

CHAPTER XXIV

THE BLUEBIRD'S CALL

EVEN in the long after years in stately Christian Spain, Don Ruy was a silent man when his serene lady in stiff brocades and jewelled shoes would mock at court pageantry and sigh for the reckless days when she had worn the trappings of a page and followed his steps into the north land of barbaric mysteries.

Mystery much of it had remained for her! The life of the final days in the terraced village by the great river had been masked and cloaked for her. Ysobel and José had been silent guards, and Don Ruy could not be cajoled into speech!

But there had been a morning he suddenly became a very compelling commander for all of them; and his will was that the cavalcade head for the south and Mexico as quickly as might be, and that Padre Vicente de Bernaldez separate from them all and seek converts where he would. A horse and food was allowed to him, but no other thing.

Don Diego exclaimed with amazement at such arrangement, and warned Don Ruy that the saints above, and Mother Church in Spain, would demand account for such act on the part of even Don Ruy Sandoval!

“Is it indeed so?” asked Don Ruy, and smiled with a bitter meaning as he looked on the padre:—
“Will you, señor priest, tell this company it is at

your own will and request that you remain in this land of the barbarians? Or is your mind changed, and do you fancy Seville as a pleasant place for journey?"

But Padre Vicente turned the color of a corpse, and said openly before them all, that he asked freedom to journey to other Indian villages. Thus, white and silent he was let go. He went without farewell. If he found other villages none can tell, but the men of a great Order framed before the building of the Egyptian pyramids, do know that the traces of a like Order is to-day in one of the villages of that province of New Spain, and that there is legend of a white priest who lived in their terraces of the mesa, and taught them certain things of the strange outside world so long as they let him live. But his name is not remembered by men.

What Don Ruy Sandoval said to the Viceroy of Mexico on his return, was in private conference, but a royal galleon carried him, and carried a strangely found Mexic bride, across the wide seas to Spain, where the wonderful "Relaciones" were made the subject of much converse, but never printed, and during the lifetime of the adventurer called Ruy Sandoval, the province of New Spain along the Rio Grande del Norte was locked and barred against the seeker of gold or of souls — it was the closed land of mystery: — the province of sorcerers, where Mother Earth hid beneath her heart the symbol of the Sun Father.

But there are legends there in the valley of the Te-hua people to tell of that time of trial three centuries ago. Also there are the records written on mesa and mountain. In the time of that far away, the Spirit People worked together on Na-im-be Mountain until of the evergreen pine, a giant figure of a man grew

there, and around him is growing the white limbs and yellow leaves of the aspen groves. The hands of that figure reach high overhead and are to the south, and they hold the great Serpent whose body is as a strung bow in its arch, and whose head is high on the hill where the enchanted lake, known by every one, reflects the sky. Tahn-té, whose mother was the Woman of the Twilight, said the God of Winter would send a sign that the people might know the ancient worship of the creeping Brother was a true thing — and so it was done — all men can see it when the Spirit People turn yellow the leaves.

Other things spoken by him have come true until the Te-hua priests know that one born of a god did once live among them as a boy and as a man.

Like children bewildered did the clans of Povi-whah watch the silent swift departure of their white brothers from whom they had hoped much. They thought of many things and had trouble thoughts while they waited until the mourning of Tahn-té in the hills would be over, and he would come again to their councils. But when the waiting had been so long that fear touched their hearts, then men of the highest medicine sought for him in the hills, that his fasts be not too long, and he be entreated to return: — that turned-away face of the God-Maid on the mesa made their hearts weak, and they needed the strong prayers of Tahn-té. His name meant the Sunlight, and their minds were in shadow after his going away.

With prayer words and prayer music they sought for him, and sacred pollen was wafted to the four ways, and all the ways of the Spirit, that the help of the Lost Others might come also.

They told each other of the promise of Po-se-yemo and of Ki-pah, that in each time of stress a leader

who was god-sent would come to the Te-hua people so long as they were faithful to the Things of the Spirit.

This had truly been a season of stress, and an appeal of new, strange gods!

Tahn-té, the leader, had been born and had come to them; the Flute of the Ancient Gods he had carried as the Sign! — and as they whispered it to each other, their eyes had a new terror, and they sought wildly for reasons to justify themselves.

He had come. They had choice, and they chose the new white brothers, and the new god promises!

He had come; — and they had closed their hearts against his words — they had driven him away as in other days the Ancient Fathers had driven Po-se-yemo to the south: — for the gods only live where the hearts of men are true, and strong, and of faith!

These things they had been told by the Ancients, but they remembered it now anew as they followed each other in silence to the hills, and to the white walls of Puyé — and to the tomb there newly built that the Woman of the Twilight might rest where her people had lived in the lost centuries.

The portal of it was closed, and the sign of her order was cut in the rock at the portal.

The priests made many prayers, but no trace of the lost Ruler could they find. All was silence in that place of the dead, but for the song of a bluebird flitting from one ancient dwelling to another.

Younger men went far to the west where the people of the Hopi mesas had loved him; — somewhere in the world he must be found!

But the Hopi people mourned also, for they had heard the strange call of a flute across the sands in the night time, and had feared to answer to the call, and in

the morning there was no sound of the flute, and no priest of the flute to be found: — only a trail across the desert sand — and the trail led the way of the sun trail, and the Winds of the Four Ways blew, and swept it from sight — and they knew in their hearts that Tahn-té had sent his good-bye call ere he went from the land of men to the land of gods.

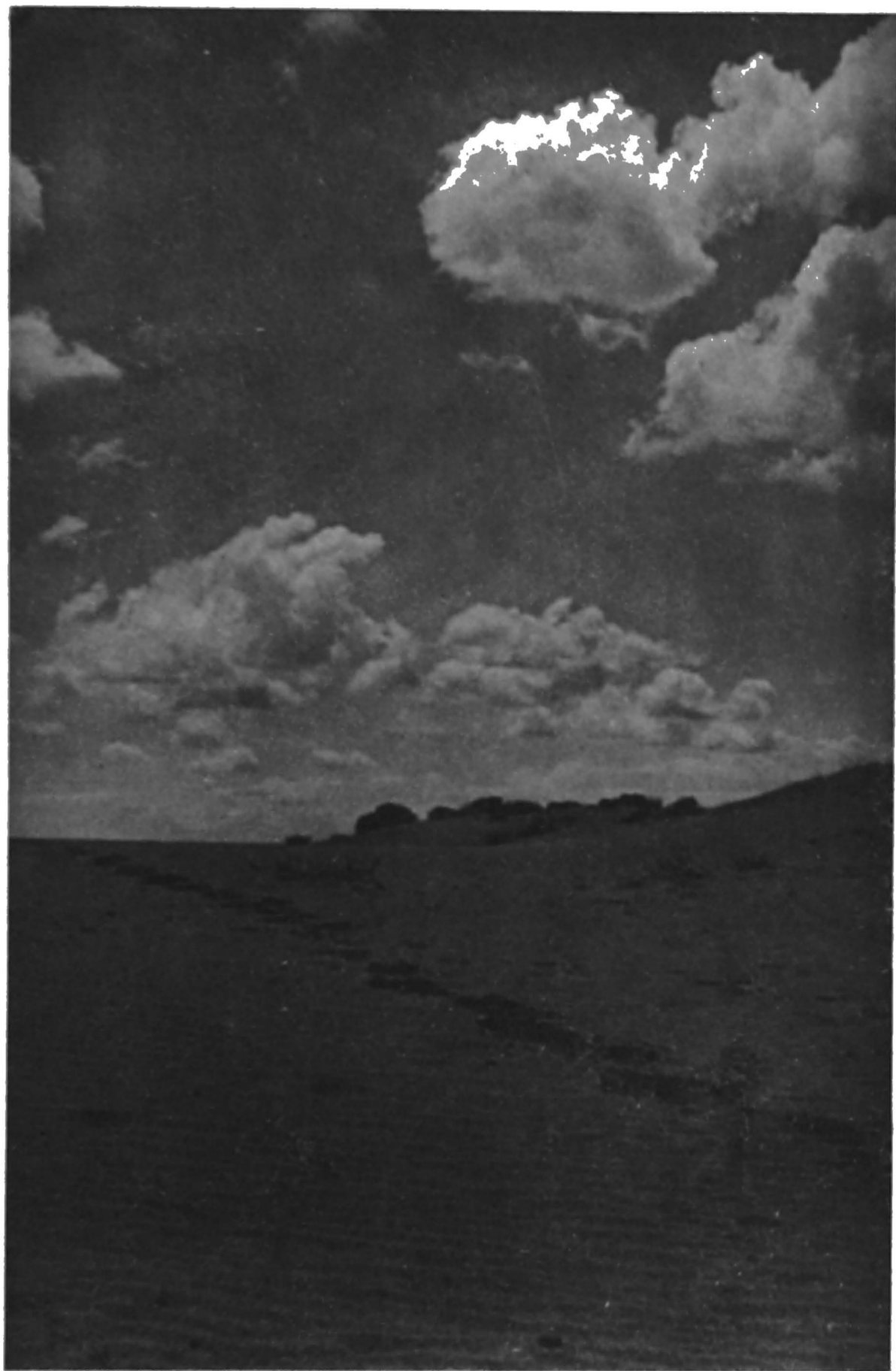
They knew also that he went alive — for the god-born do not die.

This word the couriers took back to the Te-hua people of the Rio Grande, and fires were lit for him as they have been lighted for centuries that the god Po-se-yemo might know that their faith in the valley of the great river was yet strong for the ancient gods.

Three centuries of the religion of the white strangers have not made dim the signal fires to those born of the sky!

The walls of Povi-whah have melted again into Mother Earth. Silent are the groves where the Ancient Others carved their homes from the rock walls of the heights. Wings of vivid blue flit in the sunlight from the portal of the star to bough of the piñon tree — and a brooding silence rests over those high levels; — only the wind whispers in the pines, and the old Indians point to the bird of azure and tell of a Demon-maid who came once from the land of the Navahu, and wore such wings, and sang a song of the blue bird, and enchanted a god-born one with her promise to build a nest and wait for him — at the trail's end!

An ancient teller of Te-hua legends will add that the trail of Tahn-té was covered by the sands of the Four Ways and no living people ever again looked on his face,—and that the Te-hua priests say the strong god of the men of iron swept him into the



*O*NLY A TRAIL ACROSS THE DESERT SANDS

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Nothing because he alone stood against the new faith in that time of trial.

The teller of tales does not know if this be true or not — all gods can be made strong by people, and it is not good to battle against the god of a strong people: — they can send strange sorceries and wild temptings, and the Navahu maid had such charm she was never forgotten by men who looked upon her face. It is also well known that the bluebird is a sacred bird for medicine, and does call at every dawn on those heights, and the wings worn in the banda of Tahn-té might, through strong love, have become a true charm; — and might have led him at last to the nest of the witch maid in some wilderness of the Far Away; — who can tell?

But all men know that the prophecies of Tahn-té are true to-day in the valley of the Rio Grande — and that his vision was the vision of that which was to be.

Aliksai!

