the blossom and guard your land that your corn and your women be ever safe from the wild Indians who make devastation.”

Tahn-té repeated this to the Te-hua men without comment of his own, and the dark faces were watched by the Castilians. They could see no eagerness — only a little wonder — and from some a shrug or smile, — but — not from any of them anger or fierce looks!

The padre drew a quiet breath of content and leaned back — the game was at least even. The Navahu had been bad for two years — very bad! The appeal of Don Ruy might prove the right thing, and the simple thing. It would take time, for the Indian mind was slow; — the quickness of the naked sorcerer proved nothing otherwise, for every god-

fearing man could see that he was more than mortal in satanic strength. Against this one man alone must the battle for the Trinity be fought!

Together did the Te-hua men of council speak much — and to Ka-yemo they turned more than once and asked of the Tiguex days of the other Christian men. But between the devil of the padre and his symbols and the deep sea of the eyes of Tahn-té, not much was to be remembered by a man, and he could only say that his stay in the south was not long — that he was only a boy, and without the understanding of things done and seen.

“I have spoken,”— said Tahn-té when the older men turned to him for council as to the wisdom of throwing away so powerful a friend as the men of iron. Some were concerned lest they should turn away and offer help to their enemies!

In the land of the Yutah the yellow stones were found in the stream — also in the heart of the Navahu desert. No people used these stones because they were sacred to the sun, and strong for prayer, but — it was well to think what would happen if the men of iron were brothers to the Navahu!

“Never more could we sleep under our own roof — or plant corn in our own fields,” said the man from Te-tzo-ge,—“our daughters would be wives to the Navahu and mothers of Navahu, and the grass would grow over the walls we have builded.”

They smoked in silence over this thought, for it was a dark thought — and it could come true!

“We could kill these few, and then sleep sound for a long time with no trouble thoughts,” suggested one, a patriarch from Ui-la-ua.

“That is true,” said Tahn-té — “but if we do that

way we would be no better than these men of iron. Their god talks two ways for killing, and their men live two ways. Our god when he taught our fathers, gave them but one law for killing, it was this: —“ Go not to battle. A time will come for you to fight, and the stars in the sky will mark that time. When the star of the ice land moves — then the battle time will be here! Until then live as brothers and make houses — use the spear only when the enemy comes to break your walls.” That is the world of the Great Ruler. To kill these men only holds the matter for your sons to decide some other year.”

“ What then is to do? ” demanded a man of Naim-be —“ they do not break the walls, but they are beside the gates.”

“ When the Yutah and the Navahu traders come with skin robes, what is it you do? ” asked Tahn-té.

“ We trade them our corn and our melons and we get the robes.”

“ And,” — added Tahn-té —“ the governor of each village gives them room outside the walls when the night comes, and the chief of war sees that the gate is closed, and that a guard never goes down from the roof! If these men are precious to you, make of them brothers, and send prayer thoughts on their trail, but never forget that they are traders, and never forget that the watchers must be on the roof so long as they stay in your land! They come for that which they can carry away, and once they have it you will be in their hearts only as the grass of last year on the hills — a forgotten thing over which they ride to new harvests! ”

“ You talk as one who has eaten always from the

same bowl with the strangers," spoke one man from Oj-ke — "yet you are young, and some of these men are not young."

"Because —" — said Tahn-té catching the implied criticism of his youth and his prominence — "because in the talking paper which their god made, there is records of all their men since ancient days. They have never changed. Their gods tell them to go out and kill and take all that which the enemy will not give, — to take also the maids for slaves, — that is their book of laws from the Beginning. Since I was a boy I have studied all these laws. It was my work. By the god a man has in his heart we can know the man! Their god is a good god for traders, and a strong god for war. But the watchers of the night must never leave the gate unguarded when they camp under the walls."

All this Padre Vicente heard, all this and much of it was comprehended by him. Plainly it was not well to seek converts when the pernicious tongue of the Cacique could speak in their ears.

"It may be that we abide many days beside you," he said gently and with manner politic — "also it may be that we visit the wise men of the other villages, and take to them the good will of our king. The things said to-day we will think of kindly until that time. And in the end you will all learn of the true god, and will know that we have come to be your brothers if you are the children of the true god."

Upon which he held up the cross, and bent his head as in prayer, and went first up the ladder into the light. He was pale and the sweat stood on his face. It had been a hard hour.

The others followed in due order, but Don Diego

eyed the wizard Cacique with a curiosity great as was his horror.

“ Alone he has studied books without a tutor — sacred books — since his boyhood! ” he said to Don Ruy — “ think of that, and of the grief we had to persuade you to the reading of even the saintly lives! There is devilish art in this — the angels guard us from further sorcery — without a tutor! A savage magician to study strange tongues without a tutor! It is nothing short of infernal! ”

But despite all opinion, Don Ruy waited and approached the man of the white robe and the cruel logic.

“ You have been my friend, ” — he said — “ will you not eat with me and talk in quiet of these matters? ”

“ You do not fear then to be marked as the comrade of a sorcerer? ” asked Tahn-té. “ You must be a man of strength in your own land, Excellency, to dare offend your priest by such offer. Is the Holy Office no longer supreme in Spain? ”

“ How do you — an Indian — know of the office, of the duties of the workers there? ”

“ Two years of my life I lived in the camp of Coronada. To listen was part of my work. Strange and true tales were told in the long nights. They are still with me. ”

“ But — you will come? ”

Tahn-té looked at him and smiled — but the smile held no gladness.

“ My thanks to you, Señor. To you I give the prayer beads — it is good to give them to you. More than that is not for me to do. My work takes me from where the feast songs are sung. ”

Then he wrapped about him the white robe made of deer skins, and it was as if he had enshrouded himself in silence not to be broken.

With reluctance Don Ruy went up the ladder and left him there. The sweetness of the outer air was good after the reek of many smokes in the kiva — and the adventurer stood on the terrace and drew great breaths and gazed across the tree fringed water, and thought it all a goodly sight well worth the jealousy of the pagan guardian.

Don Diego had accompanied the padre to their own quarters, but Juan Gonzalvo was across the court speaking quietly to Yahn Tsyn-deh whose vanity required some soothing that she had been shut out by Tahn-té from council and her coveted official tasks.

At the wall of the terrace waited the secretary in some hesitation, yet striving for boyish courage to speak the things outside the duty of his office.

“Your pardon, Excellency,” he said lowly. “It is not for me to advise, but I heard some words of the two over there — may I speak?”

“Yes, my lad, and quickly as may be. Their two heads are over close together for discretion. I fear I shall have the task and expense of providing a duenna for my beauteous interpreter.”

“Little enough of love there is with that dame!” commented the other, — “it is hate — your Excellency — and for you to say whether their private hates may not be a breeder of woe for all of us.”

“You mean —? — and Don Ruy motioned with his head towards the kiva.

“Yes: — it is the Cacique. The woman for some cause is bitter with hate against him. — Juan Gonzalvo is eager to listen — he is restless as quicksilver already with suspicion of strange things. In the far

south he and his comrades made little odds of riding rough shod over the natives — here he would do the same at a word from the padre.”

“And that word we can ill afford when we are but a handful!” decided Don Ruy,— “Hum! — for instant annihilation of the proud pagan we can depend on Gonzalvo, the padre, and Maestro Diego, if it came to a showing of hands. There must be no showing: — Capitan Gonzalvo!”

“Yes, Excellency.”

Gonzalvo crossed quickly to him, while Yahn stood sulkily watching the three with lazy, half closed eyes.

“You forget none of the pagan Cacique’s words — or his defiance of Holy Church?”

“His defiance of Holy God! — Excellency,” answered Gonzalvo hotly,— “and that is not all — I have heard things — I am putting them together — You saw his eyes — scarcely Indian eyes! You heard his accursed logic of heresy — not all Indian — that! Indians may think like that in their accursed hearts, but they do not find the quick words to argue with their superiors as does this insolent dog! Listen, Don Ruy, for I have found the clue — and he belongs to me — that man!”

“To you — Capitan?”

“To me! You have listened to mad things of his birth and of his clan — the girl of the twilight and the seed bearer — well, what I tell you seems even more mad, but it will be true if ever we get to the end of it — that story of the thrice accursed Teo the Greek — you recall it? — he did without doubt cross this river and saw the Pueblos,— this sorcerer is of his spawn — he and his medicine mother come back in good time with their Star God story, and the seeds — the identical seeds of the padre’s story! See you not

what it all leads to? He has the blood of the Greek in him: — in any Christian land he has enough of it to be broken on the wheel for his damnable heresies!”

“But — since we are not in a Christian land, and doubtless shall never see him in a Christian land?”

“That narrows it down to man and man, Excellency! His father made a slave of mine — my earliest oath on the Cross and on the Faith, was vengeance against the Greek and all his blood! God of Heaven! — to think that of all the priests of Mexico you chose the one who knew that story! — and that of all the Indian tribes, we have come to the one where the half Greek sorcerer rules like a Turk! Don Ruy — you have led me north to vengeance — my sword and my arm are forever to your cause.”

“Many thanks to you, Capitan, but in this case it is not your sword I shall command — except to remain in its scabbard! — but your speech I must silence while we give this matter of the Cacique a season of prayer and due consideration.”

“Excellency — I do not understand —”

“You understand at least all that a soldier need, Capitan,” said Don Ruy with smiling ease. “Your commission comes from me, — and I did not bestow it for the furtherance of private quarrels. Until I give the word, your speech must not again mention the thing you suspect —”

“But — the padre —”

“Least of all must the padre or Senor Brancedori hear even a whisper of it! Neither private vengeance, nor religious war must be pursued while the company is on our present quest.”

“You would have me break my oath on the cross

— save a heretic alive who belongs in the deepest pit? — Excellency! ”

Gonzalvo’s voice had much of pleading. He felt himself a man cheated of his righteous dues.

“ Your holy vengeance will keep until our quest is over — and the more time to prepare your soul,” suggested Don Ruy. “ Then — if the gold is found, and all goes well, you two can have open fight before we take the road to the south. But until that lucky hour, the first and the last word for you is — silence! ”

Gonzalvo stood, staring in baffled rage. It was to the padre he should have gone first. He had played the wrong card in the game. Was Don Ruy bewitched as well as his horse?

“ At least I shall have a double debt to pay when my time does come, Excellency ” — he said at last. “ His pagan discourse warrants him a Christian knife, and will insure him a corner of hell when I send him there! ”

At a respectful distance the secretary had seated himself, and rested with brow on fists.

“ How now? ” — asked Don Ruy. “ You seem little heartened by all this brave talk of righteousness. Think you the monk’s life of cloister and garden looks fair after all? ”

“ In truth, Señor, if you have the desire to despatch a lackey to your lady love across the sands, you may choose me if you like! ” agreed the lad. “ I have neither heart nor stomach for this contest of souls or no souls — the pagan blood for my far away grandmother unfits me for judgement — this heretic of the white robe is fighting the same fight of my own people — but he fights it like one inspired by the

nahual of a god. Yet — there is only one finish to it! Bulls-hide shields and arrows stand not long before steel coats and leaden bullets — I would be elsewhere when the finish comes, Señor.”

“The nahual of a god!” repeated Don Ruy, “now what may that mean in Christian speech?”

“In Christian speech it does not exist — the church has spilled much blood that it be washed from the pagan mind,” said the lad. “But the nahual is the guardian angel or guardian devil born to earth with each man — it is like his shadow, yet unseen, it is part of the Great Mystery from the other side of the dawn and the other side of the dark. Once open worship was given to the Nahual, and their priests were strong. Now if the worshippers do meet, it is in secret. This man has truly drawn to himself a strong nahual and it should give him much of the magic which the good padre tells us is accursed.”

“For a boy you have a fund of strange lore!” commented Don Ruy,—“too much for good company in the night time,—small wonder that you range abroad and dream under the stars! The monks never taught you all of it. Come:—tell me truly of your escapade—what sent you to our ranks?”

The lad flushed, then shrugged his shoulders and regarded the toes of his sandals.

“Excellency — if you require that I tell you — I am most certain never to get the commission to carry message to lady of yours!” he said so whimsically that the excellency laughed and promised him constant employment on such embassies if fortune found him ladies.

“Then: — I must speak myself a failure! A damsel did trust me with some such message to her cavalier and seeing that the love was all on one side — and that side her own — I dared not go back and face her — not even her guerdon could I by any means steal from him; brief: — I saved my neck by following you and leaving the land!”

“Was she so high in power?”

“Yes: — and — no, Excellency. She was, with all her estates, so close under the guard of the Viceroy that she could win all favors but — freedom!”

“How?” queried Don Ruy with wrinkled brow — his thoughts travelling fast to the converse of the gentle maniac as told him by the padre. “Has the Viceroy then a collection of pretty birds in cages — and must they sing only for the viceregal ear?”

“I cannot tell as to other cages, Señor, but this one was meant to sing only for a viceregal relative: — if she proved heretic, then the convent waited and her lands were otherwise disposed of.”

“Hum! Then even in the provinces such rulings work as swiftly as at court! Well, what outer charge was there?”

“The strongest possible charge, Excellency. The mother of the girl had Indian blood, and, despite the wealth and Christian teaching of her husband — returned to Indian worship at his death. For that she was called mad, and ended her days in a Convent. The daughter of course will also be mad if she refuses to be guided by the good friends who select her husband — that husband was her only gate to freedom, knowing which the maid did certainly do some mad things: — to strangers she tried to speak — from her duenna she slipped out in the night time —

oh there is no doubt that all the evidence will show plainly in court that she is more mad than her mother —”

“Chico!”— The hand of Don Ruy rested on the shoulder of the lad —“ You are telling me the hidden part of a story to which I have listened from other lips — and your eyes have tears in them! — Tush! — be not ashamed lad. You yourself have heart for the lady?”

“Not in a way unseemly,” retorted the lad, dashing the water from his eyes,—“ to think of the mother dead like that behind the bars is not a cheery thing! As for the daughter — I dare call myself her foster brother, and I dare pray for her that she finds the chance to die in the open!”

“What a little world it is!” said the adventurer. “Do you mean that you did come with a message — and that your heart failed you as to consequences? You failed the lady — my unknown lady of the tryst?”

“Excellency: — the maid thought you a person of adventure, and she dared hope to buy your services — then — you two know best what you whispered in the dark! — but she no longer thought of purchase money in exchange for helping her escape to a ship; — God knows what she thought of, for you must not forget that she is called mad, Señor! But with all her madness she would not have approached your highness with the same freedom had she dreamed that your rank was high as the camp whispered to me the day I came for speech with you! That rank told me a story I could not go back and tell her, Señor — so — I used my forged letter written on viceregal paper, and secured service with a man instead of a maid.”

“And left her waiting?”

“I could do her no help by going back — she is no worse off than if I had not come.”

“She sent you for the silken broidery?”

“She said if you could come to her service, the scarf or a certain page of a certain book would serve as a sign: — letters are difficult things — boys who carry them are tripped up at times and learn the might of a lash. To send a jewelled bauble and ask for the silken scarf was a less harmful thing for the messengers.”

“You imp of an Indian devil! a souvenir was sent me — and a message — and I am hearing no word of it until now in this pagan land!”

“Excellency: — the message is of little moment now — it was only a matter of a tryst — and you were too far on the journey! But the ardor of the Capitan Gonzalvo may bring us all strange moments, — and it may be some graves! If mine should be among them, and you should live to go back, you can take from my neck the bauble trusted to me by the lady. It is one of the records of her madness. But you will not quite laugh at it, Señor — and you will forgive me that I could not give it to you as she had dreamed in her madness that I could easily do.”

“Mad? By our Lady! — there has been no madness from first to last but my own when I was tricked away from her by lies pious and politic! Oh — oh! — our padre was in it deep, and I have served their purpose! And you — you girl-faced little devil — what share is yours in all this? Whose tool have you been from first to last?”

“Whose?” — the lad had regained his careless mien — “surely not that of Dame Venus or her son, Master Cupid! It is well for me to find employ in

the wilderness — never again dare I seek service with lord or lady!”

“Your lady lost her wits ere she made you ambassador on a love quest!”

“Without doubt you speak truth, Excellency. I might add — (had I not been whipped into politeness to my superiors!) that the deluded maid had lost her wits ere she fell into love with a face seen from a balcony — or with a voice whispering to her in the darkness of a rose bower!”

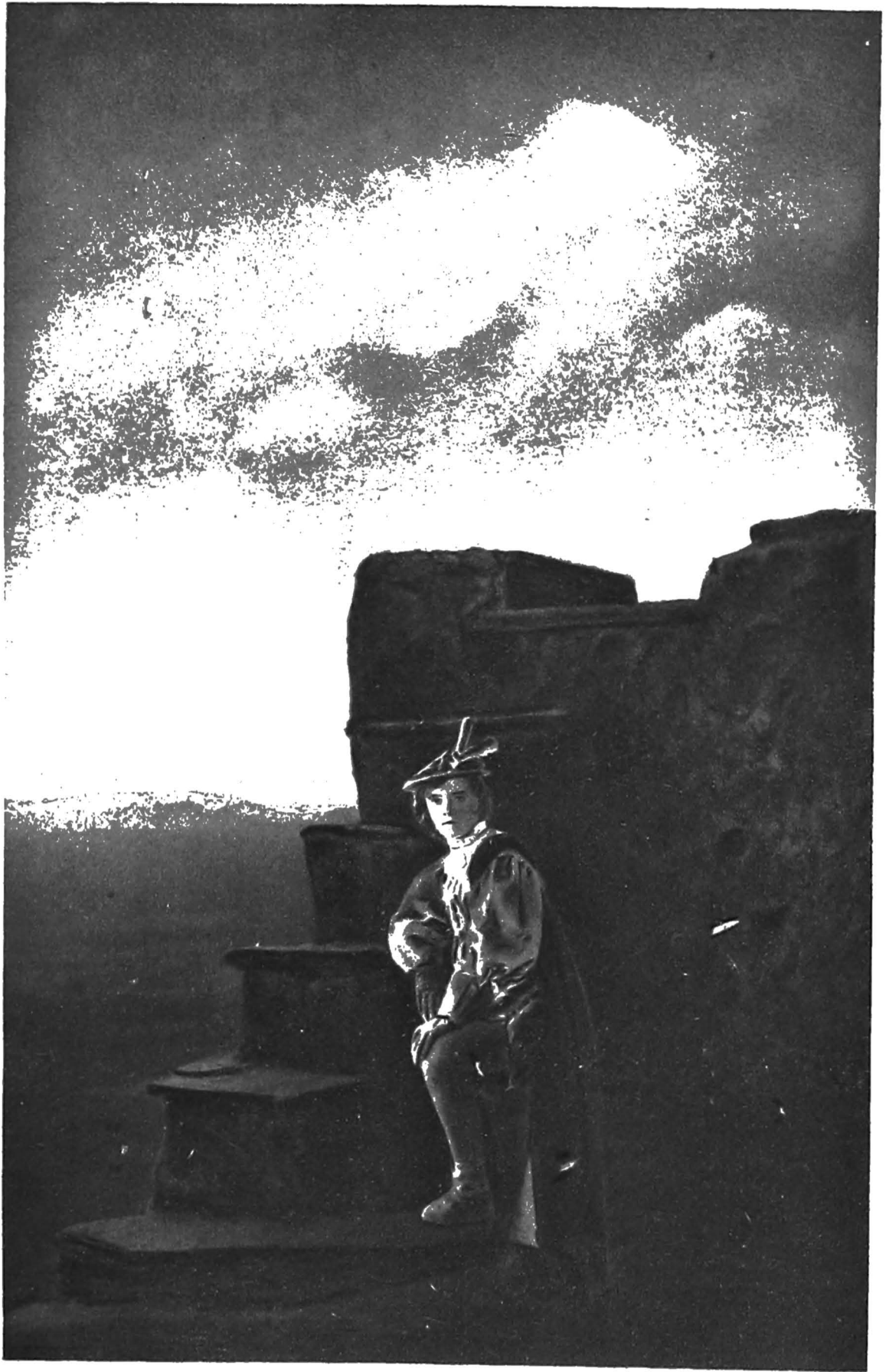
Don Ruy looked at him without much of sweetness in the glance.

“I’ve two minds regarding you,” he stated, — “and one of them is to thresh you for faithlessness and a forward tongue!”

“Then I beg that you choose the other mind!” said the secretary, on his feet, alert, and ready to make a run if need be. “Don Diego could not well spare me in the midst of his struggles with the heathen, and his desire that honest things be set down in the ‘Relaciones.’ Moreover — Excellency, it would take many words to convince that pious gentleman that I had been faithless in aught — to you!”

There was a pitiful little quaver in the last words by which Don Ruy was made ashamed of his threat, for despite his anger that the lad was over close in the confidence of the unknown Mexican maid, yet the stripling had been a source of joy as they rode side by side over the desert reaches, and he knew that only for him had those Indian thoughts been given that were heresy most rank for any other ears. In ways numberless had the devotion of the lad been manifest.

But Don Ruy had little heart to discuss the matter, he was still flushed with the annoying thought that



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the young cub had been let know every whisper of the moment under the roses. He walked away without more words.

And Yahn who was watching the two, was very glad in her heart. She could plainly see that those two who had laughed at her sometimes, were having a quarrel that was a trouble to each, for Don Ruy walked away with an angry frown, and the page stood by the terrace steps a long time, and looked across the river with no smile on his face.