

CHAPTER III

OF THE JOURNEY OF TAHN-TÉ

THE journey of Tahn-té to his mother's land of the East was the wonder journey of the world! There were medicine-men of Ah-ko for their guides, and the people were many who went along, so no one was afraid of the Navahu of the hill land.

And a new name was given to his mother. Hottiwa gave her the name, and put on her head the water of the pagan baptism to wash away that which had been. The new name was Sāa-hanh-çue-ah and it meant the "Woman who has come out from the mists of a Shadow or Twilight Land." And they all called her by that name, and the men of Ah-ko regarded her with awe and with respect, and listened in silence when she spoke.

For the first time the boy saw beyond the sands of the desert, and in the high lands touched the running water of living springs, and scattered meal on it with his prayers, and bathed in the stream where green stems of rushes grew, and braided for himself a wreath of the tasselled pine.

"*Ai-ai!*" said his mother softly,— "to the people of my land the pine is known as the first tree to come from the Mother Earth at the edge of the ice robe on her bosom. So say the ancients, and for that reason is it sacred to the gods — and to the sacrifices of gods. Have you, my son, woven a crown of sacrifice?"

But Tahn-té laughed, and thrust in it the scarlet star blossom growing in the timber lands of the Navahu.

“If I am made sacrifice I will have a blood strong, living reason,” he said, with the gay insolence of a young god walking on the earth.

But the older men did not smile at the bright picture he made with the blood-red stars in the green of his crown. They knew that even untried youth may speak prophet words, and they made prayers that the wise woman of the twilight land might not see the day when her son became that which he had spoken.

He carried with him a strange burden:—an urn or jar of ancient days dug from one of the buried cities of the Hopi deserts. On it was the circle of the plumed serpent, and the cross of red and of white. It was borne on his back by a netted band of the yucca fibre around his brow, and in it were young peach trees, and pear trees—the growing things of the mystic seeds given to the medicine-men of the Hopi the day of the boy’s birth.

Seeds also were being carried, but it was the wish of the mother that her son carry the growing things into the great valley of the river Pō-sōn-gé.

Even into the great rift of the earth called Tzé-ye did he carry it, where the cliff homes of the Ancient Others lined the sides of the cañon and the medicine-men of Ah-ko spoke in hushed tones because of the echoing walls, and of the strong gods who had dwelt there in the days before men lived and died.

“The dead of the Ancient ones are hidden in many hollow places of the stone,” explained one of the men who spoke the language of Te-hua people. “And it is good medicine for the man who can walk be-



*B*LOOD-RED STARS IN THE GREEN OF HIS CROWN

tween these walls where the Divine Ones of old made themselves strong. You do not fear?"

"I do not fear," said Sāā-hanh-que-ah, the woman of the twilight, "and my son does not fear. Before he was born to the light of the Sun Father, I made the trail from the level land of the west where the snow is, to the deep heart of the world where the plants have blossoms in winter time, and the birds sing for summer. Beside it this deep step down from the world above is like the thickness of your finger against the height of a tall man."

The men stared at her in wonder, and Tahn-té listened, but could not speak when the older men were silent.

"There is such a place," said the oldest of the men. "It is to the sunset. The water comes strong there, and it is a place of the gods, as this place is. And you have seen it with your eyes?"

"I have seen it, and the water that is so strong looks from the top like this reed of this ancient dwelling place," said Sāā-hanh-que-ah, and she pointed to the waving slender lattice grass of the cañon.

"I have heard of it, but our people do not cross it in these days," said the old man. "Our friends the Te-huas cross it — and cross a desert beyond when they go to the Love Dance of the Chinig-Chinik who live by the sunset sea. In my youth I thought to go, but old age is here and I have not yet seen it." Then after an interval of thoughtful silence he said:— "You have crossed that river in the heart of the world — I did not know that women went to the Love Dance."

"I can not tell you. I also do not know," said Sāā-hanh-que-ah quietly, and the boy saw that the

eyes of all the men were directed strangely to his mother. "I do not belong to the Order from which the people are sent to the Dance of Love or the Dance of Death. My eyes have not seen the waters of the sunset sea."

"Then you did not go beyond the river in the heart of the rocks?" asked the old man. "You did not cross over?"

"I did cross over. I have seen the sands of that far desert of which you speak. I have seen the trees of which one leaf will cover a man from the sun, and more leaves will make a cover for a dwelling. I have seen the water run there at the roots of those trees as this water runs in the shadow of this rock, and — ai! — ai-ah! I have seen it sink in the sands when it was needed most — and have heard it gurgle its ghost laugh beneath the hot trail where the desert lost one wandered."

Her head bent forward and her hands covered her eyes. The boy wanted to ask where this place was of which he was hearing so much for the first time. What was there in the wonderful journey of the wise woman to make the tears come and her voice tremble? But the old Shaman of Ah-ko reached out his hand and touched her bent head.

"It is true, my daughter of the Te-hua, that the Snake priest of the Hópitu told in council that high medicine was yours. Yet all he could not tell me. You have lived much, oh woman! Yet your heart is not hard, and your thoughts run clear as the snow water of the high hills. It is well that you have come with us, and that you have talked with us. When the hidden water mocks with laughter so far beneath the desert sand that no man lives to reach it: — then it is that men die beside the place their

bleeding hands dig deep. You have heard that laughter, and have lived, and have brought back your child out of the sands of death. It has given you the medicine for your son that is strong medicine. You have lived to walk with us and that is well."

"Yes, thanks this day, it is well," said the other men.

At Ah-ko, "the city of the white rock," the silent, shy Medicine-Woman of the Twilight and her son were feasted like visiting rulers of a land.

To his wonder they sang songs of thanks that the gods had left her come to them once again, and they asked that she make prayers with them.

The woman with whom the rain and the sweet fruit had come to the far desert was a woman to be feasted and propitiated — all the more that she disclaimed aught of the divine for herself; but when they spoke of her son she was silent. His life was his own in which to prove what he might be.

Here he saw no girls with the head bands for their burden of water bottles as in Tusayan. He saw instead the beautifully poised vases on the heads of the women while they paced evenly over the rock of the mesa or the treacherous sand hills, and the great walled reservoir of shining green water was a constant source of delight to him. Eight times the height of a man was the depth of it, and at the very bottom in an unseen crevice was the living spring pulsing out its heart for the long line of women who brought their decorated jars to be filled.

The evening of their arrival he found his mother there in the shadow of the high rock walls.

"Are you sad, my mother, that you walk alone and sit in the shadow?" he asked, but she shook her head.

“I come because this place of the deep water is precious to me,” she said. “Make your prayer here, my son, make your prayer for the people who thirst in the desert of this earth life. There are many deserts to cross, and the enchanted hills and the enchanted wells of content are but few on the trail.”

He made the prayer, and scattered the sacred pollen of the corn to the four ways, and again took up his query.

“The enchanted mesa Kat-zi-mo I have seen and already the men have told me its story,” he said. “But of this well there is no story except that in the ages ago the water was brought high with the wall, and when the Apache enemies came, the people could not starve for water even while the fighters fought a long time. That is all the story — there is no magic in that.”

“There is always magic in the waters of the desert,” and the Woman of the Twilight. “One other time I drank of the water of this well. It was enchanted that time, for every moving light and shadow on its face have I remembered all the days and all the nights. Give me to drink of it now with your own hands, and it will be then precious for two reasons.”

He did as she said, and wanted to ask of that other time and could not.

“Thanks this day, thanks for my son,” she said and sprinkled water to the four ways and drank. “Not again shall I see you — oh joy place in the desert! Give your magic to my son that he may carry it to the free running water of his own land!”

In Tusayan his mother had been to him Mo-wa-thé, the pottery maker who made the finest of all vessels, but on the wonder trail in the new lands he found that she was strangely learned. And when she spoke of

the place of the well on the high mesa and said it was precious for magic there, he walked silent and awed beside her, for the magic world held the Great Mystery, and only through prayer must it be spoken.

He knew that his lot was more fortunate than that of any other boy alive, and the long trail where each night around the camp fire the men told tales of the Ancient days when gods walked on the earth and taught wisdom to the people. Each tribe had its own sacred truths given by its own gods, and he was learning of many. In the great cañon of Tzé-ye — the abiding place of the Navahu Divine Ones, he had heard with awe of the warrior boy gods who were born of the Sun and of the Goddess Estsan-atlehi and set out to slay the terrific giants of evil in the world. But the medicine-men of Ah-ko were quite sure that the Ancient Ones of their own race had proof that the Supreme Power is a master mind in a woman's form. It is the thing which thinks and creates, and her twin sister is the other mind which only remembers. Prayers must not be said to the goddess who only remembers — but many prayers belong to the goddess who creates. And the most beloved of all is the goddess E-yet-e-ko (Mother Earth) who nourishes them all their days. He learned that they planted their corn and their cotton by the stars and the plum blossoms, in the way his mother said they did by the river of her land, also that the great bear of the stars was called by them the great animal of cold weather, and that the Sun had eight children, or wandering stars in the sky.

He heard many more things, but the wisdom of it was too deep for a boy to know, and the words of the symbols were new, and not for his understanding. How big — how very big the world of the Tusayan

desert had seemed to him as he stood on the mesa of Wálpi and looked to the south where old Awatabi (the high place of the Bow) stood in its pride, and rugged Mishongnavi with her younger sister Shup-aulevi against the sky, so beautiful, that the sacred mountain Dokoslid of the far away, looks sometimes like a cloud back of those villages, and sometimes like the shell of the big water from which its name was taken.

But all those wonderful Hopi mesas with their fortresses on each, were within the running time of a morning, and not in any of them were there forests or living streams, or strange new things. Only the clouds and the shadow of the clouds on the sand,—or the sun and the glory of the sun on the world, made the heart leap with the beauty of the land of the Hopi people. But here were new things each day.

When the boys of Ah-ko in friendly rivalry ran races and leaped great spaces, and shot arrows into a melon with him — and then ate the melon! — they asked how many years he had lived and he laughed and did not know.

“ I had so many,” he said holding up the fingers of both hands and pointing to his eyes,—“ When I followed your men down the trail from Wálpi in Hopi land. But I have seen so much, and lived so much that I must be very old now! ”

This the boys thought a great jest, and said since he was old he could not run races, or see straight to shoot, and he must let himself be beaten. But the boys who tried to beat him were laughed at by the old men who watched, and he was given a very fine bow to take on his journey, and never any boy crossed those lands so joyously as he who carried all the way the growing sprouts of the new trees.

And at Ah-ko a little tree from the urn, and some of the seeds were given, but the winter to come was a hard winter, and the ice killed them, so the fruit from the strange far-off trails was not for Ah-ko.

They had rested, and were about to depart, when Tahn-té, watching with other boys the war between two eagles poised high above the enchanted mesa, saw on the plain far below the figure of an Indian runner, his body a dark moving line against the yellow bloom spread like a great blanket of flowers from Mount Spin-eh down and across the land.

He only watched because the man ran well — almost as well as a Hopi — and did not see in the glistening bronze body the herald of a new day in the land.

At the edge of the cliff they watched to see him appear and disappear in the length of the great stairway of the fortress. Some day each boy among them would also be a runner in his turn for ceremonial reasons, and it is well to note how the trusted men make the finish.

It is not easy to run up the two hundred foot wall of Ah-ko at the end of a long trail, but this man, conscious of watchers, leaped the last few steps and stood among them. Only an instant he halted, in surprise face to face with the boy Tahn-té who stood nude and fair beside dark companions.

Tahn-té was accustomed to the curious regard of strangers who visited the country of Tusayan. He had heard so often that he was a child of the sky that this explanation of his fairer skin seemed to him a very clear and logical explanation of the case.

But after the runner had been listened to by the governor and fed, and a herald from the terraced housetop had called aloud the startling message

brought by him to the people of Ah-ko, the boy went away from the other boys, and wrinkled his brows in boyish thought, and stared across to the ancient crater of Se-po-chineh until his mother sought him, and found him.

“You are weary, my son, that you come alone from the others?”

“The others only talk yet tell nothing,” he said gloomily, “and of that which the runner tells I wish to hear much. You hear what he says of white men like gods who come from the south searching for the blue stones and the stone of the sun fire, and taming strange beasts to carry them on their way?”

“Yes, it is true, I hear,” she said.

“And you think it is magie? Is it that they are gods — or demons — or men like these men?”

“If they were gods would they not know where the stones of the sunlight are hidden in the earth?”

“Are they children of the moon or the sun, or the stars that they are white?” he demanded.

“It may be so,” she said very lowly, conscious that his gloomy eyes were trying to make her see what he felt, but she must not see, and she spoke with averted head.

Then he rose and stood erect and stretched out his arms their widest and surveyed himself with measuring gaze and a certain pride, but the other thought came back with its gloom and he laughed shortly with disdain of himself.

“I have felt stronger than all the boys — always! Do you know why that has been? I know now why — it was because I stood alone, — I was the only child of the light and I dreamed things of that. Now a man tells us there are many, such people, and:

their magic is great, and my strength goes because of the many!"

His mother stroked his hand reassuringly. "Navin (my own)," she said steadily. "I have felt your dreams, and I also dream them. Fear no one born of the light or of the darkness, and when you are a man you will have all your strength — and more than your own strength."

"You say that, my mother?"

She held her head erect now and looked straight and steadily into the eyes of her son.

"I say it!"

And he remembered that it was more than his mother who spoke, it was the Medicine Woman of the Twilight and of the strange places, and the far off thoughts.

He lifted her hand and breathed on it. "I am again Tahn-té," he said, and smiled. "You make me find myself!"