

CHAPTER XIV

THE TRUE VISION

THE sentinels on the terrace who watched the night in Povi-whah knew these were nights when they did not watch alone. The Po-Ahtun-ho was abroad in the night for prayer, and when they made reports in the morning, they knew that he had not waited for such reports ere being wise as to each shining path of a bright spirit sent earthward by the Great Mystery,— or each shadow passing over the Mother of the Starry Skirt, or the nearness of the visiting Ancient Star to the constellations on its trail to the twilight land of many days.

They knew he was watching the world overhead. With the Pin-pe-yé, that mystic compass of the Milky Way, was he balancing the fate of things as written in the light of the Sky Mother whose starry skirt was a garment to which departed souls cling. So many are the souls of earth people that their trail makes luminous the white way of the sky, and all the world, and all the people, can of course be seen from that height of the sky, and when a dart of heat lightning sped earthward to the west, the sentinels cast prayer meals and knew that Those Above were sending messages to Tahn-té who prayed as no other prayed.

And on the heights were his prayers, for ever it was to the mesa and beyond that his trail led since the mighty wrath of the wind by which the corn was broken to earth. The darkness was often running

from the dawn ere he came downward from the hills into the valley.

A scout, speeding eastward from the mountains in the dawn saw him coming down from the ancient place of the Reader of the Stars in Puyé — the sacred place where no other reader of the Sky Things goes in the night. The Lost Others are known to abide there, and mourn the barren field of the older day.

At times strange magic circles the ancient dwellings of the cliff. Before a storm, light flickers like fiery butterflies above the fallen walls on the summit.

For this reason was it deemed holy, and for this reason were the women of Shufinne much afraid when the ghost of a woman was seen plainly there between the edge of the cliff, and the silver disk of the moon.

The scout carried this word, and Tahn-té who had been seen coming from prayers there, listened, but gave little heed; — the women had seen shadows, and the older men said they were only weary that the men were so far across the mesas. Fire out of the sky, or out of the earth, had often danced on those heights, but no woman had been there in a ghost form ever in the memory of men.

Much more were they intent to know of any trace of warriors on the hills, but only smoke had been seen far beyond the place of the boiling water of the hill springs, and the smoke could easily be of Ua-lano hunters. Other scouts were yet to come. They had made longer runs. This man had been told to return at dawn of the day.

So the word went abroad, and in the Castilian camp, Don Diego gave fervent thanks. He was none too well pleased that to secure records for the "Relaciones" it might be necessary to carry a spear

against the heathen. It had been plainly understood in far off Mexico that the people to be visited were not a hostile people. They were to be found waiting for salvation, and with good gold to pay for it!

The offer of the padre to give aid in battle to their Indian brethren, had been but a courteous pleasantry when uttered. It was a different matter when scouts were sent abroad by the pagan Ruler to seek trouble and bring it home to all of them!

Trouble enough was he brewing by that gift to the padre of the sacred sun symbol. The pariah who brought it was under the curse medicine of Tahn-té. Before their eyes he sat dumb, and the Castilians crossed themselves with dread as they looked on him. He was the visible warning of a doom awaiting any other who dared speak!

Not alone could he lift water to his own lips. The trembling of his hand was now the trembling of his entire body. By order of Tahn-té he was to be taken to one of the little cliff dwellings at the foot of the mesa. Each seven suns, an old man and a group of boys were to have the task of carrying to him food and water, and each visit the boys were to be told by the Ancient why the medicine had been put upon the outcast. Thus all youth would know that the Great Mystery sent power against traitors.

In vain Padre Vicente tried to scoff at the reality of it, or the continuance of it. The men pointed to the palsied man, and prayers were remembered by many who were not pious. Indian witchcraft was not to their liking!

“Paracelsus with his necromancy has done nothing worse!” declared Don Diego. “This barbarian priest lacks bowels in his devilish art! Had he not sent the gift of gold, the aggravation would have

been less pointed. That insult from the heretic is not to be endured."

"Yet the saints do give us strength for the endurance, Señor," replied the secretary, "and Don Ruy paces apart, and keeps key on his thoughts since that council. Think you he fears magic of the Po-Ahtun-ho?"

"A good thing were it true!" decided Don Diego—"overmuch is he inclined to countenance their pagan practices, and find likeness in their mummeries to the mysteries of the Greek—and even the Egyptian of ancient days! The sorcerer has snared him with that ungodly learning of books. But while we see it, and know it, Chico my son, it is as well that the thought enters not into the 'Relaciones.' Don Ruy in the desert is a good comrade, but his Excellency in Madrid could nip any book in the bud—even the most stupendous."

"He is so great in power?"

"He is—but it is enough to know that he is the darling of princes, and has not yet been ignored by their sisters! That which he wants in Madrid comes easily to his hand,—and this wild adventuring is unprofitable madness."

"Not unprofitable shall it remain," decided Padre Vicente, who had walked near enough to hear their converse, and whose interest was ever alert to further knowledge of their patron.—"Let the heathen sorcerer send what insolent message he will, it does not change the fact the gold has been put into our hands. It is clear proof that the story of the Indian mine was a story of truth."

"Strange it is that the abhorred Teo the Greek should have been the one to carry word of it out to the world"—mused Don Diego. "Write down in

the 'Relaciones,' Chico, that the ways of the saints are often wondrous peculiar in the selection of evil instruments for pious works."

"Yes, Señor, and shall I write down also that the piety has not, up to this date, made so much progress as devout minds could have hoped?"

"You may do so," conceded Don Diego—"but fail not to give the true reason. Had these poor stubborn barbarians not sent their women away, the padre would have won many souls for the faith ere this. Women are the instruments through which religion reaches men. Not until the women have been frightened back to their homes can we hope for a comforting harvest of souls."

"There is one soul waiting to be gathered with the harvest," said the lad, pointing to the outcast. "If Christian prayers could lift from his shaking hands the pagan doom, it would not do more to make converts here than wordy argument."

"The governor and the head men approve of his sentence because the man made camp here without the word of council," stated Padre Vicente. "It is not well to meddle with their Pueblo laws."

Yahn, who listened, saw the smile on Chico's face, and wondered why the lad should be humorous because the priest did not venture to measure saintly prayers with heathen medicine!

Glad enough she was that it was so, and eager she was that some one should tell to Ka-yemo that his new friends had a weaker god than the god of the Te-hua people,—even the medicine of Tahn-té—the medicine of one man—made them respectful!

But her own lips were sealed between anger and jealousy. Like a sullen figure of fate she had brooded during the days of strange changes. Sullen

also she listened to speech of sorcery, and speech of war if war came.

To go to battle was the one way by which Ka-yemo could dominate and make the men of iron see there was another than Tahn-té in Povi-whah. This thing she thought of by day, and dreamed of in the night.

She heard his name on the lips of the old women and of Säh-pah, again they talked of the day when the father had been left behind by the warriors to pull weeds in the corn!

Like a chained tigress she walked the terraces and heard their laughter, but no word did she say. If once their laughing words had been said to her, she felt she would kill Säh-pah!

And Ka-yemo gazed at her with burning eyes afar off — yet looked the other way if by chance they passed each other in the court of the village. It was true he started over the mesa to Shufinne where the new wife waited with the other young women and the girl children, but midway on the trail the thought of Yahn and Juan Gonzalvo had come to him — and he had turned in his tracks, and the new wife of the many robes, and wealth of shell beads, was not seen by him.

Phen-tza the governor said hard words to him that his actions made laughter,— and that he went about as in an angry dream, and that the warriors asked who was to lead if the day vision of Tahn-té proved a true vision!

“I did not see the vision of Tahn-té,” retorted Ka-yemo — “the people to whom he made it clear of sight, say it was across the river to the sunrise — why then does Tahn-té ask for scouts running to the sunset hills? That is new medicine.”

“The council asked that thing while you were yet on the mesa,” said the governor patiently. “The people who saw the vision of Tahn-té saw only the spirit form of Navahu warriors,” and the governor puffed smoke from his pipe to the four ways to propitiate the gods for the mention of those who belonged in the spirit land. “But before the vision was carried away by magic of the wind, Tahn-té saw more than the others, he saw a dream mountain behind them — and cliffs and a mountain pass that is known to his eyes. Through that pass they were coming, and the pass is beyond the sacred mountain to the land of the hunting ground of the sunset. By that trail he knows they come — or they will come!”

“You think the vision of Tahn-té is clear, and his medicine good!” said Ka-yemo — “But the men of iron are wise also. They call him — sorcerer.”

“It is not yet the time to say it aloud,” warned the governor. “This is a time of strange things, and our eyes saw that which came to the outcast who carried the sun symbol to the men of iron. The medicine of the white men is strong, and they could be good brothers in battle, — but not yet has their man of sacred medicine shown magic like that,” and he pointed to the outcast waiting and shaking in the sunshine against the wall of the village.

Ka-yemo knew by these words that even his own clan watched him closely — Tahn-té had made the jealous hearts afraid.

Yahn saw him go alone to the river's edge, and sit long alone; his handsome head was bent in thought and to no one could the thought be told. From the terrace Yahn watched. It was a time when the war chief should call men and see that bows were strong, and lances ready. It was not a time to walk apart

and be unseen of the warriors. One man, who fastened a scalp to his lance for good medicine, talked with Säh-pah, and the woman laughed and asked who would pull weeds in the corn if all men went seeking the Navahu!

When Yahn Tysndeh heard that, she went down from the terrace into her own dwelling, and made prayers to her own gods of her Apache people. With a blade of obsidian she made scars until the blood dripped from her braceletted arms. To the divinely created Woman Without Parents, she chanted a song of prayer, and to the Twin Gods who slew enemies, she let her blood drop by drop fall on the sacred meal of the medicine bowl:— all this that one man be given power — and all this that a Te-hua clan be not ashamed in the sight of gods!

Through the words of her prayer she heard the hurry of feet, and the shrill of voices, and past her dwelling tramped men of iron clanging the metal of their arms, and the voice of Chico was heard calling her name at the door, telling her the scouts had found the Navahu camp:— to come quickly to Don Diego. Tahn-té had read aright the magic of the vision of the sand and the sun!

And Yahn Tsyn-deh slipped shell ornaments over the wounds on her arms, and went out to make words for the Christians.