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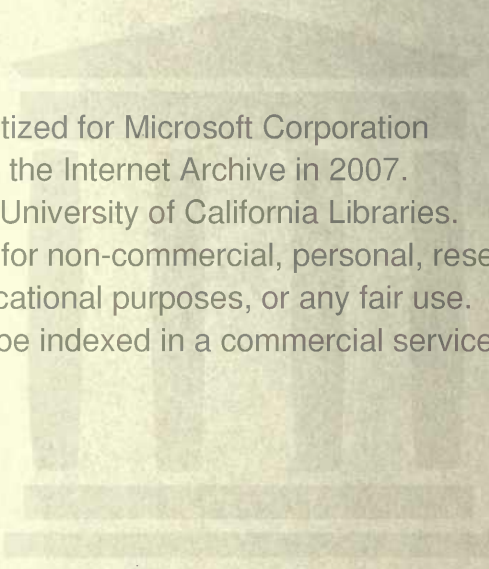
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ATLANTIS
THE BOOK OF THE ANGELS

Again from ocean's buried realms they rise,
Drowsy with their long sleep, the unshrived dead,
To speak with their thin voices of the Past
That lies beyond tradition.

Now we see
In fancy's thoughts the land before the Flood:
Again they stand, the battlements and towers
Against the azure skies:
Again those Atlantean temples rise,
And thronging pathways crown the heaving waves:
The voices of the Past speak yet again;
In dreams we hear them and we see the crowds
That dared the doom of vengeance.

B.M.



1917

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I SAW IN THE NIGHT MANY SPIRITS DESCEND, WHICH WERE TO WORK THE APPOINTED WORD.

ATLANTIS

THE BOOK OF THE ANGELS

INTERPRETED BY
D. BRIDGMAN-METCHIM

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS
BY THE AUTHOR.

CHEAP



EDITION.

LONDON:
SWAN SONNENSCH E I N & Co., LIM.
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1903.

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P R E F A C E.

THIS Interpretation is the fullest account we have yet of the life ante-diluvium, filling in with apparent accuracy, as far as I can judge, one of those many blanks in the earlier chapters of Genesis, which, were they all to be so filled, would make our great Bible several times greater without any good accruing to our minds in learning of the embryo formation of Earth and Man.

This is the history of the zenith of the early Adamites, when their superhuman attainments demanded their destruction; and by reason of the language being beyond all other languages—the root language of Shinar—it has been a labour of time to interpret the narrative, throughout which I have used commonplace and understandable terms, rendered in clear English of to-day.

With the Flood the curtain falls, as it were, upon an interrupted and unfinished act of the great drama of Man; and when we realise the sin of stoppage and the challenge of the halt of progress, we stand appalled to watch the inevitable result, and shudder as the elemental powers remove all traces of rebellion from before Heaven. And as the ages blot out all but the mention of that vanished period that began we know not when, we may wonder when our scenes will come to the last one, and what will be the ending.

D. BRIDGMAN-METCHIM.

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LIBER · I

THERE · WERE · GIANTS · IN
THE · EARTH · IN · THOSE
DAYS · AND · ALSO · AFTER
THAT · WHEN · THE · SONS
OF · GOD · CAME · IN · UNTO
THE · DAUGHTERS · OF · MEN
AND · THEY · BARE · CHILDREN
TO · THEM · THE · SAME
BECAME · MIGHTY · MEN
WHICH · WERE · OF · OLD
MEN · OF · RENOWN ·

GEN · VI · 4



CAP. I.

THE TEMPLE.

THE days when the sons of Adam increased and multiplied, and in the days when they overran Atlantis and builded themselves cities, the noise of their sin rose up the Heaven.

And to me, Asia, an archangel α which stood before the Throne of God, was given command to go forth upon the Earth and by reason of my words turn the heart of Man back to the faith of his fathers, and destroy his groves and altars which he had raised

to the worship of gods created of his evil imaginings, which were detestable to Us.

Now certain also among Us had gone forth and cohabited with the daughters of Man, in mystic visions of the night or

α Mrs. Jameson in "Sacred and Legendary Art" gives us the following:—

"The great theologians divide the angelic hosts into three hierarchies, and these again into nine choirs, three in each hierarchy: according to Dionysius the Areopagite, in the following order: 1. Seraphim, Cherubim, Thrones. 2. Dominations, Virtues, Powers. 3. Princedoms, Archangels, Angels. The order of these dominations is not the same in all authorities: according to the Greek formula, St. Bernard, and

by more physical manifestations causing them to conceive and bear children unto them, which was neither seemly nor proper; but in such strong form was the celestial passion manifested in the beings of Earth that even angels stooped to partake of its pleasures, (such angels as moved in very close communion with the farther circles, and looked to an extent upon material things). And indeed the separate Female was a mysterious and wonderful creation.

In manifested shape among them were many evil spirits, working confusion by their own confusion, and whereby Man came to know more than was meet that he should: whence would have come much tribulation by reason of his turbulence and ambition, and the use of powers superhuman for the attainment of Earthly things, which is sorcery and witchcraft.

Not very much had I known of the New Creation and of the world among the stars; to me was sufficient the vast delights of space and those far circles where the billows of Life broke upon horizons beyond which flaming worlds fed the Immensity with fire and light; sufficient was the song of endless spheres so

the *Legenda Aurea*, the Cherubim precede the Seraphim, and in the hymn of St. Ambrose they have also the precedence—*To Thee, Cherubim and Seraphim continually do cry*, etc.; but the authority of St. Dionysius seems to be admitted paramount, for, according to the legend, he was the convert and intimate friend of St. Paul, and St. Paul, who had been transported to the seventh heaven, had made him acquainted with all he had there beheld.

The first three choirs receive their glory immediately from God, and transmit it on to the second; the second illuminate the third; the third are placed in relation to the created universe and man. The first hierarchy are as counsellors, the second as governors, the third as ministers. The Seraphim are absorbed in perpetual love and adoration immediately around the throne of God. The Cherubim know and worship. The Thrones sustain the seat of the Most High. The Dominations, Virtues and Powers are the Regents of stars and elements. The three last orders, Princedoms, Archangels and Angels, are the protectors of the great monarchies on earth, and the executors of the will of God throughout the universe.

The term angel is properly applied to all these celestial beings; but it belongs especially to the last two orders, who are brought into immediate communication with the human race. The word Angel, Greek in its origin, signifies a Messenger, or more literally, a bringer of tidings. In this sense, the Greeks entitle Christ "The great Angel of the will of God."

For a discussion on the meaning and etymology of Seraphim and Cherubim see note, cap. XVII., lib. II., where some curious information is revealed.

The word "Archangel" of the text is, in the original, "Great Angel," or signifies perhaps "Mighty Spirit."

THE TEMPLE.

justly poised upon the seas of immeasurable air where the rolling wheels of Fate turned, ever moved by the Word, hymned of the winged Æons.

And would that I had never left my happy estate, nor ever looked upon thee, Earth-world, thou dull spot within the starry coronet that crowns the brows of God. When the noise of thy rebellion and unrest arose, we marvelled; and thinking upon thy smallness it was as the noise of a tiny insect buzzing in a great mansion. Yet, little pest, thy sting is sharp, and many have felt it.

For it was whispered that the beings of Earth were goodly to look upon, and were attractive in their wit and wisdom and high in the sight of our Lord Jehovah, being greatly esteemed that they combined with the subtlety of Heaven a manifested form of Earth. Beautiful in sad truth were they, and excellent in arts, particularly of mischief. And I, who have seen the days when man first came upon Earth, and the last-created man, Adam, and who have looked upon the face of God, bear witness herein to their excellence, and to that ambition that ministered by the female element, medium of Heaven, caused their downfall.

Why should we sing our defeats? Whence the desire that others of Earth shall learn my record of them, that is hidden up in the closing book of the Past? Fain would I lose myself in profound meditation, yet it may not be; and ever arises in sad memory the dreamy glories of Atlantis and starry nights of love. Gone thou art, Zul, city of gods! and thou, my Love, where art thou now? Wilt thou remember when we meet again? O Azta, could I but have led thee in those careless paths where false ambition has no home and the fleeting triumph of dearly-bought glory troubles not! The Siren of Earth, that ever sits beyond your reach and throws gifts of self-esteem whereby ye need no warning and perish in self-created flames, sits not in the lofty groves of Paradise.

Hear, Peoples of the Future, a recital of days that are past and gone beyond the reach of history—a recital of a power that sought to strive with the creator of itself for a mastery that would have brought but a horror of impotent ruin on Universes unimagined—a recital of how the heavenly power of Love brings disaster

when not applied in its own spirit—and learn, if but in a passing flash of intuition, that misapplied Good begets a more powerful evil than Evil itself can do.

* * * *

Stooping from Heaven, and full of the trust reposed in me, I sought the Earth lying like a cloudy wonder on the bosom of space; and attaining at length the terrestrial atmosphere with the speed of the Word, and the brightness of the Earth-atoms generating light, stood thereon, an embodied Intellect, upon a vast land, by the side of a lake of water wherein I perceived myself fashioned wondrously. Thereon I gazed in an ecstasy of admiration, not fully understanding as yet that it was my own image, for I had never before taken on any carnal manifestation; and then confusion overcame me and I rose up and surveyed the surrounding beauties.

And to me was given the power to take on whatsoever form of Earth I wished, which power I perceived to be balanced by a certain dulness of thought and intellect fitted to the heavy atmosphere and the solidity around me.

With what curiosity I gazed on the white swans that skimmed the lake, and how I was ravished with the towering beauty of palms and stately trees shadowing the fruitful Earth beneath the blucness of the deeps of sky as apparent. Afar were mountain slopes and grotesque yet shapely masses that filled a whole horizon with irregular outlines, and I cried in the language of Earth, How beautiful!

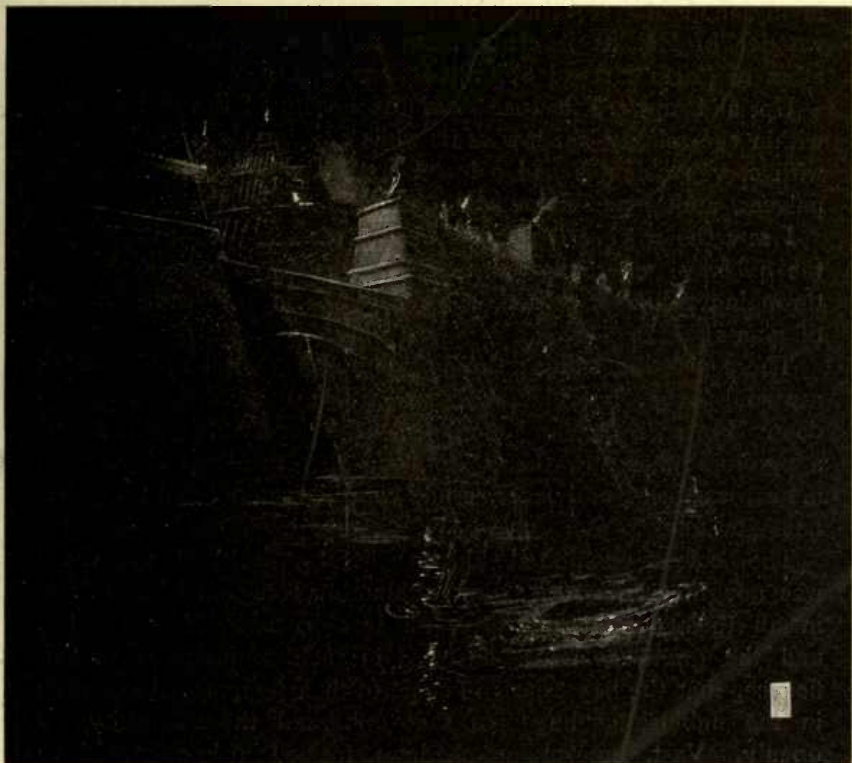
But suddenly the brightness fled. The Earth rose above the sun and there was darkness over everything. In eager haste I mounted into the air and grasped the sword that lay along my thigh, and soon I saw the burning planet and that half the Earth was bright and half was not.

Curious, I lighted down again upon the dark part, near to where I had at first come, and presently the moon shone with a wonderful pure white gleam.

It was night. I stood on the sandy beach of the old sea, that I knew was there long before man came, and that after in more human nature I loved so well because of its restless sorrow; a

THE TEMPLE.

beach fringed with palm-groves and luxuriant vegetation, with strange animals wandering upon it. I raised my eyes, full of wonder, to the shapely masses rising from its plain, and perceived a city.



THERE LAY ZUL!

There lay Zul! α from East to West horizon stretching, dark against the moonlight; and afar, standing out in white sheen and misty beauty, rose tower, pyramid and pylon in endless grouping, mass above mass, terrace above terrace, in cyclopean

α The etymology of the Atlantean Zul, which appears to indicate *the Sun*, is perpetuated in the Akkad Zal, the Aymara Sillo, and the Latin Sol.

gloom. Grim, awful and majestic in its immensity of sleeping strength, lay the mighty city; and full of the wonder of the night, I drank my full of the mystery of it and marvelled at the glory of Earth. Methought in the darkness it was the city of Satan and of his legions, and at times I wonder now if I were correct in my thought. Never, ah! never can I forget the stupendous wonder of Zul as it came upon me that night, when as an atom of Earth I stood beneath its majesty.

Up and upward it rose from the bosom of the waters, and within the mighty shadow of its walls I saw gates, massive ports with carven columns and colossal statues, and within the walls, palaces, arches and colonnades, and on this side a wide moat.

I saw the waving flames on temple roofs; I strove to analyse the piles of enormous masonry that rose in confusion—the thronging columns, colossi, roofs and towers. This was a city of giants!

There was life within; there was music. Not like the strains my soul loved, but blatant and ribald, and methought, discordant. I perceived many more lights; before a propylon stood a pyramid; and now the light began to return and to disclose monstrous forms and faces, crude clashing colours and rough ornamentations.

The colossi exhibited hideous deformities, and yet there was nought to disgust. Nay; although afterwards I knew them in all their daring obscenity, all was so vast, so enormous, and the grand columns clustered in such confusion of magnificence, that the beastliness of some of their figures was forgotten in the unblushing hugeness that exhibited the deformity so openly. Vast, amorphous shadows formed a background to gray, towering piles of such proportions that caused me to marvel at their grand immensity; square masses of brick and masonry standing there under the shades of the night in bewildering grandeur, simple in their massive immobility, intricate in the dim vistas of colonnade and arch, α gate and stairway, column, altar and colossus.

α The arch is known in early architecture, but only in a crude form—a beam laid on the tops of two pillars, or the structure known as the “false arch,” in which bricks or stones project in each layer until they meet at the top.

I saw strange scenes that then I did not understand, and heard sounds of voices, and shrieks; cries that seemed of terror, and the occasional clash of arms. How well, ah, how well was I to know that scene, and hear those sounds in days to come that then I recked not of, being amazed and bewildered by my tumult of emotions and delighted with the strangeness of it all. It was so real, so oppressive and wonderful, and the gray twilight so mysterious, that my senses were intoxicated, and I gazed on the lofty walls and anon over the dark waters with ecstasy.

A sound fell on my ears above all the rest and grew louder and louder. It was the drum of the great temple of Zul, crowning the hill above the waters, that, being struck, rolled out like the awakening voice of Heaven over the city of the Sun, and looking up, I perceived the topmost tower flash like a polished mirror as the first rays of the returning Day struck on it.

I wished to observe what might come, unseen, and, burning with curiosity, lighted on the topmost tower and mingled with the wavy flame, so pure was I then and so powerful. Far above the great ocean that laved the terraced cliff, and far above all the city that spread away into the dark shadows below; beneath me, the temple, story on story, four-sided and flat-topped, each pyramidal and smaller than the one below, reared its mighty mass to Heaven, α and, from immediately

α From the very earliest times we find a pyramidal form used in building, probably not so much for the sake of the outline as for the fact that this form aids the effort to obtain vast dimensions with perfect solidity; and the ruins testifying to this are found in Babylonia, Egypt and America, while the form is seen in India in her grandest temple, the great pagoda at Tanjore, rising in 14 stories to a height of nearly 200 ft. from a base 83 ft. square.

In Babylonia the great mound Babil among the ruins of the capital, represents the temple of Bel, which was a pyramid of 8 square stages with a winding ascent to the top platform; and the mound of Birs Nimroud is all that is left of the "temple of the seven spheres" which was but 156 feet in height, but wonderful by reason of each of the seven stages being a mass of one colour different from the others. Of this class we find temples built in stages of 3, 5, or 7,—each of which numbers had a mystic significance. In Yucatan are found sculptured and architectural monuments of a coarse character, temples (*teocallis*) elevated far above the surrounding buildings on square basements, rising by huge steps to the summit in the form of a low truncated pyramid.

The architecture of Egypt is too well known and too familiar to need any

beneath me, the roar of the drum swelled louder and more sonorous, reverberating through the quiet atmosphere; then died slowly away in tremulous waves of sound most beautiful to my ears as they floated afar.

And now the flame on the golden tower in which I was, which stood in the centre of the topmost roof wafted by the sea-breezes, seemed to have become absorbed in the glory of the Sun and vanished in the splendour, and from the shadows of the base of the tower a dark figure moved to the edge of the platform facing the brightness. It was a man, and with a great curiosity I gazed upon this one individual atom of the human Life of Earth, that in manifested form could move apart from the rest and live with his own separate functions. And methought there was a strange sympathy between us, for he started and gazed up towards where I hung in airy flame, and then turned and looked long on the flashing beauty of the ocean and the shades beneath. His attitude betokened adoration, and once, twice, three times he bowed his whole body with outstretched hands towards the glory of the sunrise.

Very far off inland I perceived mountains among golden fields of wheat, and other cities, and abundant verdure covered the fair, shadowy Earth, where rivers ran and lakes reflected the tiny pink clouds and the city walls and battlements. After, I learned that the mighty piles were built by the enforced labour of conquered nations of physique and presence immeasurably inferior to the white conquerors in their midst, and who had description here, but by no means is the pyramid an exclusively Egyptian form, as we see.

Of the architecture of Zul we have no comparative measurements, and with the one vague statement on p. 14—"greater than great Babylon," and the bare description, we must imagine an architecture at least equal to Egypt in her prime. Of all the wonders of these mighty works surely the greatest is the size of the blocks of stone used in their construction. Professor Lewis tells us that the very ancient Egyptians must have reached a proficiency in the mechanical arts of which we can form no conception, by reason that they were able to quarry rocks of even granite and to move them to great distances, polishing their almost iron sides and carving upon them, raising huge masses that would puzzle our most powerful appliances of to-day to move. Nor in this again were the Egyptians unique, for in America, at Uxmal, Tihuanaco, Palenque and other places are found stupendous ruins, of which the huge blocks had been brought into shape and angle without the use of iron.

THE TEMPLE.

been there since, as their old traditions told, the entrance of that first man and woman from the East, where great Gabriel guarded the gates of Eden, from whom had sprung a nation that subjugated all around by its arts and prowess.

Lost in contemplation, I surveyed the massive architecture and rejoiced in the solemn and shadowy grandeur of the city as it lay vast and magnificent, with the flames of its many temples leaping and swaying like bright spirits from the Sun that never sleep nor die.

There was a great palace, vast and striking beyond all the rest, enclosing a courtyard of palms and pleasant verdure with red towers and pylons and sweeping terraces of steps, grim and massive as the halls of Hell α and in truth holding as much sin. Yet then I knew it not, and did but gaze in wrapt pleasure on the mighty structures that rose in impious pride above the gloom lying in a wan purple cloud over the gardens that faced the sea beyond the temple, and noted the open spaces of the Circus and the market-place yawning darker than the wide streets. I saw the square pile of the Museum, and palaces of nobles; a round temple, that I afterwards knew to be that of the virgin Goddess Neptsis, whose emblem was a serpent, and whose son, the Lord of Light, was worshipped in Zul, standing conspicuously, near by which

α During the earliest periods of architecture a similar style appears to have been universal, and indeed survives to this day in many parts of the world. The old Pueblos of Mexico—the successors to the *Pallos* of Atlantis, were generally one enormous building occupying three sides of a court, (see note γ p. 25). Of the very oldest styles of architecture the pyramidal proportions before referred to, and great flights of steps, are the most striking features. Although not used, as we shall see, in the Pueblos, a stairway would of necessity be a simple and obvious idea. We learn that in some of the Peruvian *Huacas*, which I take to be Pueblos, there are considerable remains of staircases, and these useful fixtures were in vogue among the Chinese. In many vast ruins in Yucatan and Central America explored by Mr. Stephens in 1838 they are found, where temples and palaces of an almost invariably pyramidal form, built in several stages with wide terraces, were reached by grand flights of steps.

We are told that the principal building at Uxmal seems to have been a very magnificent pyramid in three stages or terraces, faced with hewn stone, and neatly rounded at the angles. The first terrace is 575 ft. long, 15 ft. broad, and 3 ft. high, serving as a sort of plinth to the whole; the second terrace is 545 ft. long, 250 ft. wide and 20 ft. high; the third terrace is 360 ft. long, by 30 ft. wide,

were the temples of Winged things, the Serpent, and the Moon. I saw the fortifications stretching far as the eye could see, and below, the cliff facing the sea, where it declined to the level of the beach and formed a bay; the harbour and water-way and an outer protecting reef of rocks.

The roar of the drum was answered in the far-echoing spaces for a long time, by others on the surrounding temples, and the music of a myriad birds arose to my delighted ears. I perceived many people to be approaching, and, mounting the stairway running up the eastern front of the temple of "The Lord of Light"—Zul—came a long procession, the leaders chanting a hymn to the Divinity. Up, up, from the comparative gloom, until the sunlight brightened the yellow mantles of the leading priests and flashed back from helmets and armour and the gorgeous cloaks of those following. It was the procession of the Emperor's household and the great nobles.

Upwards they came with a growing hum of voices and clatter of feet, reaching each terrace successively, where ten men could walk abreast, until a zig-zag of bright colour reached from top to bottom as the priests stepped onto the platform of the highest roof. Following them came many priestesses, for the god Zul was supposed to partake within himself of the nature of both sexes and was equally served by both, and by twos the successors followed them until over fifteen score were gathered beneath my enraptured eyes, delighted to watch their movements and

and 19 ft. in height. From the centre of the second terrace the upper part is gained by a vast flight of well-constructed steps 130 ft. wide. This leads to the temple the façade of which is no less than 322 ft. long, but has not had a greater elevation than 25 ft., yet its grandeur is enhanced by the rich sculpture that covers the upper part above a fillet, or cornice, that surrounds the whole building at about half its elevation. The interior consists of two parallel rows of chambers, eleven in each row. The front apartments are entered by eleven doorways, enriched with sculpture, which give sufficient light to those rooms; but the posterior row receives no light except what enters by their doors from the exterior rooms.

In the Central American architecture we have before us a very significant fact, that the chambers in the buildings, like the peculiar architecture of Assyria, have generally a length disproportionate to their width, whereas the Egyptian halls were square. One Yucatan building, for example, is in disproportion as 4 to 1, the halls of Assyria were 4 or even 8 times longer than wide, and in both lands the thickness of wall is enormous—from 15 to 30 ft. Also the Assyrian buildings were raised upon mounds and approached by great flights of steps.

THE TEMPLE.

hear all that they said. Beneath their feet plates of gold gleamed sombre in the shadows cast; from their midst arose the golden tower, a pyramid of light, with the imperishable flame waving like a vapour over it, in which I lay entranced. Within this tower was the drum and also within it was kept the victorious standard of the nation, the sacred symbol of victory—a Cross with four arms stretching horizontally, signifying the national prowess North, South, East and West—the old, rough rally-signal carried by the Emperor Tekthah from the North. Afterwards I knew that all the other cities had, in their Temple of the Sun, that same emblem, feared and venerated throughout the land and—Oh, confusion as I write!—worshipped as a god. There also stood an altar on that roof, overlaid with gold, and all was bright save the dark man I had first seen come from the tower, which one still remained on the edge looking towards the Sun, and to whom a priestess handed a little smoking bowl.

The men before me were tall and godlike and of excellent stature, and I knew them afterwards to be sons of Tekthah and some of the great Tzantans α and Patriarchs—chiefs of the armies, Polemarchs, and tribe leaders. There were women too, on whom I gazed with exceeding admiration, for they were of beautiful form; conspicuous among them stoodest thou, my Love, shining as the moon among stars—the Empress Azta, her tawny hair, where golden streams seemed to move in waves of light, fastened above her head by a pin crowned by a butterfly of gold and very large as to size; her yellow eyes heavy and slumbrous and their fires dull, as new awaked from sleep. There were daughters of the Imperial household and of the favoured chiefs, and many that were concubines of Tekthah, which last were very splendid in their persons and majestic in carriage, and some of them were of other races. Upon their

α The word Tzantan is probably the original of the Accadian *Tur-dan*, a title of the chief officer in the army. The name Tartan of the Holy Scriptures (2 Kgs. XVIII. 17) is the Hebrew form of this, and the Apache *Nantan* seems to have some affinity to it. Also, perhaps, the Servian *Zupan*.

Tzan, akin to Czar, Cæzar, is another form of the same meaning, of which the first appears to be a diminutive.

faces lay thickly powdered white pearl-dust, and as they smiled they disclosed their teeth in which were set flashing gems, which gave them a strange appearance.

Some of the men's faces were half concealed by large beards, nearly all black, falling from under their helmets of various shapes according to their rank and following, and flowing over their polished breast-plates. Their hair was as long as that of the women, but coarser, and I learnt that in war the thick tresses were rolled around the neck under closed visors to afford additional protection and make an elastic shield under the metal. Among these ebon chevelures the red-brown one of Huitza, first son of the Tzan Tekthah, (which was King over all the land,) and a very splendid prince, was conspicuous by contrast, with its subtle effects of yellow. From the colour he was supposed to be particularly favoured of the Sun, and the people's hopes leaned to him, their idol, builder of the great province of Tek-Ra: whose Empress-mother, Atlace, had hidden her baby boy, begotten by a celestial lover, until such time as she could mingle him with the unremembered crowd and claim him as a child of the Throne. He stood now the real, though not openly acknowledged, leader of the armies of the mightiest power of Atlantis and the World—the Last-created.

My eye roved over the gay throng, but ever returned to Azta; and, O Zul, I looked upon thee, thou fair abode of Evil, greater than Great Babylon, yet unheard of and unknown. Every terrace of the great temple was filled with worshippers, and the roofs of all the other temples were swarming with superstitious idolaters fresh from some wild orgie of the night, and by reason of my perception of spirits I saw their thoughts turning on their wanton excesses and planning more in their hearts, while their crossed hands and bent heads revealed a mockery of adoration. Through a tube the dark man upon the edge of the platform inhaled the smoke from the bowl, which he expelled in clouds towards the four quarters of the heavens. *z*

The yellow-robed priests, with wild movements indicative

z This custom was always practised as an invocation by the American tribes, among whom tobacco smoking and chewing, (especially the former,) were universal and immemorial usages.

THE TEMPLE.

of joy, broke into a weird chant, and in the pauses the faint echo of the distant myriads rose into the pure air with wonderful beauty from below and afar. The god had arisen! a thousand voices shouted in rapture as from the shadows flashed tower and sculptured column, and like a coloured carpet the city rose through the mist.

And who could dream a fairer dream of all the wealth of Earth! There stood revealed the massive grandeur of enormous piles of wonder and awe, scarce o'ertopped by mighty trees of thy many groves, cooled by lakelets and fountains, surrounded by colonnades and courts and the lacy beauty of palms, ablaze with the flaming blossoms of the yellow sartreel bushes and the crimson flowers of the pomegranate, lovely with the columned arches and the statues surpassingly beautiful. O excellent in majesty, would that I had never seen thee!

And then a fleeting idea of my mission ran though me, but I wondered why and how I must fulfil it, my thoughts immediately becoming fixed on the scene before my eyes, causing much perplexity to me, as the dark man which stood against the sun now, with movements representing terror, leaped towards the golden tower, everyone making hasty room. For a short space he disappeared and then, mounting the interior, stood out before me on the highest summit, distinct and clear against the bright sky.

The dark mantle was thrown open—torn off—cast into the flame, that consumed it in a breath—and the pantomime of Night fleeing before Day was over as the High Priest Acoa, the "Voice of God," stood forth in a gleaming garment of the universal yellow and bowed in adoration to the flashing dawn.

Priest of Zul, I rejoice that thy deep lore was locked within thy bosom, for thou knewest indeed more than many of Ourselves. This same was a furious fanatic, believing, heart and soul, in his god, and zealous of the observances of the rites of his temple. Thus ever dwelling on the divinity, with a feverish zeal, he would have sacrificed Tekthah himself or his own person even to the "Lord of Light." How wondrous an influence is fanaticism on the heart of man! Unreasoning, devoted, it is almost noble by its very unselfishness and steadfastness of purpose, by its fury and its zeal.

C A P. II.

THE INTERIOR.

THE god comes! A myriad voices hailed him from temple and house-top. The kneeling thousands bowed in real emotional adoration now, the gay crowd on Zul in weary compliance to custom. With the virtue of the dark cloak of Acoa I became more aware of the meaning of all I saw; and bear Thou witness now, O Elohim, ^z who knows and understands all, and perceives how the torment of the spirit forces foolishness from the lips, that to none is showed the hidden things nor the accomplishment of those great affairs that I revealed to such as lived then. For in my impious pride and profound despair I dared to raise the rebellious head, but all those are dead which saw my works and none shall know them more.

I perceived that the people were daringly and defiantly weary, preferring to look with bold glances upon one another to bending their thoughts on worship. But to the mass of the people the glowing orb was a terrific Thing to be appeased—the Father of Flame as well as Lord of Light, and King of the leaping Spirits that ever dwelled on their temples—ruler of the

^z There are four names by which God was known of old: Adonai, Lord or Possessor; Shaddai, Almighty; Jehovah, the self-existing one; and Elohim, God, the Covenant-keeper, and Lord of the Universe.

The word Elohim is probably derived from the Hebrew word “Alah” to swear, in support of which we have the Arabic “Allah”, God, an almost identical word. Our Lord’s last words from the Cross also seem to indicate this meaning: “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani”. That is to say, “My God, my God” . . . where is the covenant! And in S. Mark it is still nearer: “Eloi, Eloi . . .”. The word Elohim or Elim is the plural of El, chief of the Phœnician divinities.

I understand that the origin of the word “Javeh” or Jehovah appears to be lost in mystery, but apparently indicates One who *is*, and is Eternal, and true to his covenant; and of these two names, which are frequently used, each with its own significance, *Elohim* is regarded as treating natural, *Jehovah* revealed, religion.

internal fires that devoured them in thunder, to whom the messenger of Zul flew in the bright lightning and raised in frightful revolt from hidden caves in the mountains; those distant hills, from which, to the west, towering Axatlan lifted her high cone with its coronet of fire and smoke.

From every corner of the great city arose the voice of prayer and praise, and now the High Priest descended from the central tower to the platform. The wild clangour of a song boomed and clashed out, and a silence of death lay over all.

It was the signal for a sacrifice. A death was to take place up there in the pure, holy calm of the early morning, and with that unappeasable appetite of the terrible human heart to gloat over suffering, an appetite that never wearies, the multitudes strained their eyes upwards to the temple platform, and those too far off to see were yet pleasantly aware of what was transpiring. For, despite bloody carnivals, brutal scenes of torture and devilish butcheries on a ghastly scale, there was yet something in the solemnity of the hour that startled the ghoulish appetites and made the pulses beat with a pleasant interest.

Up the stairway came the Procession of Atonement, the attendant priests robed in black, the victim in the middle, in silence deep and profound, broken by a weird chant from the priestesses.

The sad procession moved slowly; and moved by an intuition, I knew something dreadful was about to happen, yet, alas! so curious was I, I moved not one step to its hindrance.

I perceived a feeling of natural horror to pervade the multitudes as the dark butcher stood silhouetted against the sky and seized the victim as he stepped on to the platform—a grisly pantomime that often resulted in a terrible struggle, the more fearful to those below from its silence and desperate earnestness.

As now, it always resulted in the same thing—the victim being carried to the golden altar facing the sunrise and bound down securely. The High Priest raised his voice in a poetic appeal to the Sun, then one gash of a dagger of obsidian laid open the victim's breast, from which the butcher's fingers

tore the pulsating heart. Raised aloft, the gory trophy, yet oozing its living blood, was offered to the Sun, and a myriad voices countenanced the murder.

A reproach entered my mind, a feeling of mortified annoyance that I had allowed curiosity to so overcome my just interference. I looked, marvelling, on the victim, for I had no knowledge of death, and perceived him to be a Clay and immoveable; and although I did not quite comprehend what had been done, yet I knew by his former acts and the people's that all was not well, and indeed, most improper. Yet I confess that I did not care to fully comprehend before, being anxious to witness what I might.

In a profound silence the crowds wended their way downwards; the morning worship was over. Through every street they threaded, looking like ants from Zul's stately height, as one vast body made up of tiny units, that, studied individually, exhibited individual characteristics, but were all alike in the issue. The unbiassed mind of one was the unbiassed mind of all. As the pebbles of the beach looked at in a mass form one great plain, yet each has a different shape and no two would fit the same hole; but taken individually or as a mass there is the same groundwork. Also among them may be gems, pearls, diamonds, rubies, sapphires, and the commoner precious stones. I reflected deeply on them and considered their ways and passions without at all understanding what I had already seen, nor dreamed that in those evil hearts burned the seed of the madness that would one day murder the Son of God, their own Creator and mine.

O fools! who worshipped the work and not the Maker, and preferred any god to the all-powerful one! In the empire cities of Chusa, Aten, Lote, Talascan, and a hundred others the same rites had been observed, for though bowing the knee to many divinities, the Lord of Light was esteemed first, the mightiest, most popular and dreaded.

All had gone, and with a desire to allow busy works to cover that weary feeling of reproach, I looked upon the shadowy mass of the temple, whose high front facing the sun was refulgent above the pearly tints below. Considering it well, I entered

downwards into the great cool chambers, dark after the morning glow above, and whose thick walls kept out all heat of the Sun, and noted the bold paintings therein. Here all was still and silent; I was alone with those coloured portrayals that spoke to me with an unknown tongue; but after, when I understood, I wondered at the daring audacity that conspired to mingle Heaven and Earth in obscene confusion as there represented. Together with the serpent, which was of that species bearing upon its swelling neck the emblem of the Sun.^z A great bird appeared to hold high place in these imaginations—the vulture, which, preying upon the entrails of the dead, soared to the eternal presence of the gods with the released spirit which would otherwise lose its way. All over the land the foul birds were worshipped as the messengers of the gods, and temples were erected in their honour—the honour of a created thing!

The secondary chambers, buried in the enormous mass of the temple, were cold and gloomy, tall columned vaults of shade where no sound ever entered and no air stirred, and where intricate passages led to still darker places beyond number. And here dwelt those priests and priestesses which ministered to the divinity, entombed in the twilight all their lives; for the light, entering by square apertures, or through distant brazen doors which turned within stone pivots, here had to traverse a great thickness of wall, and lighted the inner vaults but feebly, and in awe I gazed around, oppressed by the silence and gloom, while from around peered diabolical faces, grim and immobile, from the colossi supporting the dark roofs. Three on every side they stood, those giant forms of stone, as though they had been there from the beginning of the world, gazing on a dark altar in the central gloom, on which, upheld by three dragons with outstretched wings, was a stone sarcophagus. This chamber was to contain the mortal

^z This may indicate a species of cobra having a circular marking upon its "hood," or may refer to the "hood" itself. Here we may note that the only difference between the Indian cobra and the Egyptian *hupé* is the spectacle-like marking upon the back of the former's neck, both species having the skin of the neck loose and dilatable at will.

remains of Tekthah, whose dust, being burned to an ash, would rest in the sarcophagus, built by him for that end, and I wondered at the earthly idea that would wish to lie there in the gloom watched by those stony figures until all of Earth should cease. Ah, man, thou couldst not read the book of fate. On the high roofs were bats that hung like little dark devils and sometimes squeaked as their bones touched one another's, while their evil eyes flared at times upon me.

With a strange feeling almost of fear I went downwards into the third floor of chambers, and, as a great moth, flitted here and there in a chamber from which led many galleries. My wings brushed the long webs of spiders in the dark roofs, and upon the gross bosom of a colossus I poised high up to consider the ways stretching in dark avenues hither and thither. In those soundless spaces was no sign of life or movement, but afar off I perceived a light which I believed came from one of the cave-like opening in the outer walls, and speeding thence by an instinct that overcame me, found myself in the chamber of the High Priest.

Buried within those walls, above the earth yet within it, there stood the dark man, bending over a little flame on a brazier, that showed up his clear, hollow, ghastly face and vivid eyes and long white hair, leaving his lower figure in the gloom of the vault, and making the shadows of the place fearful. Methought he gazed anxiously, for he shaded his eyes with both palms and stared with trembling intensity into the flame, that rolled in a purple-red coil topped by the orange brightness, and then turned swiftly towards a faint disc of light away in the gloom. He cried aloud in a fearful voice of rage and command, extending his long, skeleton claws over the flame, his whole form dilated and exalted, his face transformed and his eyes like a devil's.

Wondering that no inspiration entered my mind to address him, I watched, heavy with the great chill and gloom. Suddenly the faint disc brightened until a golden light flooded the vault and struck on the opposite wall, where mystic emblems and figures were grouped in mysterious configuration. It was the light of the Sun which entered and was flashed back from a mirror of obsidian, lighting the whole space and disclosing its contents.

The little flame struggled and coiled. Three of the symbols on the wall moved to a certain place and stood still. Acoa, his face vivified to a terrible degree, watched, and then cried aloud: "Conceive, O thou pregnant one! Bring forth that which is in thee!"

From the flame arose a white amorphous shape, vague and horrible. The man had ceased to breathe and was gazing with an intensity of soul on the spectral figure, that writhed in horrible contortions, yet so indistinct that nought could be seen of what it was. The Thing emitted a very faint sound and then appeared to dissolve in the shadows, and the High Priest fell prone on the floor. The disc was darkening and methought the life of the man was going with the brightness, and I felt sad at the thought what the mortal part was so frail. But, as I stood regarding him, he arose and retired to his stone couch and laid himself thereon, murmuring many things that I did not understand. So I left him.

The fourth chambers were around me, filled with warmth and a deep lurid glow issuing from the centre of the floor where yawned a square bright opening. I was filled with mystery and awe, and the sensation that I was in unknown depths, nor perceived any end to the other chambers stretching right left. The one I stood in was immense, and columns threw great shadows away from the central light that appeared at times to flare more brightly. Pictures with bold, luminous outlines stood out in the farther shadows, mystic representations somewhat similar to those in the first chamber mostly, I found, depicting the wondrous conception of Neptsis and labour with the hermaphrodite Zul. α Wild and horrible the phosphoric representations stood, flickering and smoking, and at certain times an indefinable sound echoed round the gloomy vault, while the eyes of the colossi clustering round the columns moved

α The Sun is usually a female divinity among Turanians, in earlier religions the moon being often considered of the male sex. The Esquimo regard the moon as a man who visits the earth, and again as a girl whose face is spotted by ashes thrown at her by the sun. Among the Hindu Khasias the Sun is a woman and the moon a man, and in the Andaman Islands the Sun is the wife of the moon. Among aboriginal Hindus the moon is the bride of the Sun.

ATLANTIS.

and glittered from on high as though the stony abortions actually lived. No sound disturbed the awful calm where stood



THOSE WHOM GOD HATH CHAINED FOR EVER.

those giant forms, save only at times that weird sigh or moan, or what it might have been, that seemed to come from nowhere and return thither.

THE INTERIOR.

A fear seized me, a new strange feeling I had never known before, and an inclination to mount thence with speed and seek my native skies; and yet I longed to see and know more, and the curiosity overcame the sudden trembling fear.

And thus in trepidation I explored the fifth central chamber, of which I could see every part, being, as it were, a great pit of light in which tossed a sea of molten gold. Three figures of superior size sat around the bright wonder, with faint, half-imagined shadows playing over them, and my spirit sank with the dread feeling that I stood in some awful presence. Sublime in their majestic stillness they sat, gazing with inscrutable faces downwards, carven from the solid rock that formed the cone of a volcano. In awe I gazed on their calm grandeur, and methought they gazed on me; and I cried in my heart that it was small wonder that man was so esteemed who could create such as this. I yet deemed it might not be of human skill, and believing myself to be beyond the World and in the petrified presence of Those whom God hath chained for ever, I fled upward precipitately, nor ceased my strenuous flight until I hovered far above the city in the gleam of the sun.

CAP. III.

TEKTHAH.

NOW Tekthah was the son of Lamech and brother of Noah the Righteous, remembering also the children of Seth the son of Adam, by his wife Lilith, (which was also his sister)^α and the children of all the sons of Adam, spread abroad and multiplied into nations very great and powerful. And being of a bloody nature and of vast ambition he had conceived great ideas, and with all the families of Lamech his father and the families of the sons of Mathusaleh and of all the sons of Enoch and Jared, (the beauty of whose daughters first tempted the sons of God to stray), he had crossed the sea from his own land to found an empire.^β

Upon the north coast landing, with all their flocks and herds, with cruel arms and many warriors advancing, taught of Azazel in the art of war, the inhabitants were swept before them in ruin and downfall; and along their path of dreadful conquest they built great citadels where the ground was steep and high, half hewn in the rock, half built above, terrace above terrace, with galleries and corridors and ladders to climb upon, which, being pulled up, rendered access impossible. These great Pallos were as one huge fort, full of rooms and very strong,^γ and

α The custom was observed in Egypt of marrying sister to brother in the royal line.

β An analogy, which I am not competent to discuss, appears to me to exist between this passage of the Adamites and the legendary start of the Nahoas or Toltecs from the unknown Huelme or Tlapallan, which they left in consequence of a revolution; but which event, however, is said to have taken place shortly before the Christian era. The account states apparently that seas and countries intervened between them and their native land before they reached America.

γ These most remarkable buildings, (i. e. those built of brick or stone,) are apparently in later history only found among the oldest Americans and we

the chief of them was called Surapa, which was in the province of Astra. Nor was there anything lost by so building, for it was by this discovered where lay the yellow gold and the mines of gems, and where good stone was, and clay for making bricks.

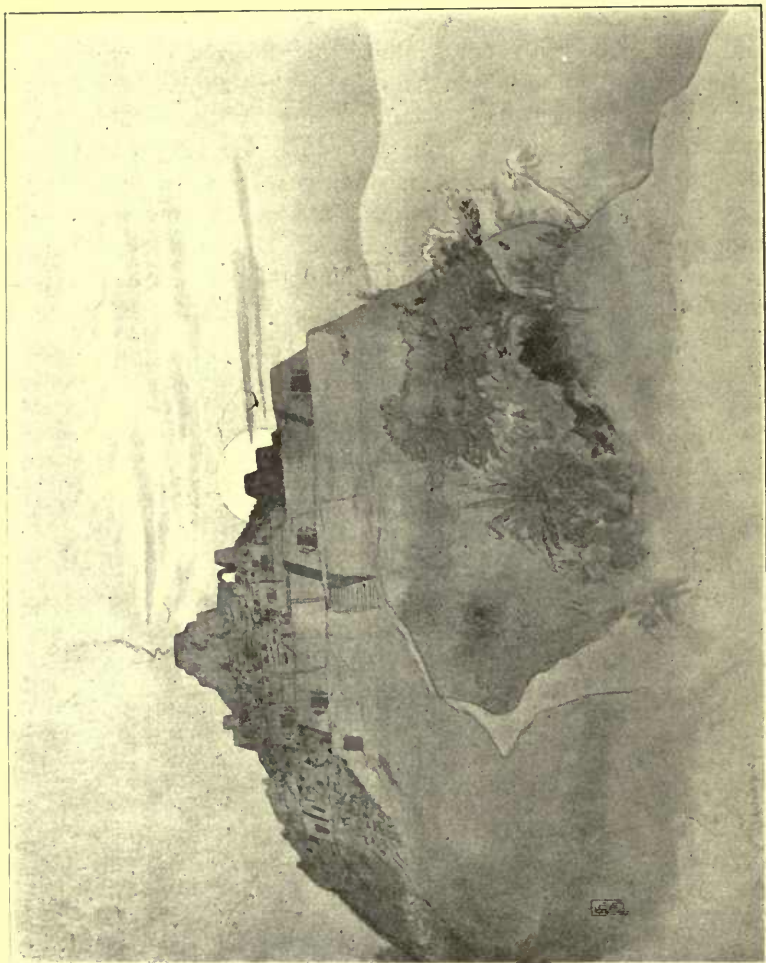
And thus with expanding minds they marched southwards until they came to the tall volcano that looked above the waters, whereon they built a Pallo and fought a great battle, establishing themselves there. And for their protection they digged a wide moat, far-reaching and deep; in intervals of peace increasing and multiplying greatly, for that was a very fat land.

And there being but few women, each took unto herself as many husbands as she chose, and round the Pallo, which they called Zul and by which they worshipped the sun, sprang up a village, a town, a city, a great city, a city of grand buildings generally one huge construction occupying three sides of a court, built on the pyramidal step system, but possessing no apparent internal means of ascent, being mounted by moveable ladders. Such structures were probably the outcome of a vital necessity to protect a small colony of agriculturists from the depredations of less civilized nomads, and their remains are scattered throughout central America and Mexico, on mountain and in forest, many occupied now by Indians. There are the great structures of Pueblo Pintado, the Pueblos of Taos, San Juan, Zúñi, Hungo Pavie, and of Pecos, this last estimated by Bandler to be the largest aboriginal structure of stone in the United States, with a circuit of 1480 ft., 5 storeys in height, and once including by calculation 500 rooms. There is the wonderful rock citadel of Acoma, whose 600 inhabitants live between earth and sky, and Pueblo Bonito, on the Chacos, 1716 ft. in circuit, with 641 rooms and an estimated population of 3000 Indians.

I have seen stated an opinion that the Aztec city of Mexico was but a vast Pueblo, but I think this is highly improbable, as the wonder of such a construction would be certainly greater than an ordinary city of scattered buildings; and it would have taken cleverer men than the followers of Cortez and Pizarro to have fabricated cities and polities like those of Mexico and Peru.

The northern Indians, the Iroquois and Nez-Percés, also followed the communistic idea in their "long-house," such as one described by Lewis and Clarke on the Columbia river; a single house 150 ft. long, built of sticks, straw, and dried grass, containing 24 fires, about double that number of families, and numbering about 100 fighting men. This represents a communal household of nearly 500 people, and another building of the same race (Nechecolees) was larger, being 226 ft. long. Some tribes of the Amazon and of Borneo have such houses.

It is interesting to trace the etymology of the word Pallo, in Pueblo, palace, and the Egyptian Pharaoh, which last word is very curious as embodying the communistic idea, representing the Egyptian words *Per-aa*, "great house [in which men live]."



SURAPA.

and later ornamentation, and the temple, built on the crest of the volcano, crowned the height of progress.

Now in all this time the people were not idly resting on their triumph, for parties continually sallied forth to farther conquests and found new cities. Whereby the Tzantan Izli swept the far province of Trocoatla, and Rhadaman the son of Maroa, a concubine of Tekthah, carried conquest afar; and many others did likewise, Huitza adding the province of Tek-Ra to the territories of the nation.

Until at last the whole great land of Atlantis was subservient to Tekthah, yet only such parts as were fairest being occupied; and such savage races as menaced the frontiers were kept afar by the terror of their conquerors. These latter also among themselves caused dissensions, for there were ambitious spirits among them who wished to follow the example of Tekthah and form a kingdom for themselves; but as a terrible lesson to all such rebels, the warriors of Rhadaman lay round the pallo of Zoë, (the mother of the dead chief Tygan, who wished to seize a Queendom for herself,) until such time as famine forced them to surrender, and then one hundred and fifty-four of the froward ones were carried to Zul, and died horrible deaths. In likewise fell the pallos of Adiar, Vul and Amarek, and there was given full allegiance to the might of Tekthah.

Then, with peace, there arose a great discussion among the leaders of the allied families as to Tekthah's position, he resting as a ruler over all and dictating affairs. But this with prudent forethought perceiving, he had formed around him a very strong confederacy, there being, besides his own giant brood, his uncle Mehira, (sprung from Azura, daughter of Adam, α) and the Tzantans Nezca, Amal, Shar-Jatal, Izta, Toloc, Ombar, Colosse and and many more great and powerful. And especially Nezca advised him strongly as to what policy he should adopt and how he should bind the hearts of people. So the patriarchs and chief warriors in a great council, called upon him to declare his intent, and the issue was that Tekthah's commanding front

α This name, and that of Avan, (p. 76), are the only names we possess of any daughters of Adam, but an old tradition says he had twenty-three daughters and thirty-three sons.

and gracious promises caused him to be recognized as the ruler over all the land, he pointing out that such course were wise as their brethren might arrive from across the seas and attempt to take from them the fruits of all their heavy labours. But this in the issue they never did, but lay in their forwardness and increasing evil until the waters drowned them with the Earth. Yet Tekthah was also compelled to agree that one chosen of the nation should be always with him to act for the people's welfare and protection.

And being thus, he took on a great pomp and circumstance, yet with politic circumspection; and to please the people (acting also by the advice of Acoa) he caused grand services to be celebrated with horrid bloodshed in the temples of Zul and others, drenching the new altars with the blood of captives. He built a Circus and instituted games and competitions therein, securing powerful adherents by distributing new posts of honour and military glory, and with the enforced labour and aid of thousands of captives working with soaked wedges, rollers, and levers, he constructed his great red palace with stone from the province of Axatlan, and many more buildings of vast size, so that the city of Zul became a wonder and an awe in the land. And in manner becoming to so great a ruler, he established a great national polity, setting up around him certain of his sons and others as judges over the people, to whom was given the power of calling upon the officers of legions to enforce laws, punishments being meted out for various offences. To aid him in government he created princes, counsellors, captains, rulers of territories, governors, treasurers, rulers of tribes and private domestic officers and overseers; while by word of mouth teachers were instructed in many arts and knowledge was greatly propagated.

And Thanaron, the celestial master of Ophie, daughter of Jared, invented a kalendar by which seasons were divided; and Armers showed how to prepare the smoking-herbs for enjoyment of inhalation, many other things being invented and put forward.

All over the land cities began to grow from villages surrounding pallos to huge walled marvels, taking unto themselves standards and insignia; fields of wheat sprang from the kindly

earth, and a navy was built which could sail round the moat of Zul and across the sea to certain islands which lay upon the horizon. The pleasant arts of peace were opened to all to increase, and with security ended that slaughter of female children (which was of necessity when useless mouths but hindered warriors' progress). Yet none might say who was his father, for every woman had many husbands; and indeed wherever I looked the policy of man ran contrary to all natural creation. And by many means the proportion of the females very greatly increased, some being stolen away and sold to a distant master, who disposed of the male offspring as slaves, which soon died, and thus the women were preserved to the great increase of the nation.

And before this had there sprung up a new race α by reason of the Last-created taking unto themselves mistresses from among the captives, and by indiscriminate misdemeanors, which offspring, degraded, and unowned, became servants and slaves, being also encouraged to multiply to aid the supply.

Tekthah, Tzan of Atlantis, with a brilliant court, led the nation afar from its upright paths, followed willingly enough, for indeed human nature ever sins naturally. The cities of the land followed whatsoever the capital led.

The nation halted.

The desire and instinct of progress and development, that, formed by congregation and led by a few energetic minds, precocious children in Life's nursery, manifested itself in the eager restlessness, the collecting into potential communities and the desire for civilization and its benefits, was satisfied with a power that was able to supply itself with every need and luxury, falling before the temptation of slothful enjoyment and turning its vast warlike energies on the satisfaction of carnal lusts. The

α Here we have a plain statement as to the origin of a new race of mankind which verifies the theory of Max Müller. This distinguished scientist says, in the course of one of his lectures—"New mixtures of mixed or mongrel offspring with other or with pure breeds will make confusion even worse confounded, and after hundreds and thousands of years the very possibility of pure breeds may very justly be doubted. How then should we dare in our days to classify mankind according to such variable peculiarities as colour, skull or hair?" Personally I do not quite agree *in toto* to this, but to a very great extent I think it to be correct.

proud bearing and haughty impetuosity of conscious masters of Earth grew into an arrogance at perceiving the works of their hands flourish and the desire for vast effect gratified; and by reason of the appearance among them of celestial beings who showed them the revelations of mysteries, they gazed entranced with daring knowledge on the hidden things. Forsaking their pure instinctive religion they began to worship idols, and with that strong human feeling that belongs especially to primitive minds, of a desire to worship something visible and tangible, they bowed down to conceptions of their own minds, and the wonders of the Heavens which they represented by them. α Such were the Sun, and gems supposed to be born of sunbeams, and the dragon which guarded them and was the emblem of the sun, the moon and stars, the male and female ox, the cat, the frog β and other things, to each of which was given a legend which was in part a fact; yet all these were but created things. They believed their forefather Adam to have been a god, and deified all those hoary elders whose terrible years brought such vast experience, magnifying the deeds which they had done until they assumed an appearance surpassing all of Earth. And these they also worshipped under various emblems, nor was there any end to their imagining.

They became more violent in their ideas, and as with luxury their minds grew licentious and imaginative, so also did their religion, and at length they had the most sensual and debased mythology that the subtlety of their evil minds could conceive; not sparing their ancestors the obscene representations of mystical creation. And in every temple, in every pleasant grove and palmy garden sat enthroned an effigy of some god, degraded and bestial, and each man took unto himself a divinity

α The Atlantean religion was in advance, perhaps we may say, of all traces that are understood of the religion of prehistoric times, which is supposed to be Nature-worship alone, with no representations to aid the imagination. But that a people so powerful and of such perceptions should conceive physical forms of natural objects is scarcely surprising.

β Prof. Friedrich Ratzel mentions the Frog, among many other animals worshipped as gods and adopted as totems by the American Indians, as being met with in countless typical representations, especially where Toltec civilization reached. Among the Egyptians Ptah, as creator of man, is a frog.

among manifested animals or insects, eating also food of flesh by subtle reasoning of their minds, and after for their stomach's sake.

So falling, those early sinners who came to Atlantis with a pure faith and knowledge of God, raised descendants who fell still farther into idolatry and wickedness, degraded superstition, and still more degraded practices, mingling with them a ferocious and dauntless prowess in war and a luxuriance of living in later days that caused their name to be spoken of with respect and reverence and their power to be undisputed among the races who had been there beyond the legends of all time. Superstitious, ferocious, and of tremendous powers, Atlantis lay under the foot of the sons of Adam; but the world instead of being improved, threatened to sink in a chaos of confusion and blood, and all by the desire of Tekthah, who wished to maintain his high estate.

C A P. I V.

THE PALACE.

THE palace of Tekthah rose in its colossal grandeur from vast spreading areas of steps, on every landing of which a pair of Andro-sphinxes lay. Built of the red stone of Axatlan, it was as a small city to itself, with its courts and galleries, colonnades, arches and statues and outlying pylon towers, housing within its painted halls many of the great officers of state with their servants, and ladies of high rank which were in the Tizin's train, the astronomers, astrologers and soothsayers, magicians and chemists and many which led Tekthah's inclinations by evil cunning to the great detriment of the land. A structure of grand architecture and gloomy beauty, vast and massive and plain, it never failed to fill me with a certain awe; indeed a bewildering beauty lay in the spreading fall of the stairways guarded by those stony sentinels on their oblong, flat pedestals, that sat looking with impassive, inscrutable faces on space, and the pairs of colossi which guarded every doorway and were called the Guardians of the entrance; a sense of majesty and power that aspired to great things and could only satisfy the longing by being immense and grand and wondrous. In certain spaces were tall columns of stone of a carnal significance, towering obelisks of which the like were seen all over the land, each one graven with the symbols of genealogy. And each obelisk had a name.

There were gardens surrounding, where feathery palms grew, and yellow sarteels spread their masses of sunny loveliness above the elegant ferns, blended with crimson roses and various flowers of all manners of colours and shapes and perfumes, shaded by great spreading forest trees; and down by the fountains the songs of birds rose from morning to night. Towers supplied

these watery jets, the water being pumped up thence by wheels on which generations of slaves had grown up and died.

On a pylon terrace that commanded a view of the ocean the Tzan Tekthah reclined on his couch, attended by one who bore an inhaling-pipe, and a fan-bearer who kept off the rays of the sun and the persecutions of flies. He was a man of great stature, and the white hair that framed his face well became the ruler of so great a nation. White also were his brows and beard, but his face was sensual and cruel, and although he looked a ruler, yet he appeared to have some traits that boded ill for the welfare of his charges. From his mouth and nostrils he blew volumes of fragrant smoke, inhaled from the pipe, in which lay a burning herb, which enjoyment to me appeared at first very curious, but was indulged in by all of the land. The early beauty of the sea and sky arrested his gaze, and I also looked wonderingly to where, within the reef, moved a large black bulk; fine-like arms beat the water and propelled it through the waves, and three gaily-coloured squares of cloth, bellying to the wind, accelerated the speed. I watched it with a lively interest, Tekthah with a listless curiosity; it was one of his vessels, the three-masted warship, Tacoatlanta, bearing at the prow the enormous semblance of a human head, large enough to hold nine hundred warriors, *α* but never venturing more than a mile from shore for fear it would get caught in the current of the great cataract that everyone believed fell over the edge of the world where the Sun rose and where the great sea-animals lived that they saw occasionally—monsters of the deep that reared like enormous serpents from the waves.

The ship entered the harbour, and still Tekthah mused; now

α It is evident that the art of shipbuilding had reached a considerable proficiency in the old days of Atlantis, and in after times we are informed by the best authorities that the Egyptians possessed ships nearly 3000 years B.C. By the cargo consisting of cattle, and the number of rowers employed, these would be of no inconsiderable size, and were not merely large boats or canoes, as, according to the Rev. Edmond Warre, the earliest of all presents us with the peculiar mast of two pieces, stepped apart, but joined at the top. He shows us that "the legend of Helen in Egypt, as well as the numerous references in the Odyssey, point, not only to the attraction that Egypt had for the maritime peoples, but also to long-established habits of navigation and the possession of an art of shipbuilding equal

scowling up at the temple, where the eunuch priests and their female co-ministers held service to the hermaphrodite Zul, and trying to distinguish some face at that distance, now again scanning the sea. He believed, like most of his people, in what Gorgia the magician said concerning the ebb and flow of the waters: that the gods, the makers of the great animals, who lived over there, drank it down and then threw it up again, and the thunders were the sound of their females in labour producing the monsters.

At the Tzan's feet lay his favorite mistress, Sumar, and on the terrace below, that commanded every approach to the tower, was a company of the Imperial Guards. Their captain was Nezca, a tall prince of exalted beauty, who had as apartments the whole base of that tower, for Tekthah feared what he dared not express. For this also it was that he had caused an arm of the sea to flow round the walls of Zul, stopped at each outlet by rocks, that the ebbing tide might not drain it, and had built warships to navigate it if needed.

And thus I perceived the penalty of earthly greatness, and pondered much within my mind if that, Tekthah being overthrown, the land would be saved from evil. Even should I cause myself to be the Emperor? It was a pleasing thought, but I knew that it might not be; and indeed I had no knowledge of man or his ways, nor the ordering of such.

A trumpet sounded. It was the hour for the morning meal, called the After-worship, and Tekthah arose to enter the Hall of Feasting, for he reclined on a couch which was on the daïs at the top of the chamber, and none durst enter until such time as he was seated.

to the construction of sea-going craft capable of carrying a large number of men and a considerable cargo besides." But in matters maritime the Phœnicians were unsurpassed and the order kept aboard their fine ships, together with their skill of utilizing every inch of space, won the later admiration of the Greeks.

It seems strange to learn that some southern Indians had sailing-boats, while the Aztecs, who united with their predecessors the Toltecs, knew nothing of them, notwithstanding the fact that the latter must have used large crafts to bear them from the legendary Tlapallan to the shores of America.

The vessels of Homer were capable of carrying over 100 men, but the Atlantean war-ship must have been much larger than any that we read of in ancient times.

The walls of which splendid apartment were very lofty and of an oblong formation, enclosing a great space with their painted barriers panelled and frescoed in gaudy colourings representing the advent of their race and their wars. Four tall columns supporting the central ceiling, which was painted with scenes as upon the walls. α But how barbarous were their colours when viewed separately, although imposing on the whole! Bright vermilions clashed with ochres and crude greens in all of them: there were sanguinary representations of the chase, in which appeared Mastodons, β aurochs, and gigantic stags; and vile pictures of amorous designing, hideous in their beastliness and grotesqueness, and abominable in their atrocious conceptions. Between these panels were long mirrors of gold polished so brightly as to reflect the minutest detail and lending a richer colouring by its own sunny tint.

Attended by his guards the Tzan swept in with his mistress and took his seat. At the sound of a second trumpet the Tizin Azta entered with her guards and attendants, occupying a seat immediately below Tekthah, with her entering Shar-Jatal the Representative of the People; and then, at another trumpet-call, the couches were all filled with the households and suites, numbering three hundred males of various ages, from boys to old men, and ladies greater in number and of the same variations of years. Behind and about them were innumerable attendants, especially around the Tzan, at the back of whom

α The particular style of the architecture of this apartment is perhaps like Assyrian, as regards the oblong shape. The Assyrian roof was of thick layers of earth on strong beams, the pavement of sun-dried bricks, or baked bricks, or of alabaster slabs laid in bitumen and delicately carved. We find also carved alabaster dados, many of which show traces of having been decorated in colours, and above them baked bricks richly coloured and glazed. A vast amount of ornament is employed, and doors were used, a piece of furniture we do not often find mentioned here, save the great gates of the city and doors of the temple of Zul.

In China we find also in palaces and temples coloured glazed tiles, or the bricks themselves were coloured and glazed.

β The range of the genus *Mastodon* in time was from the middle of the Miocene period to the end of the Pliocene in the Old World, when they became extinct; but in America several species—especially the best-known, owing to the abundance of its remains, which have been variously called *M. Ohioticus*, *M. Americanus* and *M. Giganteus*—survived quite to a late Pleistocene period.—Ency. Brit.

stood the Imperial Guards clad in armour, young nobles all, their breastplates of orichalcum fashioned after the emblem of the Sun, cothurns of the same metal, and gold-overlaid shields. For arms they bore long spears with heads of obsidian, and heavy swords of the same; their gleaming helmets were crowned by the plumes of the ostrich, α those of the officers being dyed red with minium, and Nezca's being of cunningly wrought gold—a mass of beautiful filigree work. And behind each great lord stood his shield-bearer, his cup-bearer, and his pipe-bearer, and many others to be at his instant command; and the ladies also had each her cup-bearer and pipe-bearer among the rest, and to every one there was a fan-bearer to brush away flies.

Sumar lay at the feet of her mighty lord, and on her Rhadaman, the firstborn by a concubine, leader of warriors, whose name was known among all the tribes and among the barbarian hordes afar off, cast a long stare of such a character that, blushing, she averted her face. From her his glance travelled to the Tzan, but as soon as he found he was in danger of being observed he resumed his meal.

The Tzantan Huitza had observed both expressions with a frown, and I watched keenly, seated among the lower guests, using my perceptions and power to understand all I saw and gathering the meaning then and afterwards. I perceived that he and Rhadaman were both bent upon obtaining sovereign power, and that both as warriors were unequalled in the land, being also greatly beloved by the populace. Yet lately Huitza, ambitious and energetic, blotted out by strenuous works the remembrance of his brother's past deeds, and nought but the sire's power upheld above him the rival.

For Huitza had altered the fashion of war, making his troops most formidable, and causing jealousy to the Tzan, and a great unrest, (he loving not to see one too powerful).

Yet all my regards went forth to the Tizin Azta, and at that first mingling with human beings came my first intuition of my mission, my first trial, my first rebellion.

α I read this as "ostrich", meaning a great bird with plumes; but it may be an earlier species.

For of all that godless land Noah was the only just man, being also governor of the province of Tek-Ra, under Huitza, his lord. And it was shown to me that I should uphold Huitza and cause him to become the Tzan, whereby Noah, who was much entrusted by him, would come into great power. Yet being greatly entranced by the beauty of Azta, methought I might win her regards and do also as much good by aiding her to gain the sovereign power, knowing nought of women or why they were not as fitted to rule as men, and repressing the voice that told me that the more earthly mould should greatest excel upon Earth.

In sad mood I gazed around, hesitant, not at all willing to abjure this woman and fulfil my mission unbiassed, but looking upon her until her beauty drowned my reason.

O Azta, dear Love, how queenly wert thou, and how my soul regarded thee! Thou didst not know how I watched thee then, nor conceived the great love which I bore to thee.

To me everything was wondrous and strange and impressive, nor can I tell the peculiar emotions I experienced on perceiving that which was eaten by these godlike forms to be flesh of other animals. It is as a dream—those early days of my mission to Earth, the gradual perception of the material grossness of its inhabitants and faint intuition of my end and object.

For ever among the great ones of the land sat the mystics who opened up to their minds the hidden things. So that the counsellors, judges, treasurers, privy officers and all rulers forbore to interest themselves in affairs of Earth, being greatly captivated by strange arguments and visions of delightful things. And especially the queens lent willing ears to such revelations, fascinated by the magic of those evil ones and the things of marvel and awe which they revealed; so that at last none of the people did aught but interest themselves in the most exhilarating things.

The meal was over. The great joints of meat were carried away and the huge, clumsy vessels, and all manner of platters of slate, stone or more precious materials carefully lifted and taken to the kitchens by the slaves to be cleaned. Some of the privileged menials remained behind, their position entitling

them to the favours extended to the ladies, and they laughed and chattered in broken language to one another, returning sneer for sneer with the haughty queens whenever the latter deigned to notice them. Most of them were slim youths chosen for their beauty, some almost children, covered with a profusion of ornaments; with hair varying from huge frizzled chevelures to oily, coarse masses of curls, all of a black colour; and in like manner their skins varying in shades from yellow to intensest black, and physiognomies of every grade and class.

The Tzan's exodus was the signal for the dispersal, and with noise and laughter the crowd broke up, some to hunt, or play games of ball, others to try their fortune at casting dice, some to transact business of state and some to review the troops. Others went to the vast round building of the Circus that held a semicircle of seats overlooking an arena, where once a year games were held and mock battles took place. These went to practice for the approaching ceremony and view the combatants who were to take part in the display, for the purposes of laying wagers on who should win and who should not, and to see that the brute combatants were well cared for and savage.

I saw Azta cast a glance at the Tzantan Huitza before she retired to the gardens where she loved to sit and watch the fish in the fountains, and I wondered at its character and that the lord gave no sign of having perceived it. A shade of annoyance clouded the Tizin's face as a cloud coming over the sky—a black, furious, sullen look from which her great yellow eyes flared like lightning, while her opening lips disclosed the flaming rubies set in her teeth. She suffered her vivid gaze to fall on Sumar, who yet remained, and who, frightened at their strange beauty, stared with a terrified fascination, as a bird might stare on a serpent; while Azta, enjoying her power, let the long lashes fall softly over them and then averted her head.

I believed her about to kill this one by her glance, for she could never bear that another should stand above herself; and, after, I found that even towards Tekthah, her lord, she nourished an impatient hauteur that the Tzan condescendingly humoured; yet notwithstanding he was her lord such feeling would have been of terrible danger to him if circumstances had favoured the

passion for supremacy that caused it. But as concerned Sumar I found there was another motive for her feeling.

She passed out into her garden, attended by the slaves who served her at meals. These, as most of the serfs of the city, were from the dark peoples of the south-east, having black eyes like antelopes and curly hair and great lips. Through the cartilage of the nostrils of each one was thrust a golden skewer, by which they were secured when they were punished for any offence, which many frequently were, being whipped with thongs; and each had, cut on the breast and dyed, the emblem of the particular thing worshipped by his or her owner. Azta's divinity was a butterfly, and the golden emblem overshadowed her proud head, rivers of gold appearing to flow from it as the light moved over the thick silky coils of her hair, that was looped up on either side of her face and confined at the temples by a jewelled strap from which dangled golden plaques, each stamped with the emblem, and representing, I learned, the stars; for Azta's head-dress of state supported the emblem of the moon. A second's hesitation, one swift desperate struggle with my conscience, and I had cast duty aside, preferring to follow this wondrous beauty and feast my eyes upon her loveliness to staying where intuition bade.

Down by the fountains, whose fern-shaded lakes were alive with jewelled fish, was a swinging couch, and to this the Tizin went, and suffered herself to fall upon the soft cushions. She dismissed her retinue, keeping only old Na, a serving-woman, versed in simples and the making of most subtle perfumes—the envy of all the queens of Tekthah's court and an endless theme for aspiring gallants.

Of a truth the more I watched this being the more did I love, and half methought to appear suddenly before her in a blaze of glory, being scarce able indeed to resist my love. And surely here was the scene for promoting such a passion; the blue depths above, the flecked shadows from the ferns and magnolias, the tinkle of the waterfall and the songs of birds among the sartreel bushes; while afar lay entrancing vistas of dazzling surf-lined beaches with their woods and villages, and inland the white towns of Bab-Ala, Lasan, Dar, Bari and Ko.

The Tacoatlanta was moving from the harbour, visible through the trees, and suddenly Azta perceived the black bulk, that looked, with its human head, to be like a great swimming man progressing with a wash of foam at either side, that rolled astern and seethed in a long wake of white, and gazed curiously on it.

Not long she looked, but turned her face to where rose the pylons and battlements of the palace, seen at intervals, about which flashed the armour of sentinels guarding the monarch who lay within.

"See!" she cried to the old nurse—"This day have I lost one of the plates from off my forehead-strap." Yet I knew she only took this as an excuse to vent her temper, and not for sorrow at the loss, which was to be for a great token in after days. "Didst mark the Lady Sumar?" she continued, looking curiously under her lashes at the woman.

"Yea," answered Na; "yet it would ill-become me to speak aught of so exalted an one; but methought she did favour the Lord Mehira overmuch." This she said to soothe Azta, for she knew her regard for Huitza, and feared the wiles of Sumar.

Then, with one of those impetuous motions I learned to love so passionately, Azta turned her lithe body over on the couch, addressing old Na more than any other object in the landscape but because she could speak. Her countenance unrelieved by aught of colour save on the full lips, framed by waves and masses of living gold, took on, apart from its usual serene calm, a glowing vivacity, and her great eyes, yellow as the liquid amber and lurid as fire, flashed in their vivid beauty, her features expressing joyousness, contempt, savagery, hauteur, and a wild reckless menace.

"Behold me!" she said; "am I not beautiful? who can equal me in all Atlantis? At my feet are all the princes, whom I scorn, even Rhadaman the Superb—ha! *He*, forsooth! There is but one other who is equal to me; who is it, thou old one?"

"There is none. The only one who approaches thee is the Lord Huitza."

Azta's eyes flashed at the name, and to me came an uncomfortable idea.

"It is he, the Lord Huitza! Ay, equal to me, and excelling.

THE PALACE.

He is a god and all men tremble before him. His face is as the Sun and—hast marked his hair, woman? But I have hid from him the love I bear him, preferring to wait until such time when I can make him to rise yet greater in power. Dost hear, old fool?"

"Yea, mistress," answered Na meekly, for Azta's mien was haughty and dangerous as she uttered the words, that were untrue.

Then her manner changed and she spoke almost in supplication:

"Thinkest thou he is a god to despise all of Earth?"

"Belike he is, Lady; who but thyself has so divine a presence?"

The Empress passed her hand across her eyes as if she would awake from a vision. "It is enough," she said; "fan me, for I would sleep."

C A P. V.

THE HALL OF FEASTING.

So great became my love for Azta that I yearned mightily to embrace her, and did but await an opportunity to reveal myself. Forgot I for what I was here, or to study after what fashion I was to act in reforming the sons of Adam; all my thoughts went out to this daughter of Earth and her exceeding loveliness.

Now Mah was the priest of the temple of the Moon, whom I perceived to be of celestial mould, knowing all the astronomers, astrologers and soothsayers, all such as reckoned analogously concerning man and practised sorcery. Over certain he had a great power, and Azta oft went thither to consult with him, pretending to worship the moon; but I perceived in what manner she worshipped, and how she trusted to his knowledge concerning the means by which she might obtain the sovereign power. Also, as being the Tizin, she had power to enter any temple which she chose, being the High Priestess of the land, and I marvelled that she conferred not with Acoa: but Mah was more of the Earth—and practical in its affairs.

Alone with the priest, Azta spoke to him on matters other than of worship, calling him her old counsellor and bidding him speak if he had aught to say. "Zul awaits thee," she said, with a swift glance at him. He smiled, and I knew that evil reigned in his heart, yet of what fashion I knew not, but it was an unpleasant look that he wore, and methought Azta seemed displeased as she gazed haughtily at the mystic insignia and the dark corridors.

"My daughter," he said, "haste will ruin all, and care must be taken in selecting our tools, or they will wound the hand that guides them. The Lord Shar-Jatal, whom Tekthah favours, is in the toils of the Lady Pocatepa, who will bid him administer

a potion prepared by me to Tekthah. But thou must first take Rhadaman to be thy right hand wherewith to gain the throne; with him thou canst make terms, he being thy suppliant slave; and thou, being more powerful than he, canst so secure thyself that thou wilt reign alone and supreme. Thou understandest?"

"But of Huitza?"

"Ha! Ever Huitza! I will charge myself also with him, or the Lord Rhadaman can plant his foot on him."

"Peace, thou old slave!" cried Azta, furiously, her tall figure quivering with rage; "Rhadaman shall never trample such as Huitza beneath his foot. Against such infamy is his own godlike person, all the peoples of Atlantis, and *me*, my old father, *me*! Huitza must be absent from Zul when this comes about, that he may be shut out and we may come to terms with him. He and I are born of the Sun and I love him—as a brother."

The old man's eyes flashed at the insult, but when Azta had ceased he was calm again.

"The words of the Tizin are full of wisdom," he said coldly.

Azta's manner changed. "Forgive my hastiness, my old one," she said in a sweet, gracious tone: "Ever was I impetuous, father, and my regard for this man is great, I am not as the gay wantons around me, who love all and none, and surely I may like one born as I was born."

"'Tis nought, daughter; the young are ever impetuous. But I tell thee, it is for thyself to get Rhadaman into thy power. Remember!"

Azta bowed, somewhat icily, for she could scarce brook this manner of speech, and retired, going out to her slaves. I, who perceived many things, heard Mah whisper in his beard, "Thou fool! The Priests shall rule in Zul": and in like manner Azta murmured, "When the sword has struck, it shall be broken." Whereat I wondered. And in after days I forgot those words, for what reason I cannot tell.

There was the evening meal in the palace, when the hunters returned with bear, ox, goat and venison, and at times brought in one of the small horses that were so difficult to catch, with short necks, and manes and tails like mats of vegetation: fierce

little brutes that bit with their big yellow teeth and flung themselves madly about, but whose flesh was very good to eat.

A clear and musical trumpet-call summoned all to the banquet, lighted by torches after the sun had set, in order that its pleasures might be kept up far into the night, for these beings were unsubdued by the mystery of the darkness. Then the flaring lights cast lurid, waving shadows over the noisy throng, and consumed the winged moths with a horrid sound, causing Azta and her attendants to cry out with terror. They would catch up the tortured creatures, and, immersing them in wine, endeavour to ease their sufferings and keep them alive; but, although perhaps they succeeded in the former effort, they never did in the latter, which I perceived they took for an omen of something.

And—O human nature, how vile thou art! and how canst thou be excused—yet who am I to say this?—On great occasions, slaves, secured to crosses, were set up in the open courtyard beyond, and, being fed on fat for some previous time and smeared with grease for the occasion, were set on fire, the streaming lights doubly illuminating the feasting debauchees within, who roared with evil laughter at the shrieking, writhing, living torches flinging the fire from their anguished bodies. Others again were set upon stakes which pierced their bowels, so that they wriggled in most fearful agony, yet their fellow-men did but smile at their pain, and instead of being distressed were very greatly amused thereby.

The scene in the hall was wondrous of an evening, for the great frescoes took all manner of imaginings under the swaying lights, the gaudy colours rushing together in masses of tone; and, with the glitter of armour and the blending of dresses and mantles of white, yellow, imperial purple and red, forming an effect rivalling the kaleidoscope in colour, reflected and flashed

z This punishment of crucifixion appears to be one of the earliest. In historical times it was, however, unknown to the Jews until introduced by the Romans, who themselves only inflicted its degradation upon slaves and the lowest malefactors. But persons were hanged on a tree as far back as the days of Joshua (VIII. 29), and I understand that hanging was a very early Egyptian penalty.

The punishment of burning alive and the presence of women at feasts were essentially Babylonian customs.

back dazzlingly by the long golden mirrors. Most of the ladies wore their hair looped up like Azta's, and thickly powdered with gold-dust and tiny gems, and wreathed with gay flowers, so that the effect was surpassing beautiful and gave added radiancy to the coloured scene, which was continued among the viands by rich fruits, flowers and leaves, and gold and silver vessels.

And what a company was there! Warriors and princes, gray-haired patriarchs and glittering chiefs in the various dresses of border tribes. Tzantans of Talascan with their profusion of heavy gold ornaments, and mighty warriors of Trocoatla in their great silver breastplates; tall mystics who gazed with their dreadful eyes upon the throngs, full of dire knowledge of hidden things and covered with symbols, and many whose strange beauty bespoke a superhuman descent. Imposing head-dresses of metal, horn and feathers mingled in a splendour of warlike confusion among the gemmed tiaras of the ladies; and the roar of voices arose, loud and confident.

There reclined the splendid Mehir, an uncle of the Tzan, next to Huitza; Shar-Jatal with his sinister smile showing his teeth gemmed like a woman's; Zebra, Tzantan of the sea; Ju, and Eto-Massē his friend; Izta, Lord of Astra, the bosom friend of Shar-Jatal; the majestic Nezca, Lord of Axatlan, who was one of the best-favoured figures of the court, old Nahuasco, Adar, and the giant Amal, which last was so huge that in after-days his bracelet of bronze served as an Amazon's coronet, that would have caused him much shame. There was also Ham, the tall son of Noah, governor of the province of Tek-Ra, which former was kept by Tekthah secretly as an hostage, and because he feared his father, being under Huitza, Lord of Tek-Ra. Also was Ham excellent in architectural design, and had raised some of their grandest buildings.

And among these the ladies shone fairest,—thou, my Azta, far more than all; and next Sada and the Lady Pocatepa, who was a priestess of Neptsis and knew much magic, wearing the insignia of the goddess to whom she administered in daring blasphemy, as not being a virgin she should not have ministered.

Large circular bowls held wine, distributed among the revel-



IN THE HALL OF FEASTING

lers in huge horns, although some of the more intemperate among the feasters plunged their heads into the large vessels and swilled like the beasts, pledging their mistresses in shameful phrases. Among whole joints of meat and masses of cakes, fruits and vegetables, spices and strong scents made the air reek with their heavy perfumes. Slaves walked freely among the viands to pass them to their masters, who used knife and sword to hew the smoking joints, or with their spears lifted out this or that for themselves or their women, occasionally hurling a bone at some slinking shadow passing the entrances. Here I perceived the transient joys of Earth, the Individual feeling that excludes all else and can think of nought but its own present joy, heedless of the future and only regardful as to how to be the hero of the moment.

To-night they seemed less noisy than usual. Tekthah, looking down like a white-maned lion on his harem and household, seemed to seek for a friendly face; Azta's thoughts were busy, and Rhadaman's and Huitza's brows were both bent with the same schemings. None had attended the evening ceremony at Zul—save of the greater citizens. Which, one of the nobles, a guest and boon companion of Rhadaman, said, was sufficient to express the sentiment of the whole of the sacred city, and they had the Spirits beaming on them from the torches. Nevertheless there were a few qualms regarding it.

The feasting and heaviness pressed on the gay crowd; they abandoned themselves to the voluptuousness of all around, and much foolishness and wantonness was wrought. The musicians increased the uproar, and after the feasters had eaten and drunk their fill, which was a goodly amount, girls came in who danced and sang, jugglers displayed many wondrous feats, and the chief of the musicians told tales of strange mystery. This one was named Tairu, who related weird things of monstrous creations; of a nation, living among the beasts, who had teeth like the great apes and ate their own offspring; long histories that caused Azta's eyes to glisten, of warlike women of the North and West, who fought in battle like men and killed all their male children, and whose husbands were captured in raids and afterwards killed also. Whereat were many sayings, silenced sneeringly by

Azta; and Tairu, continuing, rehearsed the amours of Neptsis, the female principle; of how, pregnant by Night, she brought forth the Earth and the hermaphrodite Zul and much evil.

The land was full of these legends, and many others; indeed, there was no end of them; and their hunters spoke of peoples spotted and striped, some having horns and tails, and some species living apart and driving away the others. Abnormal creations were the topic of every feast, and some even openly boasted misconduct that all indulged in.

To Azta these weird tales had a great interest, and she often questioned old Na and, later, myself concerning them, her yellow eyes dilating with awe of the marvellous and half-doubtful of the truth of it all; and to-night as she watched Tairu she bade him speak of the Amazon warriors, and listened attentively while drunken lords snored on their couches, and wanton women twined garlands in their hair and decorated them with flowers and feathers.

In view of the drowsy state of the warriors, Gadema, Tekthah's cupbearer, a youth whose white skin and fair proportions had raised him to the rank of favourite, murmured a compliment to Azta as he passed her intentionally, but she impatiently repulsed him, not wishing for conversation with any, but sitting silent until the feast ended, and such as cared, or were able, retired to their apartments. The moon arose and her pale light shone down on the city, where behind coloured walls and columns the citizens lay in wantonness and disorder working their damnation. Shone on those mighty masses of man's creation, silvering temple and palace and monument, lighting up the gardens and scintillating in showers of prinkling points on the waters that ever heaved so restlessly, and made the forests stand out like gray masses of lava. Lighted a tall dark figure that glided from the pylons and columns of the palace like a shadow, and lost itself among the trees with the silence and mystery of one.

C A P. VI.

THE GARDEN.

I SHALL never forget thee, my Love, vanquisher of all those early scruples by thy might of beauty, yet how oft have I wished I had never beheld thee! And how often have I looked sadly back to the days before ever this passion had possessed me and I loved but Jehovah, loving Him with an enthusiastic fervour of adoration for the wonder and the beauty of life and health around. And full of my holiness and purity I yet strayed to love one of Earth, and my love was as the breath of a furnace that consumed me and would not let me go. Would I had been warned by suspicions, but I would admit none of them, pretending to believe that by indulging my passion for this fair woman I should be possessed of that knowledge of earth useful to the end of my mission. Judge me, merciful Creator, that I sinned but by inviting a power too strong to be overcome, and not for the lust of sin; nor judge me harshly, O Thou who sinnest not, that the spirit of Heaven in so fair a guise of Earth could cause me to embrace it.

It was Azta who stole out from the palace in the moonlight, for I had cast my spirit over her that she should do this, and she had wrapped about her a fine purple robe. To her couch within the great arbour-forming vine by the fountains I drew her, and thither she went, casting herself upon the cushions, her full white bosom heaving under the sway of suppressed passions and bitter thoughts heightened by wine.

O evening of my happiness! O night of bliss! Ever in my ears shall sound the far-away thunder of the surf borne upon the scented breeze, that ravished the soul with music, a slumbrous background to the ripple of the fountains among the water-lilies. And thou wert like the Queen of the night,

my fair Love, yet woe is me I stayed after thou hadst spoken those words.

For she cried in a low, passionate voice: "O Huitza, where art thou now? why hast thou taken thy love from me, whom I deemed loved me well? What is this pale girl Sumar to me? Would now that I were a man and a warrior to fight by thy side! But who would be master, my Lord Huitza—ha! who would be master, thou haughty prince? Thou shalt bow to me, I swear it! By Zul and the Holy Mother Neptsis, by all the fires of Heaven and the dark Hereafter I swear it! Why, O why," she cried, shaking her hands and throwing herself back on the cushions, "are women as nought but playthings for the warriors? We, who solace their restless hours, who nurse them in sickness and bear sons and daughters to them? Why may we not be warriors too, companions in the field as well as in the home? Yet will I rule supreme in Atlantis!" she cried, leaping up—"but how—how? Were I thyself, proud chief, 'twould scarce be easy. O dreams, dreams of nigh impossible glory! If thou should'st see me great, powerful and uncaring of thy love, then—ah Zul!"

Now I, being full of desire of her, could scarce restrain myself, so entrancing was her glorious beauty and so subtle the curves of her body. The fine spirit showed in every gesture she made, and stood revealed in her eyes, that were luminous in the moonlight. As a great moth I appeared before her and chained her attention with a flurry of wings, gazing with my eyes in hers and holding her by my power.

With a little cry of fear she sank upon her couch, yet gazed I continuously, with a new passionate desire in me to be wholly absorbed in this being. And thus I wooed her, until I stood forth in proper shape, being of stature superior to all she had seen and radiant with the love of God, as yet scarce misdirected.

"Azta," I said, and then—alas, that aught but truth should have come from such lips—"I have come from afar to thee. As thou art the most mighty of the daughters of Man, so also am I of the sons of Heaven."

How did thy large eyes look on me, most beautiful! Yet

exclaiming, "Sir, how knowest thou aught of me if thou art not of our race?"

"Nevertheless, I know thee and concerning thee," I answered, loving her yet the more, "and of how Tekthah took thee as Empress after that Atlace died, who lies in the pyramid near to the temple of Neptsis. It is known to Us that thou bearest no regard to him, and there are among Us those who look lovingly on thee and marvel at a beauty more like to Heaven than Earth. And I have come to speak with thee, Azta; is not thy lord now too old for such as thou art, who excellest in beauty?"

"Thy speech is fair, courteous stranger," she said; "yet would I fain know whom thou art and whence thou comest."

My eyes never wavered from hers; a rosy flush suffused her features as she gazed, and I forgot all but herself and her beauty.

"My name is Asia," I said, enraptured with her exceeding loveliness: "I am not of this Earth, being of the breath of Heaven. Yet, Azta, I love thee as never yet a mortal man could love." And, being full of passion towards her, bent my head, thinking to salute her with a kiss, but she repulsed me. At that I wondered, knowing nought of women nor of the strong passions that drive them hither and thither, nor of the pretended actions of them.

"Salute me not," she said, yet scarce displeased; "I love one with a true love; I am not as other women."

Methought she was subdued by the mystery of the night and of such a visitation, being more fearful than pleased.

"Thou fearest me," I said, very gently, seeking to soothe her mind and allay her uneasiness, yet not understanding her haughty spirit and high courage.

"Forsooth, great sir," she cried, laughing, "I fear no man!"

"Thy voice trembles, fair one," I said; "it is thy bold spirit that speaks, the heart is silent. See, my Azta, I kneel to thee, even as in days past the winged hosts knelt to thy fair mother Eve." And overcome by what madness I know not, I bent the knee to her, (that should never have been bowed but before the Throne of God,) and raising her hand to my lips, pressed it with them.

A certain light was around me, and I perceived how its beauty dazzled the fair woman, and how she regarded me as one of her divinities. She suffered the salute wonderingly, and the mystery of it all was beginning to cast a spell over her.

“And is this the manner of such visitations?” she murmured, as though she thought she dreamed; for Huitza and Mehir, two of the most powerful of the princes, boasted celestial descent, which their splendid prowess and towering presence gave colour to; although the latter had a worldly appearance, having heavily black hair and a swarthy complexion. Faë, a mistress of Huitza, and Sada boasted such a visitation, and many others also.

How fair was this woman on that night—the night of the beginning of my sorrow; for after then I can never forget her. Restfully she lay back on the cushions and watched me, smiling happily with half-opened lips that were so soft and full; and my whole soul was lost in contemplation of her utter loveliness as I held her hand and noted the perfect outline of her face and the manner of how the ruby-studded teeth shone, and how the lashes drooped over her eyes, luminous with the light of deep fires in a crater; and I thought of the last chamber of the temple of Zul and the idols that were set round the lurid pit to withdraw worship from God. Yet but for an instant, and I dismissed the thought, and watched how those long lashes quivered and how quickly her bosom rose and fell where the drapery fell from it, exposing its creamy whiteness, the whiter for the powder of pearls and the chaplets of pink roses that were fastened in voluptuous masses beneath her breasts, rising from their scented, crumpled fretwork like ivory domes from seas of sunset-lighted clouds. Over her shoulders the billowy waves of hair fell, scented and wondrous, with their curious streams of gold that seemed to run like molten metal whenever she moved, freed from the broad forehead-strap with its pendant circular plates and the shadowing golden pin, and intertwined with yellow sartreel flowers. How perfect she was, and how tangible—O wondrous Creation!

Again and again I kissed her hand, she was so wonderful

in that moonlit night, and around her was a sublety that was not of Earth.

“Thou art very beautiful!” I cried in rapture,—“too beautiful for Earth!” and I gazed on her with a passion of love, such a warm feeling as I had never known before. It was enough to but look on such and drink deep draughts of the joy of beholding perfect beauty; and, O Father of Heaven and Keeper of the Souls, what is love created for but to revel in reciprocal bliss?

“Azta,” I said, “long have I watched thee from afar and longed for thee. Dost thou know what it is to love truly, sweetest one?”

“Perhaps,” she said, softly, gazing into my eyes with a strange fixedness.

I know now that because I did not use my comprehension for the end of my mission it was denied to me to understand certain things, and thus I ever tried to unite my soul with Azta’s against all reason or possibility. Yet so it was, and thus I continued to woo her.

“Thou art very young and beautiful,” I said, “fairer, methinks than Eve. Woman was made for love, and thou—surely thou art the very loveliest of all.”

She watched me dreamily, as though she would consider after what manner I was, and as to my power, perchance. For there were many tales of evil Spirits which had carried away their mistresses, and others who had destroyed them while bearing them in mid-air, or had blasted them by too great power or in anger. And there were others which dwelt among them and wrought great works and not a little confusion, taking the fairest among the women to wife; which same were much considered of.

“Ah, would that this would last,” she said, “for we of Earth know but little peace, and woe to that one who falls in the struggle for power! For such an one has enemies, and friends who follow close do not disdain to leave the falling banner, and being unfatigued, fight onward thence and use their leader as a stepping-stone to their end.”

She spoke bitterly, rising up and gazing hard upon me.

Perchance she saw the sorrow in my eyes, for she smiled a little and waved with her hand as though to put it from her.

"Fear not," I said, "thou shalt not fall an thou willest, if I am with thee." Yet I said no more, wishing her to love me not only for an award so low.

"And thou lovest me?" she said, musingly; "whilst others scorn; and I, Tizin of Atlantis!"

She laughed a rippling, scornful laugh. "To look on thee is to forget," she said, more to herself than to me; and throwing herself back, gazed with half-closed eyes and a certain smile, as she tried to read in my face the passion she could not wholly understand.

"Fairest, the day will soon be here," I said, "and the night passes."

"The night passes," she repeated slowly with deep emphasis.

"Wilt thou come here again to-morrow night?" I asked, longingly.

She nodded abstractedly. With a tumult of joy I kissed her hand again and again and she smiled like the Sphinxes on the steps—serene, inscrutable.

"How I love thee!" I cried—"never have I loved so before!"

"Never before? Hast never felt the power of love and sought for that of another?" she asked softly.

"There speaks thy beauteous sex, fair Azta," I answered; "ask *thine* heart the question."

"Nay, Sir," she said, haughtily, "I came not to thee:" and with one finger on her lips she drew back, taking her hand from mine.

I caught it again hastily, crying, "Sweetest, be not angry! Never have I loved before."

A black cloud passed across the moon and hid it, so that all was dark. And in the night I heard the rush of a Seraph's wings as the sound of a tempest, and a great fear possessed me.

My Love cried out, because of the light that encompassed me, and my shining front. "Art thou the Archangel Satan?" She asked in an awed voice.

"Nay, nay! Oh name me not thus!" I implored her, bowing my head; yet recovering my madness as I felt her hand seek



O HALLOWED MOMENTS THAT SO SWIFT SPEED TO THE GATES OF DOOM!

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mine and marked her trembling. "Nay; I am an Archangel, but of the hosts of Heaven, and my name I have revealed." And moving closely to her I took her in my arms.

It became light again, although we perceived not its coming, for we did nought but gaze into the other's eyes. She sighed very softly, and still gazing upon me with that fixedness as though she sought for something, said as speaking to herself, "Methinks thou art my Ideal." I felt the warmth of her body and cried in ecstasy, "How beautiful thou art!"

She lay still and offered no resistance to my embrace, and emboldened by her sweet acquiescence I drew her closer to me and pressed her to my bosom, feeling her heart beat faster and faster with a wild joy as she yielded to my love and lay peacefully in my arms with a happy smile on her lips.

I looked straight into her eyes, and she returned the look. Ah, the electricity of souls! The leaping fire that springs from one to the other and wraps both in a mad whirl, melting two into one with its hot embrace and ever burning more furious with its own increasing passion. Brighter and brighter it grows, and faster and more fast rush the streams of frenzy, mingling and whirling and uniting in one great irresistible torrent of ecstatic Life that leaves the body and soars to the skies. Our lips met, and with the hot contact and with her arms about me she closed her eyes.

O hallowed moments that so swift speed to the gates of Doom! O wondrous fire of Paradise that lights the Earthly gloom! O Life that blasts the soul it leaves to dream upon its bliss—the soul that gives up everything for one sweet woman's kiss! O God, if all our Heaven's life might be that holy joy when souls in purest unity are free from Earth's alloy, give us that moment of delight and then let all things cease—one moment in the living Fire, and then eternal peace.

Small wonder that the Angels need Eternity from which to make a day, yet—ah, this was sweeter than all the days of Eternity!

* * * *

ATLANTIS.

A distant rolling uproar, swelling and increasing—the crashing, roaring echoes of a huge drum, shattering and reverberating and thundering, dispelled the Dream.

Azta's face was ghastly white, but the smile on her lips was divine. She opened her eyes and laughed very softly, and I gazed into her glorious eyes with a depth of ineffable love, and smoothed her hair. Ah, those moments of damnable delight!

CAP. VII.

THE MARKET-PLACE.

ARRIVING with that first taste of the joy of Earthly love came the longing for more, and in the guise of a Magician I claimed admittance to the palace, nor dared one refused me. And mingling with the crowd I entered and seated myself, yet away from the daïs, for I wished to observe as yet the full manners of man, and there were ever vacant couches there on account of absentees.

Azta's late appearance was not noticed. It was usual, though not with her, truly, and there were many there who gazed curiously upon myself. I felt a new joy leap within me, yet terribly tainted with misgivings which caused me to ignore the feeling that certain power had been removed from me, whereby clearness of intellect was obscured and unreasoning rebellion felt. The knowledge that should have grasped in an open understanding all the economy of Earth was obscured, and I found myself thinking painfully of how to compass my desires, yet not finding any solution or perceiving certain results.

The worshippers had returned from Zul, edified by the sacrifice of a savage chief recently captured on the frontier, whose death was presumed to be very acceptable to the devastating spirits that dwelt in the mountain ranges, as I learned.

At times I caught a glimpse of the glory of Azta, and saw my Love as she reclined at the meal, with averted eyes and a happy smile on her face, attended by old Na and many more.

Rhadaman, who reclined next below her, by reason, not of birth, but of favouritism and older standing of rank to Huitza, complained aloud to the Tzan of the aggressive prowess of the savage tribes, who from the south and west began to encroach back, destroying the crops and spoiling the farther hunting

grounds. And afterwards I knew he was prompted by the power of the Priest Mah to speak.

I, intent upon his utterances, heard that which the roar of conversation denied to the others, and did mark how Azta gazed upon the prince and anon averted her eyes, like a captain that steers the course of a ship; he also covertly watching her, as he made damaging insinuations regarding Huitza, playing a deep game to obtain both herself and the throne and endeavouring to supplant his brother. Which one sat with Faë, his mistress, by whom also was Mehir.

Azta looked furious, yet she cared not to show it; and I pondered deeply as to what was transpiring, as the prince declared that it was Faë who kept the Lord Huitza supplied with secret information for wrongful purposes, and held seditious meetings with others. Whereat I perceived Azta to bite her lip.

A look of alarm passed across Tekthah's face. He shook his head furiously, like an enraged lion, and growled deeply in his beard.

Rhadaman smiled diabolically and turned his large, full eyes down the hall. Like thunder the voice of the sire rang above the wanton laughter and lewd conversation, commanding the woman Faë to appear before him.

Mehir, the Lord of Chalach, who was dallying with her and playfully seeking to make an appointment, looked up as the roaring tones fell on his ear, and then glanced hastily at Huitza. A flush spread over that prince's face and his dark eyes rolled round on his sire, while his mighty arm was outstretched towards the spear that lay behind him.

The girl, startled, looked up like a frightened deer, wondering what had caused the summons and guiltily conscious of numberless wrong-doings. She arose and went tremblingly up to the dread monarch, making a deep obeisance to Azta and before him, her face ashen with terror.

A tiny gleam of triumph showed on Azta's face, and her eyes flared with a yellow fire as she watched, like a lioness watching the quarry she is driving to her lord.

I wondered at her savage nature and at the deep play that

was being acted before my eyes, which disturbed my mind by its incomprehensibility, but that was unmistakable.

A gradual hush fell over the riotous assembly, until there was a stillness of death. The women, observant of what was transpiring, and trembling for themselves, caught their breath and paled; the warriors gazed curiously, some with hands clutching a joint that they abstained from gnawing, some with poised wine-bowls and horns; the slaves trembled, even the favourites. All watched with flung-back hair to see what would come.

This was a mistress of their favourite warrior; and all knew his furious and impetuous nature; that morning he had killed two slaves for quarrelling in his presence, hewing them in sunder from the crown down with his sword. I, too, wondered what would come of it, perceiving that as yet the prince made no demonstration, not understanding what was to come, and not wishing to cause open enmity between himself and the sire.

The woman ascended to the daïs and made another deep obeisance before it. Sumar trembled with white lips, noting every movement of the unfortunate one; the queen Axazaya buried her face in her robe and gave a shuddering cry of terror, and all the women paled.

“And who art thou?” cried Tekthah to the guilty woman, in a thundrous voice, half rising and bending his ferocious eyes on her; thus exerting himself more for the purpose of impressing the lesson he intended to teach on the assembly than for aweing this frail being; “who art thou to dare our wrath? To bestow thine harlot favours on our subjects? Is not thine own lord good enough for thee?”

A startled glance crossed Huitza’s countenance, as, clutching his spear, he leaned forward on his elbow. The woman, in guilty terror, averted her eyes, and implored him with her gaze.

Tekthah’s countenance grew livid with rage as he perceived the rebellion in Huitza’s heart, and the mute appeal of Faë to him.

“A report has reached us that our secrets are betrayed,” he hotly said; “that thou hast deserted thy chief lord the Tzan to favour a subject, and may lead him to act to his detriment.

Before our son shall do this accursed thing to his gods and his sire we will remove all temptations from his path."

A stifled cry burst from the woman's lips as she glared wildly at Tekthah and strove to articulate; yet could I perceive nought of pity in that stern heart. Before him he saw, not a frail woman, but rebellious warriors and a son whom he feared and envied. A long, bright shaft flashed in his hand as he threw his arm up and backwards and then cast it forward, and next instant the luckless woman, pierced through by the great spear, fell with a gasping shriek and lay pinned to the steps of the daïs, the shaft quivering upright above her blood-sprinkled bosom.

Her poor hands convulsively beat the air; a low muttering sound arose, and faint shrieks. Huitza leaped to his feet with a shout of rage, and his spear was poised threateningly towards the Tzan. There was a moment of thrilling stillness. A slave clutched his arm: the chief felled him to the earth, and then, swinging him up, dashed him down among the viands, glaring defiantly towards the daïs.

A low murmur followed the act, a challenge to the sire's wrath. Rhadaman uttered a surprised ejaculation intended to encourage the monarch to protest.

The incensed chief turned on him furiously, correctly believing him to be the instigator of it all.

"Thou spawn of a foreigner!" he roared; for Rhadaman's mother, Maroa, was from among the slave peoples of the west: "*There* is thine enemy, Tekthah; there is the traitor!"

"How!" shouted the attacked warrior, grasping his spear and rising in wrath: "dost thou, rebellious one, dare to taunt me who led the armies of warriors before thy whipling arm could twirl a sling! By Zul, thou shalt not so dare again!"

Tekthah made a sign to the Guards, and the ominous clang of arms sounded fearfully above the angry voice. Yet he liked not to deal too severely with the princes, preferring to calm them himself.

"Silence!" he commanded in a great shout, as the more timid began to seek the exits; "may we not administer justice in our own palace? A pretty pass, by the gods, such rude brawling in our very presence!"

THE MARKET-PLACE.

Huitza, with a deep and dreadful oath, seated himself, and Rhadaman, glaring round and encountering Azta's fiery glance, did likewise. Both remembered the fate of the last brace of quarrellers in the Imperial presence; both marked the preparations for the onrush of the Guards, the seizure, the death of the reckless ones. Tekthah never permitted his supremacy to be questioned; but, as becomes the wisdom of one who would rule, never set his power against anything that could have a chance of being successfully opposed, keeping down such as only a display of exhausting power could combat by hints that such was objected to, so that his authority was never obtrusively displayed for mere effect.

All this withdrew attention from me, for each one was too engrossed to notice a stranger, and I had time to consider how to remain unobserved.

Slaves carried out the dead woman, whose pouring blood, running from the spear-point that came through her back, made a long, horrid track. Mostly such of the Imperial household, dead, were lowered into the arms of one of those awful idols that ever looked upon the majesty of the crater of Zul, and were consumed so by the fires; the ashes being placed in the temple whose Divinity they worshipped; all but the heart, which, before cremation, was thrown to the vultures.

But the slave that Huitza had cast amid the viands, lay there with his back broken on a great wine-bowl that was smashed beneath him, from which the red flood ran in rivers in all directions.

I watched the chief and saw that his fierce eyes were blazing with wrath, and he moved his fingers as one who thinks deeply. All feared a momentary outburst, as the broken slave, who yet lived, moaned shudderingly and writhed occasionally. I marvelled that man might so shed man's blood, and wondered at the long whiles that must ensue before any order could be brought to man and his violence, in the ordering of Earthly affairs. There was that just man, Noah, governor of Tek-Ra, whom I knew beforetimes was beloved of God and of Us; but what was one among so many? and what use therefore to aid his power?

I could perceive the electricity of defiance and aroused devilry in the air. Every man's weapon lay ready to his hand, and none might know what would happen next. The giant Mehir wore a truculent air, and even ventured to stare defiantly at Rhadaman; but the meal passed with no further interruption, and sullenly the throng passed forth, steeped in reverie, and moving with steady, defiant steps.

The Tizin looked at Huitza as though she longed to speak to him, yet the desire manifested itself no farther than the eager forward leaning of her gracious body.

Rhadaman remained behind, and a message bade the warrior Shar-Jatal remain also. Which last was, I have said, the Representative of the People at the Court, a post held for seven years, and now with this one being perpetual by reason of exceeding popularity. For, being also beloved of Tekthah, who wished for no irksome person to dispute aught, he advised such things for the people as satisfied them and pleased the Emperor, and also himself, for he loved to be at Court.

Tekthah waved his hand against the Tizin, who questioned him with her eyes as to whether she also might remain, and retired with the Tzantans to the Council-Chamber. I debated yet again in my mind as to whether I would present myself thither, yet would I not leave my Love, so mad was I. For, superb in my powers, I deemed that I could easily combat aught of Earth, and forgot that my mission was diplomatic and that my Creator Himself could not force the ways of Man.

Thus I followed in the train of Azta, as she went in her coach, carried by slaves, to the temple of the Moon.

Eight tall slaves bore the golden carriage, and her body-guard of twenty warriors surrounded it, whose captain was Nahuasco. These men wore for head-dress the skin-covered skulls of bison, whose great horns gave them an imposing appearance, breast-plates of orichalcum, heavy shields and cothurns of leather with metal ornaments; and were armed with spears and swords of obsidian.

From the hill of Zul the city lay on a downward slope in all its mighty grandeur, the tree-shaded streets running in all directions among the clustering houses. Without the walls and

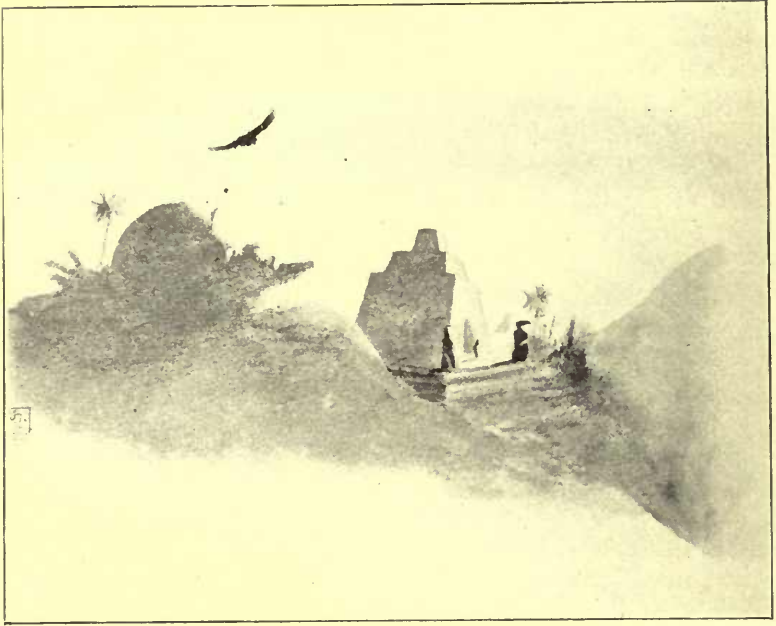
down by the Waterway were the round-topped huts of the fishermen, among which were continual conflagrations, who crowded the beach and harbour with their little boats and worshipped the Fish-god in the harbour. This was a monstrous image, of which half was in the likeness of a man and half of a fish, and in whose frightful lineaments the artist had endeavoured to express the fear of the mysterious waves. One hand held a model of the Tacoatlanta, and its great goggle eyes, set on stems, were like those of a crab, the reeking odour of fish rising from it with an overpowering stench from the numerous rotting oblations on an altar.

Closely within the walls was the great Market-place, where savage hunters, leading in leashes large spotted and striped felines and huge dogs, and occasionally exhibiting monsters that they had captured and exacted a toll to view, mingled with the vendors of fruits and rare flowers, water-sellers who brought water from the reservoirs, that were situated on the hill in order that their contents might flow down all over the city, and were filled from the river without the walls, being pumped up by slaves on the great wheels and conveyed across the sea-moat in an aqueduct. There were many auctioneers of wine also, for the grape was abundant in the land, and was much cultivated.

In the centre of the Market-place was the sarcophagus of Maroa, mother of Rhadaman; which building was of the shape of a pyramid, upon whose top lay coiled the semblance of a serpent overlooking all the lower places: around the open spaces of the square were set up images of gods, among which the cow, cat, serpent and the hideous and obscene god of Flies were the most prominent, a priest of the temple represented by each standing near to receive offerings. All over the land were these temples, and, in places, colossal statues hewn from the living rock in well-chosen situations that added to their silent majesty, startled the beholder. The larger temples disdained such patronage, their munitions being more than sufficient.

Also there were magicians, which held audiences spell-bound by marvels of awe; whom priests and priestesses of various

ATLANTIS.



ALL OVER THE LAND WERE THESE TEMPLES, AND, IN PLACES, COLOSSAL
STATUES HEWN FROM THE LIVING ROCK.

Orders from the Museum of which the name signified the Secret of God, where they were trained and instructed by the graven tablets and oral teaching in dark mysteries of fire and the cloven flame, α watched intently to learn what they might of the arts exhibited to be used for their own ends. There were those who prophesied of things to come, eating the leaves and roots of plants to increase their perceptions, β and dentists and such as sold medicinal plants and wondrous nostrums were always surrounded by thronging crowds, who hoped to find in their remedies some relief for disorders and pain, or increase of beauty to stimulate their vanity. Poor human creatures!

α This undoubtedly refers to electricity. I understand that the natural electric flame is cloven in shape. See Acts II. 3.

β The berry of the laurel is said to greatly stimulate sleep-walking and prevision.

THE MARKET-PLACE.

My heart bled for sorrow at some of the things I perceived, the anguish and tears and fear.

Yet so much the more my soul became filled with the mystery of Earth and the wonder of the mighty city. Rising beyond the Market-place was the Circus, whose annual fêtes supplied an equal number of imposing sacrifices to the near temple of Neptsis; for while Zul engaged himself in the arduous care and tutelage of the soul, the holy mother dedicated herself to the welfare and amusement of the body on Earth; and the remnant of the combatants and candidates of foreign nations captured and compelled to contribute to their masters' amusement were offered up to her in gratitude.

Around the Market-place was the Bazaar, where all manufactures were carried on, and where crowds, dressed in the universal yellow, α bowed low before our procession, gazing very curiously upon me, for my countenance was awful and my stature superior to all others. And lying by one of the aqueducts a woman held forth an infant towards me, beseeching that I would heal it of a curved back; and gazing thereon, so great a pity lay in my heart to see the misfortune of the little mite that I stretched forth my hands over it and cried for mercy on this one, sinless but by the sin of others, and it was healed because of my sorrow. And the guards swept back the crowd by reason of pressure on our march.

The houses, some of two storeys high, but most only one from the ground, built of blocks of stone and not a few of brick cemented with bitumen, β were painted in many wondrous colours, and many had square columns in the front, leaning inward from their bases, γ and some sculptured with skill. On either side of every doorway were the two images called the Guardians of the entrance, and there was a godly space

α This colour, as highly esteemed in China, was limited there to the privileged use of the Emperor. In all structures belonging to the throne the colour was yellow, it being a capital offence for any other person to use it.

β This form is found in the buildings of Assyria.

γ This follows the pleasing pyramidal idea, and was a form of portal used among the Incas. But we learn that the Peruvian Aymaras, whose monuments show a civilization more advanced than Palenque, have them perpendicular.

around every house because of the fear of flames spreading when a roof caught fire.

Here, to the factories of the merchants were brought immense quantities of gold from Talascan, where it was greatly abundant, and silver from the mines of Trocoatla to be manufactured into fancy things in the shops, and beaten into coverings for war and made into large vessels in the armoury where shields, helmets, swords, spears, bows and arrows, slings and cuirasses were made.

How greatly the children of Earth excelled in comforts for their short existence! There were manufacturers of musical instruments and woven goods, paints and dyes,—particularly yellow and the royal purple which was only used in the garments of the court,—knives and spear-heads of obsidian and metal, ornaments in brilliant pebbles, onyx, jasper and orichalcum; leather war-trappings, breast- and back-plates, shields and cothurns, the former of which were also formed from shells of turtle and tortoise. There were factories for breads of wheat and maize and bark, torches and other combustibles, open shops of butchers and makers of sweetmeats and preparers of the smoking-herbs, large factories of pottery and of coach-builders, carpenters, workers in stone and images, and cabinet-makers; shaded stalls where dairy produce was sold, brought in from farms without the walls, where large flocks and herds roamed and fattened on the fine herbage, and where all kinds of fruits, vegetables, meats and drinks were exchanged for other commodities. And indeed, everything was obtained by barter, save all things for the Emperor and lords, which were given to them in proportions. There were the offices of marble-merchants, stone-masons, builders and timber-merchants, and beautiful open stalls where furriers and mantle-makers exhibited their goods; wine-merchants, drinking-palaces and glittering emporiums of gems and precious stones, feathers and cosmetics, gold-dust and pearl-dust and the tiny gems for the hair

Everything that man could wish could be obtained there, and from morning until night there was one long roar of crowds and voices, buying, selling, crying their goods or auctioneering; and verily there is a pleasure in not being able to subsist without such, for the joy of obtaining that which is required.

THE MARKET-PLACE.

On the roofs sat the great carrion-birds, who acted as scavengers in the city together with troops of dogs; and in an angle by a pyramid stood a fearfully-maimed man, a hunter, who told, for the alms of hearers, stories of mastodons, whose giant tusks were at times exhibited in the market; describing the vast bulks and earth-shaking terror of them, and reciting hunts and hardships endured.

Yet larger and more wondrous than mastodons had I seen in the long, dark ages before man came on earth, terrible forms of land and flood that caused wonder among Us.

The Bazaar extended to the fortifications, on whose top rows effigies of gods, most of atrocious conception, were placed to bid defiance to all but the lords of the land, and methinks frightened even them. Within the walls were the great ports whose valves of stone and bronze turned within pivots of diorite what times the greased drawbridges were thrown across the moat, their tall pylons rising above the walls and crowned with figures of serpents, which were also the emblem of Zul. α The military guards, who were ever kept along the wall, slept, played games of chance and held nightly debaucheries; and this part of the city was full of dreadful women who laughed insanely and tossed their dishevelled hair, dancing and shrieking.

One of these unhappy beings flung herself down before Azta's cortége, imploring an audience of the Tizin, but a guard roughly spurned her, and on her wild persistence ran her through with his spear and cast her aside. And at this I was very sad, yet methought to prevent such I must ever forbid it before it was dreamed of, for mankind appeared to slay without thought or hindrance.

Yet Azta frowned, and beckoned her fan-bearers to shut out the blaze of the sun and the insolence of the people who stared upon her.

α It may be interesting to note here that the fortifications of ancient Egypt appear to bear a strong resemblance to mediæval works, the ramparts of the walls and towers having battlements. We find this also in Hindoo architecture.

CAP. VIII.

THE MARCH OF HUITZA.

AZTA and I alone entered within the mighty shadows of the pylon of the great Temple of the Moon. She wished me to accompany her, believing that in my power I could aid her; and of a truth I wished nothing better.

New, strange feelings were beginning to make themselves felt within me, and the oppression of Interiors lay heavy on my thoughts, whose mystic Genius was greatly worshipped in Zul with awe and obscenity. The heaviness and wonder of inward places was very peculiar, and all souls recognized their spell. The dark wombs of unknown things yet uncreated, hollow places where one was hidden from another, vaults and caverns wherein dwelt evil creatures and such as should not be, nor cared to look upon expanse.

My soul was uneasy, I say. Problems assailed me, and new anxieties, and the wish to feel again at perfect ease, yet intangible and unexplainable; and I, which had dwelt ever in Space where the glories of immensity swept in waves of luminous beauty to horizons beyond conception, felt the chains of Earth press upon me and in a measure bind me.

The priest Mah knew of what fashion I was, but concerned himself not. He bowed low before Azta, yet with a certain mockery in it, which stirred her haughty spirit. Within the shadow of his grim walls he stalked like that evil Genius I have named, and methought he was in truth a Spirit of darkness.

The Tizin returned his salute coldly. "Zul still awaits thee," she said tauntingly.

"Zul still awaits," he replied. But while Azta meant the great Temple, Mah meant the city and Atlantis,

THE MARCH OF HUITZA.

"Now give heed unto me, my old father, for it is of a great matter I would speak," said Azta; and to him she told all the affairs of the morning, what had happened at the after-worship.

With thoughtful eyes he listened, and for long after her words had ceased there was silence.

"All is well," he said at length. "The power leans to thee, Azta; and it is but for thee now to be resolved."

"But Huitza? What of Huitza?"

A shade of fury crossed Mah's countenance.

"Fear not for thy lover!" he said, words that caused the fire to leap from Azta's stormy eyes. "He is safe. Even now, with his troops, he leaves the city. Rhadaman is thy slave and Shar-Jatal thy tool. For his advancement by Rhadaman he will destroy his master and thou shalt reign with thy propitious lord whom thy tool will remove in season, leaving thee Tizin of Atlantis in very truth."

And thus I heard. For Mah, deeming me of the fallen Ones, scrupled not to voice his plans with an admirable ruffianism that caused me to stare. Alone, for the most part, in the great Temple, surrounded by the mystic shadows of the hierophantic walls and the dark vaults of unknown sin and corruption, he lived a life more of the spirit, yet dark and terrible, and as yet I knew not how the throne of the land could please him. In a thronging maze of new understandings and wonderings I stood, forgetting my high mission in the interest of weighing why this was and why that, and possessed of a great passion for the lovely woman before me, who should work my ruin.

"Hearest thou these things?" she asked of me.

"Yea, I hear," I answered; loving her that she did appeal to my soul to commune with hers, and unheeding the sharp command in her voice.

She looked upon me very thoughtfully, and the dreadful priest watched us both. I was minded to chide him, yet methought not yet. He knew more of the ways of Earth than I, and the time was not ripe for interference; neither did I know by what reason to chide, save of evil of design.

"Dost approve the plan?" he asked of Azta.

"Yea," she answered, somewhat abstractedly.

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"Art thou ready?" he asked, striking with his staff on the ground. "Behold thine handmaid, the Lady Pocatepa!"

A symbol on the dark wall sparkled with light and life, and what was a picture stood forth in carnal form, one of the dark-eyed queens of Tekthah's household, and priestess of Neptsis.

Azta frowned, and her sullen glance fell on the priest. "Thine arts are deep," she said, in a slow, menacing voice, "yet forget not mine."



HUITZA'S TROOPS WERE COMING.

"Nay, great Lady, 'twas but for thy convenience that this was done," he said deprecatingly.

Yet she still frowned, and looking on the woman, addressed her with scant courtesy:

"Soh! Hast heard of what we conversed?"

"Nay, O Queen."

Mah looked disturbed, yet I perceived he cared not to interfere with Azta's humour. But I liked not the look in Pocatepa's eyes.

"'Tis well. Return where thou camest until such time as I shall send for thee," commanded Azta.

She stretched forth her hand. The figure of the woman faded,

THE MARCH OF HUITZA.

and vanished, and from the floor where she had stood rose a great moth that sped swiftly into the shadows.

"Peace, my old father," she said to the priest. "Thou seest she is in truth my handmaiden, even as thou didst say. I go to consider this thing."

We went, and as we traversed the streets there was a sudden halt and a dispersion of the yellow robed crowds. Huitza's troops were coming through the Bazaar to the fortifications, and the Tzantan himself marched at their head.

Over his towering stature the golden vulture-wings rose from his helmet, for as a son of Tekthah he wore the emblem to signify that he might soar near the glory of Zul and still yet not attain to it, the people of Earth delighting in such figures.

The Prince's expression was stern and terrible, and his great red-brown beard fell over his breastplate in waves, nearly hiding it.

At sight of this popular chief the enthusiasm of the people manifested itself in shouts of applause and wavings of spears, mantles and bare hands.

"Huitza! Huitza!" they roared; "it is the god! Victory! Huitza! Zul! Zul!"

Azta's cortége gave way with the rest, her guards sullenly making way for the advance of the on-coming legions and roughly pushing back the citizens. The Chief came, followed closely by his warriors: the sandals thudded in the dust and nearly obstructed all sight of the marching thousands, among which I perceived the vermilion plumes that topped the helmets of some officers of the Imperial Body-guard.

The legion marched with a long, swinging trot; arms clashed and clanged and spear-points flashed above the thick dust, as first the troops of spearmen, then of slingers, passed rapidly. The archers, a formidable body of men, belonged all to Huitza's troops, and they passed by, led by Mico, last of all; and the clouds of dust, rolling behind them, began to settle down.

People stared and shouted, believing there was going to be a grand attack made on the savages and a consequent supply of victims; but I wondered for the reason of that march.

Back we went, through the Bazaar with its thronging crowds.

now eagerly discussing the passage of the troops and the prospects of captives and women. But I pondered how that, if Azta became ruler of the land, I might fulfil my mission through her; and was pleased by the thought that excused the love of this woman to my soul.

The Tzan was disturbed in mind and bade Shar-Jatal attend him by his favourite seat on the colonnade, to play chess with him. Azta had left me, and on the two men I centered my attention to learn what I might.

Tekthah's ferocious eyes, shaded by the fans of the attendants, gazed steadily over the landscape, resting long on the great temple, while beneath his idle fingers the pieces lay untouched. The courtier-like myrmidon sat silent, watching like a cat; and I knew that his great hooked nose bespoke a strong will to back his wickedness. Swinging from a massive armlet was the emblem of a certain beetle, that was Pocatepa's divinity, and I bethought me of the evil ways of that twain, and wondered why every man and woman appeared to choose another's mate; for Pocatepa was wife to the Tzantan Ju, notwithstanding that, being a priestess of Neptsis, it was wrongful that she should be aught but a virgin, yet being upheld by Mah.

The Tzan began to discuss the exodus of Huitza, already known, and which he was powerless to prevent, for with him had gone most of the army.

At which Shar-Jatal considered deeply, and afar off I perceived Nezca; nor could I ever behold him unmoved, for I knew him to be one of Us.

The Representative of the People perceived a crisis. He himself might not seize the throne at once, being restrained by the priest Mah; but if Azta became ruler the voice of the nation would aid him to supplant her.

"Rhadaman is with us," he said, but Tekthah's furious gesture stopped him.

"Rhadaman is among his women," he said, with a sneer, and conveying also one to Shar-Jatal, whom he despised because of his effeminacy, beginning to fear treachery which could scarce be defined; "he has given up the slaying for the production of warriors."

THE MARCH OF HUITZA.

Shar-Jatal bowed. He advised the chief power of all being given to himself, as being the most competent person to oversee everything, and hinted in no hidden phrase his popularity. His friends were strong in the land; one of them, Azco, being Governor of his province of Trocoatla, whence came much silver, and whose populous cities of Lote, Karbandu, Katalaria, Bar-Asan, Muzran, and Azod contained many mighty men, great warriors and skilled in war. Also that Azco, notwithstanding that he was a son of Sumar, was more friendly to himself.

In silence I watched the game of those two mortals. Tekthah's face betrayed nought, but in his eyes I read as in a book, hatred, outraged pride, sudden perception of friendlessness and deadly peril, and fear. Ay, fear. That great, strong heart that had marched to the throne of Atlantis through tears and blood saw itself alone and deserted. Jehovah forgotten, the lazily-accepted dreams of Zul too vague and unsatisfactory now that they had to be faced, and all around the hungry eyes of men and women who coveted his place. He beckoned to his pipe-bearer to approach.

"It is a weighty matter of which thou speakest," he said slowly, gazing on his courtier as though he would crush him by the vigour of his glance. "Go now. I will tell thee soon."

C A P. I X.

AZTA.

THERE was no news heard concerning Huitza. The Chief of the Navy—which was that Tzantan Ju, the husband of Pocatepa—cruising in the Tacoatlanta, had seen the lights of many fires among the hills, and Tekthah had secretly sent messengers to treat with the recalcitrant. These had not returned, and none knew for certain if it were Huitza's forces.

A careful watch was kept over Ham, the son of Noah, to hold in check Tek-Ra, but Huitza went not thither, and this was a certain relief to Tekthah, for there still stood at Chuza, which was the chiefest of the cities there, the great pallo that was built there first, which of itself was impregnable even should the stout walls of the city fall; and the sallies of such troops as Huitza's from such a position would render an entrenchment around impossible. All the cities of Tek-Ra were threatened with annihilation if they received the rebel.

From there and the distant city of Talascan came rumours that large nomadic tribes of their own race which bore for insignia the symbols of the Owl, Unicorn, and Dragon, the fish-gods of Astra, and the herdsmen of Alorus, Emok, Het and Assa, who were very truculent men and ever ready for war, sprung from Avan, daughter of Adam, had gone to join him, and people wondered what might come of it all. And continually Shar-Jatal pressed the Tzan for his consent to his scheme, but Tekthah was apathetic.

Azta, likewise remained passive. Yet she was restless and imperious, and forbore to converse with me, nor visited the temple of the Moon. And in piteous mood I found her in her garden, conversing with herself aloud, and sighing often with the name of Huitza upon her lips.

A strong feeling entered into me, a protest against her love for this man that I had never felt before; and strong impulses were upon me as I watched her. Ah, how lovely she was as she looked about with her large yellow eyes in a deep thought, and the molten gold ran in streams in her hair as her white fingers ran through it. Ah, God, pardon for the earthly love that fired my melting soul as I gazed upon her! There I saw a Spirit clad in flesh of far more subtle mould than that of man, and more lovely than any other woman; for at times one stands preëminently above the rest. Yet still in my love was a great fear and a knowledge that it was not right.

With heart on fire I watched her, yet sternly, for I liked not the mention of Huitza's name. And suddenly looking up, she beheld me, and dropped her eyes before my glance.

"And has my Love forgotten?" I asked.

"I have not forgotten," she said softly, in a very sad mood for her, the red blood rushing to her face; "how may one forget these things? But perchance they of Earth love better their own kind."

"What can woman ask more than love?" I demanded, half-amazed. "On woman did Heaven pour its choicest gifts of love, and for love would she do anything, even sin to the peril of her soul, to share a loved one's fate. And for no reward, perchance: whilst I offer—nay, give thee, whether thou acceptest it or leavest it to die—a love greater than thou couldst dream of? Dost hear me, Azta?"

"I hear, my lord: yet can love be forced?"

"Forced!" I cried, in tortured amaze, for verily here was a barrier I could not understand. "Does not thy soul leap forth to mine which loves it? Did not that bright flame spring in full quivering beauty when first we met, when thou didst lie in my arms and vow thou hadst never loved as then? Dost thou forget, O Azta? Dost thou forget?"

She moved up her round, fair shoulders, while beneath her fingers the vine-tendrils fell in broken fragments.

A sudden fear overcame me, a feeling of horror and despair.

"O Azta!" I cried, "thou dost not know what love is!"

She looked up fearfully, her lips parted, and I saw her shrink

before my gaze. The light went from her eyes, and left them dark and sombre.

"Oh, speak not in such a voice," she faltered. "How can I stand before the majesty of Heaven? Wilt thou blast me in thy wrath? Who am I that thou shouldst love me, who loves another? Asia, thou art not of the fallen ones, thy mission on Earth is not the comfort of women. Leave me, oh leave me! for behold, I die, and thou wilt live forever."

For a while I stood regarding her. Why did I not go?

In a passion I cast myself before her. "Love me, oh love me!" I cried in agony.

From the blue sky rolled a burst of thunder, and from me fell a shadow upon the earth; yet never before had I cast a shade. And gazing thereon I received a shock whereby it appeared as if a voice from God had spoken to an inharmonious sensation within me.

And then a wild rebellion entered my soul, and throwing my arms over the couch, I bowed my head upon them and wept.

Azta uttered a cry of distress and astonishment and laid her hand on my head.

"Poor Angel!" she said: "can such suffer?"

I caught her in my arms. "Yea!" I cried passionately, "and suffer more than mortals. The finer the soul, the more capable of feeling, deep and terrible. Not mere emotion, for that is but the spasmodic index to what may be hidden far beneath, and the coarsest souls may be stirred by fleeting ecstasies. The gay insect that rejoices in the beauty of one flower and is equally satisfied with another can never know the aching remembrance of a joy that is gone, the wild, agonized yearning for what will never be again."

Azta's bosom heaved.

"O love me, I implore thee!" I cried in my evil passion. What could I do! Heaven suddenly seemed too pure, Earth immeasurably too gross and vile for me; yet why I loved this woman I could not tell. I had known others who passed from my fleeting remembrance like the fading of the sun; yet to her my whole soul went out.

"Poor Asia," murmured she, with a sob, caressing me; whereat I took a little hope.

"O Azta," I implored, "if thou canst not love me, at least let me come and gaze in thine eyes and see thee smile on me. Thou dost not know the torment of the love of Heaven unsatisfied! It is as a fire that scorches and sears the source which no magic word comes to unseal."

I groaned in my agony, and like burning lava the tears fell from my eyes.

Azta wept also. "What wouldst thou have?" she sobbed—"I do love thee, also." And nestling close to me, she kissed my lips, twining her fair arms around me.

I held her closely to me, and marked how she trembled.

"Thou art not the only one who has ever loved me," she whispered; "but methinks thou givest more than is thine to give."

I had: and I trembled also at her words. Yet there was joy in her possession and I did but hold her closer to me.

I slowly pressed back her hair, exposing the broad, white forehead, and fixed my eyes on hers so that my soul entered into her.

"Did I not love thee so well, thou couldst not choose but follow me," I said.

She did not shrink, but regarded me fixedly with fascinated eyes, smiling and without fear.

"Wouldst thou force me?" she whispered; "wouldst thou take me in a whirlwind into unknown regions and leave me to perish in mid-air and return to Earth but in such fearful form as I have heard of, but never seen?"

"Nay, my love!" I vowed, with passion; "never! Trust in my love and thou shalt do well."

How beautiful she was, as, sitting straight up in front of me, she looked into my eyes. A brilliant butterfly lighted on her hair, waving his painted wings to and fro on the topmost curl that circled her brow.

"I do love thee!" she cried rapturously; "yet have I told thee, I also love another. Canst thou not of thy mighty power know what shall be done?" she asked, throwing herself into

my arms, and sighing. Then suddenly she rose up, and placing her hands upon my breast and forehead, said: "Hast thou ever yearned, as though thy soul wandered alone searching its breath of life for that which shall satisfy it? For the Ideal that at times thou thinkest to have found, yet doubting oft? And having believed to have found it, perceiving to thy torment yet others, but unwilling to release thy soul's first love? Wouldst thou cast me from thee—and ah, at times I dare not think of what might befall if thou didst!" She shuddered and stopped. "O Asia, what is love?" she cried, piteously.

"My Azta, my Love, I know not. Love is the Life of God, and none can fathom it."

She threw her arms impetuously round my neck and kissed me again.

How I loved her! and yet was I unhappy.

"Fill thy soul with my love," I implored; "fill thy heart and brain, that thou mayest be faithful and remember."

"I have prayed," she whispered, "yet nought but vague ideas come to me; bold and unscrupulous, but useless. I see a plan, a beginning, but what will the end be?"

"Cast ambition from thee, my Love," I said; "ambition is a cruel mistress, a Syren that oft lures to destruction. Remember this, my Azta, for a woman's spirit can sink as low as an Angel's, and a love that is unworthy of her may drag her down to Hell, its own coarser materials floating in the worldly matter."

"And what wouldst thou have?" she asked.

"Thy love!" I cried, passionately.

She disengaged herself from my arms and gazed into my eyes, and through the amber flames her soul looked upon me. There was no need for words in that drama, where Earth challenged Heaven. Weakened by my evil desires, my gaze was mastered by hers, and her dumb voice seemed to cry to me—Wouldst thou, Asia, give up the pure joys of Heaven for an earthly woman's arms, a being whom thou believest to be fickle, and which belief may be proven in Hell's fires? Even now who is the dominant Spirit—the Archangel or the Woman?—and what if she prove false? Consider and pause, thou who

AZTA.

hast looked upon the face of God; and think now that thou art subservient to a created being of Clay!

I looked upon her, half-hesitant, yet before my eyes her beauty appeared to increase. Her face became glorious, her skin as soft petals of lilies as it lay over the curves of her body,—her living, breathing, warm body that was so lissom and soft. And around her face the waves of molten gold fell and lay so wondrously on her fair shoulders and the swelling beauty of her bosom.

I held forth my arms, and slowly she moved into their embrace, yet with her wonderful eyes full on mine. Her soft arms encircled my neck and she pressed her lips to mine, while there came, borne upon the breeze, a laugh, sarcastic, icy, bitter and low, yet with a note of triumph in it. As the winds that sweep over the Æolian harps of Angels came that sound between Earth and Sky, and died away into a sigh over all around. And the Sun set and there was nought for us two but our love, that must die, being of Earth.

C A P. X.

THE THRONE.

THE Throne of Atlantis, the Seat of the King of the Earth, was in a hall in the centre of the palace, from which could be seen a portion of the red terraces of steps, showing through the entrance, and the openings in the long shadowy courts and colonnades that spread in mazy vistas all around. The temple of Zul, above and to the left, was invisible from the hall, but the same entrance that exposed the stairway showed the sea in the distance and the nearer tops of buildings and trees.

And before the throne lay the sceptre, symbol of Royalty and conquest, shaped like the National Standard, four-armed and cruciform, but surmounted by an orb of solid gold signifying the Sun.

The floor of the hall, of blocks of green marble with yellow markings, lay smooth and reflecting as a lake, from whose depths, in a square formation of great area, rose black marble columns rooted in pediments overlaid with gold, supporting a ceiling painted blue, in the midst of which was a rayed sun of gold, overspreading the throne.

The great seat itself was a solid block of dark green marble, and two immense curved tusks of the mastodon, bedded in it, formed the arms. The platform on which it rested, of black marble like the columns, was surrounded on each of its four sides by four flights of steps with broad landings of the same sable hue and material, signifying the quarterly periods of life to be attained before the glory of the summit was reached, the first step from the floor overlaid with gold, a tall column rising from each corner for a support to the central ceiling and the golden symbol which hung upon it. A cushion, covered with leopard-skin, lay on the seat, and the whole aspect of the

THE THRONE.

hall was gloomy and magnificent, beyond all that had been before or will be again.

Between the columns stood massive iron braziers, to hold the kindled fires; on each side of the entrance lay a lion of large size and most formidable aspect, chained and odorous. At times the palace resounded with the roar of the majestic brutes, and their deep, muttering grumble made the ladies tremble on their couches of a night.

Where are now the splendid beings who gathered in those past days in such bravery of majestic persons and glittering gems? Never before or since have such been known as those when Angels mingled their spirits with men; a mystic wonder of sin without equal: and never again will such sight be seen as that great annual obeisance of the Lords of the Provinces before the might of Tekthah upon his throne of marble and ivory.

I looked upon the hall, and on a large company gathered therein. The two grim watchers at the entrance lay prone on their lean flanks with heads erect; the Sun, setting over the western mountains, showing up in dark relief the two great shadowy forms, terrific in their vague suggestiveness.

I saw Shar-Jatal and Izta, Nezca and Acoa the priest of Zul, and many more, conspicuous among them being the giant Amal, who had seven toes on each foot. I looked towards the tall figure that sat upon the throne, holding the sceptre, and perceived it to be Rhadaman; yet uneasy he was, doing a daring thing in thus raising himself to that seat on the square plinth, one step high, that had never been mounted before save by the Tzan and the Keeper of the Throne. But too often had he rehearsed this scene in his mind to hesitate now; and now must he strike a blow, or wait and be perchance supplanted.

With a flushed face he rose to his towering height, and of a truth he was very pleasant to look upon. Yet his heart was evil and his ambition overcame all else, for now that man had gone astray from God it was each one's aim to be lord of all the rest. A little energy, he cried aloud, a little bloodshed, and the throne would be his by right of descent, and his friends should not be forgotten. This he said very graciously and with much meaning in his voice, and reminded all there that, should

Huitza return and the throne go to him, there would be the punishment of the stake and of the burning crucifix for many of Zul. To bestir themselves, to do a few desperate deeds—and then!

A murmur of applause greeted his words, and the clangour of metal as the chiefs beat their shields with the pummels of their swords; but a panic overcame my mind.

The prince smiled grimly. He reminded them of promised favours, and, turning to Acoa, bade him stir up the land against Huitza, who had vowed to hurl the gods of the Lower Fires into their crater for the destruction of his mistress, and recalled to certain individuals the chieftain's animosity. Having by cunning eloquence gained the ears and hearts of all, he showed a scheme whereby the end they were convened to discuss should be consummated. On the first day of the annual Circus games there would be a great feasting in the palace, and Gadema, Tekthah's cup-bearer, should hand his sovereign a bowl of poison, while Targul, his pipe-bearer, should prepare a fatal herb for the pipe; and after, the Tzan being dead, the gates of the city should be closed on all the gathered crowds, and himself be proclaimed Tzan, concessions being granted to all assembled, and great rejoicings instituted. To Shar-Jatal should be given the territory of Tek-Ra, Huitza's dependency, and a great part of the success of the undertaking could depend upon him and his popularity. Let Gadema and Targul also see that they failed not in their work, and great reward should be theirs.

The youths arose from where they sat, whom I had not at once perceived, and swore by Zul not to fail; and then Acoa arose, with a deep plan in his face.

Now I mistrusted the dark priest greatly, and was vexed in my mind to hear this consultation; I believed my love for Azta and the fulfilment of my mission would have wished otherwise; for I clave unto the latter by the pretended help of the former: yet forgot that which was being discussed was that planned by Mah. Therefore I caused to sound the tramp of many armed feet and the rattle of war-trappings, and a silence fell on all. Louder it came, and the chiefs, great men and valiant, fled by



THE THRONE OF ATLANTIS.

THE THRONE.

a little exit, all save Rhadaman. Alone he stood, yet trembling, and laid down the sceptre in its place.

A growl from one of the lions startled him, and he gazed at the huge brute as it stood, a vague form against the brightness of the sky showing between the outer columns of the



AZTA CAST HERSELF NEGLIGENTLY ONTO THE SEAT.

palace, with mane bristling and tail slowly waving from side to side. The other one growled too, and suddenly, as the knowledge of his sacrilege overcame the Tzantan, he hastened to the rear of the throne and crouched down, as the pat-pat of sandalled feet was heard on the very threshold.

One glance he gave over his shoulder to perceive if there

was yet time to fly, but there was none. A figure entered with a little, gliding step, casting a piece of raw flesh to each guardian of the entrance, who made no great demonstrations, and Azta, summoned by my power, mounted straightly to the throne, and stepping up to it, cast herself negligently onto the seat with a sigh. How lissom were her movements and how splendid her form!

Amazement held the chieftain still, but he glared at the back of the throne as though by his eyes he would pierce it, and I knew he was hurriedly weighing in his mind the policy of making his presence known, but ere a resolve could shape itself the Tizin arose, and, stretching out both hands and advancing to the edge of the plinth, cried in a clear, ringing voice, "Welcome, my lord!"

The prince started as he believed the Tzan to be approaching, and he knew that the only thing to do was to keep still and hope for the best that might come.

With a musical laugh Azta clasped both hands to her breast and appeared to be in a species of ecstasy, while my heart yearned to her so greatly that I longed to embrace her, believing her to be addressing myself in thought; while in the silence of the vast apartment, unbroken by aught for a while, Rhadaman waited for the recurrence of that sound of marching hundreds, with a mind too full of fears to marvel at such an unusual session and the novel manner of its initial procedure. He believed the throne would be surrounded by the Guards, and he would have to rise and take his place among them trusting to their silence.

Yet no sound came, and then the Tizin spoke again.

"And so, farewell for a space," she said, bowing to the marble seat and patting the leopard-skin smooth where she had pressed it; then, turning, she descended to the pavement and glided out through the entrance, undisturbed by the lion guards or the relieved chieftain.

He uttered a blasphemous oath as she disappeared. Then, after waiting until she should be out of hearing, he, too, passed the lions, who growled ominously, and with a sigh of relief hastened after her.

THE THRONE.

A feeling of annoyance towards the prince had entered my heart. From his exclamations I perceived him to believe that Azta intended her salutation to apply to himself, and I remembered that he also had a passion for her.

The Tizin had retired to her apartments, and to his chagrin, she refused to receive him on his prayer for an audience being presented. Nevertheless I wished to see in how much his passion for her ran, and how she received him; and she was minded to relent, so that he entered and made a deep obeisance to her, kneeling and pressing her hand to his lips, the golden vulture-wings bending low before the Glory of Atlantis. I perceived that he hastily noted the surroundings and looked very curiously on the lady. And, by my faith, she was a queenly beauty as she lay on a gorgeous green couch, the upholstery of which blazed with golden butterflies and precious gems, half hidden by her imperial robes of purple and yellow covering a white gauze vestment that allowed her creamy body to be seen beneath it; and surrounding her were slaves with the golden skewers through their nostrils, the fan-bearers and those who always kept the apartment furnished with flowers, so that it was a wonder of scented colour and enravishing beauty. Old Na sat at the foot of the couch, and lying at her immense flat feet was a panther, held by a thin golden chain.

At Azta's command all these retired and she was left alone with the prince, who still knelt, and leaned his great sword against a settee, looking the while amazed as though he sought to fathom the mystery of the armed tramp that had dispersed the assembly. On the ground he placed his helmet, casting his mantle beside it, and then awkwardly surveyed the beauty before him, who permitted him to gaze, enjoying his embarrassment.

"And so," she said at length, eyeing him through half-closed eyes with an intensity that appeared to fascinate him, "my lord is happy; his rival has gone."

He regarded her fixedly, suspicion and love struggling in his gazes.

"And what of it?" he asked scornfully.

"He was your enemy, and consequently—"she paused
"Yours!"

She bowed with a flattering smile, and her mood aroused him.

He surveyed her from head to foot with blazing eyes. His manners were rough and impatient, and he suddenly caught her in his arms, his feelings not allowing time for tardy speeches to lead up diplomatically to such an act.

"Dost know I love thee?" he said, kissing her lips with burning fervour in spite of her remonstrances; and scarce could I restrain my wrath at witnessing this.

"Thou art in truth a rude suitor, by Zul!" she cried angrily. "Of old I knew it; thinkest I am such a fool as thou?"

The look of her yellow eyes made him uneasy, and the pointed speech cooled his sudden ardour.

"Fool?" he said, with an awkward smile, relaxing his embrace.

"Nay, take me not so seriously, it is not thy wont," she said, still with that ring of sarcasm in her voice.

"I would wish to take thee seriously," he said hotly.

"Pshaw! a serious woman is but a sorry thing," she laughed, with ringing musical scorn.

"Azta, thou tormentest me!" he cried, as, half-encouraged by her manner, he again caught her in an enraptured embrace.

She looked on him and laughed, a silvery, rippling, mocking laugh, that stung his ardour, but checked his purpose.

"I torment thee!" she cried. "It is thy country that should torment. *Thou*, a Chief of armies; *I*, a mere helpless—"

"Say it not!" he cried passionately, kissing her with rude rapture: "one moment of thee were worth all Atlantis!"

"Shame, shame! What when the lord Huitza shall come and lay siege to Zul, which has no defender? Tekthah is old and his house is divided."

The prince stared at her, lost in a sudden thought. The lady knew not what had prompted her to say what she had, and half-fearfully she gazed on him; and so they stared the one at the other, each startled by their thoughts.

"Dost thou know aught of this?" asked the chief, suspiciously.

"Nay, by my faith," she said, laughing merrily and shaking her head.

THE THRONE.

"The Tzan is old, as thou sayest," he said, drawing her towards him.

"But until he dies, he is my lord," she responded, believing him to wish to press his suit, whereas he wished to fathom her feelings with the end of supplanting Tekthah. And again he lost all interest in such and only wished to possess this splendid being.

He gazed at her in rapture, excited by the wish and her apparent hesitancy.

"Thou knowest how I love thee," he said earnestly, drawing her close to him; "thou knowest that thy title is an empty glory: wouldst thou not wish to have the name of Azta revered from one end of Atlantis to the other?"

I trembled! The wife of this man! The knowledge rushed upon me overpoweringly and held me in such mute horror that I waited powerless, watching the struggle going on in Azta's mind and wishing I had revealed my presence at first.

Now I became as a human man, with such an one's heart, and tasted to the full the torments of jealousy, which I had never perceived before. Oh, horror of that fall to Earth and Earth's woe! Never can I forget all I felt as I gazed on the features of my Love and read there the temptation of glory and power with the chance of an almost immediate fulfilment. And yet I did not know all.

Suddenly I perceived Acoa, and then he was gone. On Azta's face all traces of mental struggle had vanished and an inspired look came into her eyes. She looked beyond the chief, and in a dreamy voice, as though she watched a scene, spoke.

"Listen," she said; "before me is the Circus, and the crowds watch the arena. The trumpet sounds for the single combat on the third day, when the Champion of Atlantis steps forth and dares one to face him. This time one appears. The Champion, Sir Chief," she said, suddenly gazing straight at him and changing her voice until it rang, "is thyself. If thou conquerest I will be the Queen of Atlantis."

"And the other, O Love, the other?" he whispered hoarsely.

"Nay, I know not," she said, trembling; "I could not see."

"I *will* conquer!" he cried, with a great oath, raising his

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arm and clenching his fist till the great muscles cracked, while his eyes flamed with the deadly purpose of his mind; "Thou shalt be my Queen! Let me embrace thee, my Love!"

"After—after!" she said, throwing out her hands.

"Nay, but thou triflest with me!" he cried, enfrenzied, seizing her with rapture, and smothering her efforts to escape with a power far superior to her own.

I cried his name in a voice of thunder, standing forth in the person of the Magician. He leaped to his feet, with his hand towards his sword that leaned against the settee. My stature o'ertopped his own, and my eyes blazed, yet so furious was he that he raised his sword to smite me to the earth, his teeth showing in a savage grin in his great black beard.

As he leaped forward a wavering flash of fire laved the weapon and paralysed his arm. The sword fell ringing to the floor, and the would-be ravisher, with a shout of terror, fled, dazzled and half-stunned.

C A P. X I.

NOAH.

SEEING me, Azta uttered a glad cry and threw herself into my arms, so that my heart was glad, and I kissed her again and again, perceiving her to be still under the influence of the vision, and not accountable for her former words.

"Yet thou hast not done well," I cried. "Bad estate will it be to thee, the toy of such an one as yon debauched chieftain, and soon will he cast thee by as a flower that has ceased to bloom. Hast thou not learned that the love of Heaven is better than aught the Earth can offer?"

She answered not, but hiding her face in my bosom, burst into a flood of tears and sobbed violently. I was distressed and amazed, not yet comprehending her nature, and believing that I was the lord of her heart, and none besides. I comforted her, and my mind being in sore bewilderment and dwelling chiefly on what she had said concerning the vision, I required of her to tell me why she had promised to be the wife of such as Rhadaman when that he had overcome his opponent.

"He will not overcome him," she answered, trembling; "neither did I promise to be his Queen. And in truth it would have mattered nought had I so done."

"Thou didst vow to be Queen of Atlantis?" I said, still feeling sore.

"And so will I; and of thy might could'st thou not make thyself Tzan of all the land?" she demanded desperately and imploringly; "thou, powerful, invincible? What could stand before thee?"

I raised her up and looked into her eyes, that were as two lakes overbrimming with fire.

"Not but in love may Heaven and Earth mingle, the adapt-

able life of all Spirits," I said, "else, if this might be so, there would be no mortal man."

"How so?" she asked, wishing that I should expound the mysteries of Spirits unto her. Yet would I not do this thing.

"Azta," I said, "the failing of thy beauteous sex is the failing of the angels and of every pure, fearless Spirit, longing to see hidden things, and things more gross than itself, and that only the Master-mind of great Jehovah can bear without defilement. The only thing that lasts, my Azta, is love, which, missed, we ever vainly grieve for. Man has less curiosity than woman, for that his more material mind, imagining more of Earth than there is to be ever seen, is satiated with its own excesses. Dear one, the angels themselves, methinks, know not for why he was created, save that the likes of thine own fair self might be born to him."

Her flaming hair lay over my arm, and streamed through my fingers as I caressed it. With an impetuous gesture she sat up and looked me full in the eyes.

"Yet thyself, thou art a man." Her eyes, deprecatory and half-indignant, spoke the words; her full lips moved not.

"Dear Love, thou could'st not understand what I could tell thee now. I' faith of Heaven, I do not understand it quite myself. But Adam was formed of the atoms of Earth, and sex as thou knowest it is not of Spirits."

We sat in silence, and I tried to fathom the varying emotions that swept across her face. How subtle were these Earthly beings, and what great emotions they possessed! and how cunning in contrivances they were! For it was also known in Heaven that those of Earth were wiser in their generation than the Sons of Light, and I pondered deeply on this thing. Already I perceived in this fair being a nature of intense emotional characteristics; to friends steadfast and true, to enemies dangerous, waiting in apparent friendship until a proper time should come to strike a deadly blow. Brave to recklessness, yet cautious; and as the supple reed, bowing to storms that could not be withstood, and, rising behind them, gaining the ends of an invincible determination by circumventing barriers that could not be broken down. Yet how far I knew not, nor

was I to know at present; and although I saw many things clearly, yet others I perceived not, so that I should work my own punishment.

For a while after that I was happy; and ever mindful of my mission, that I would not believe I was endeavouring to consummate in sin by attempting to clean a polluted temple with the impure mediums of Earth, set my mind on Azta becoming the ruler of the land.

Rhadaman, waiting for the Circus games, sank himself deeper in the pursuits of pleasure; mistrusting Azta because of her words regarding Huitza, and dismayed by her power that he believed had caused me to appear. He said nought concerning it, ashamed of his flight, but was busied in ingratiating himself with the Tzantans.

Neither did Tekthah bestir himself, being overcome by an unaccountable lethargy which was shared by the rest of his household. The temple services, carried on with bloody precision, and the near approach of the annual games, kept the minds of the pleasure-loving populace from all considerations of country or state. As long as they had plenty of amusements it mattered little if Tekthah were ruler or anyone else, and perchance they would prefer a little excitement to culminate in extraordinary rejoicings. Their lives were immoral to a degree, and passions growing with the ease of their satisfactions took the most extravagant lusts and cried for new pleasures. Also those who were more sober would wish for Huitza to rule them and raise the glory of Atlantis still higher, and thus the capital wavered in imbecile helplessness.

But all were debased and evil. Obscene gods were worshipped, libations being poured over their hideous and grotesque forms, and tortured victims offered to them. In the market slaves were sold, and crowds gathered round and gazed lewdly on the blushing charms of kidnapped girls taken from among their own people, and prostitutes who voluntarily sold themselves to rich masters. Izta, the Lord of Astra, sold many young girls there, torn from the coast-villages and valued for their flaxen hair and their large bodies. Everything was violent and unnatural, and I, instead of elevating those who might purge

the land of its folly and reinstate the nation in integrity, sought to raise an Earthly Love to the throne and through her to do this. I say, I knew not Woman then, but dare I say what I should have done if I had!

Now in all the land there was but one man whose name was well spoken of in Heaven, with the names of his family. It was that Noah, the governor of Tek-Ra under Huitza, who with his wife Talasse, and his sons, great men and godly, and their wives and families, lived in holiness and rectitude, each man cherishing but one wife, and each woman owning but one lord. Neither did they at all yearn after the unnatural vanities of the land, in the inserting of gems in teeth or the abuse of strong wine or smoking-herbs or the eating of flesh; keeping holy every seventh day, as was of very old legend. And Noah, who was a judge over the people, was just and upright in his judgments, not striving by the quarrels of others to seize things for himself, nor treating his servants harshly or improperly, striving to live in honourable relations and preventing his sons from inquiring into the hidden things which Kasyade the Angel taught concerning demons. But Ham was kept at Zul as a secret hostage for the behaviour of his father.

To Tek-Ra I conveyed myself, wishing to see this man, and thinking to behold a very godlike being. I chanced upon him as he sat in the shade under a portico of his palace, and, perceiving him to be small of stature, began to consider him of less account than I had heretofore. Yet I saw that no weight of years had quenched the fire of his bold, bright eye, and after, when I knew him better, I perceived that he had a sensitive spirit which by reason of its bent had been through the furnace of criticism harsh and galling to it, and through ridicule that toughened in bitterness what it failed in checking; that by the failure of heart-wrought effort and bright and sanguine hopes his nature was crushed, but not annihilated, rising, Phœnix-like, to fight again, fiercely and bravely, and win at last.

Methinks now that oftentimes smallness of bodily stature conduces to largeness of spiritual, for, perhaps, that when these smaller beings have overcome difficulties made doubly arduous by this

defect, they are able, when powerful and free, to work with the hard energy of veterans who have striven desperately against circumstances that would have overpowered characters less tough, and with such tempered weapons to win a way to fame.

Thus it was with the Patriarch. Now no sarcasm could instil its blasting poison into his soul, no wrath make tremble. In his communion with Heaven he was comforted, and for the lost sweets of Earthly life possessed the joy of impregnability from sorrow. So ever at last the waves of Time's ocean beat harmless on the iron-bound shores of Life, from which all the sand and that which was soft is washed away.

"Ever thinking!" said a voice of the sweetest beauty, and a lady appeared, stepping out on to the portico. Save Azta's self, never had I beheld so fair a being, so like unto the holy Spirits of God! Simple in mien and attire she was, with an ethereal beauty that lighted her sweet face and gave to her carriage an unearthly majesty of which her innocent smile gave proof of no knowledge. This was Susi, the wife of Shem, firstborn of the Patriarch, she being of Edna, the master of Methusaleh through Lamech and Danaos the son of Lamech.

Stepping up to her father-in-law, she laid her hand caressingly on his shoulder, looking into his face with a beaming smile of love.

"Thinking why there is no reward for sorrow, dear father, when thou sayest aloud, 'Trust in Jehovah and He will recompense thee an hundred-fold'?"

She stood before him with her hands clasped on her bosom, white as most pure marble, and gazed on him with her lustrous eyes. She seemed an Angel, and the old man looked on her for a while without movement or speech, and with an adoration that was almost worship.

"Ay," he said slowly; "yet at times the soul is vexed. The countenance of Jehovah is turned from His servants and darkness falls upon their hearts."

"O father, it is for a proof of thee," she said softly; "the servant who is faithful when his master's face is turned is most dearly loved of his lord."

The Patriarch looked on her in astonishment, and then he sunk his head. "I am a sinful man," he muttered, in a vexed voice.

She seated herself at his feet and looked up into his stern face.

"Nay, father," she said, "methinks thou art the best man that I have ever known."

He placed his hand on her curls, brown and lustrous in their thick glory, and said sadly:

"There are times when the soul is vexed sore and the things of this world seem to work together for evil. Then begins faith to wax unfaithful and our hearts put questions hard to answer. Behold the sin of the Earth and the wickedness of those in high places! And now Huitza is fled from Zul with his army, and it fears me for my son Ham, who is in the midst of danger and temptations in the very palace of Tekthah and his wicked women. Why should it be made that sin is so pleasant and duty so hard, and that the sinner shall answer for what he is caused to do, and the good man reaps nought but vexation and misery?"

He spoke as to a superior, or as though he communed in truth with an Angel.

"Father, this mood becomes thee not," cried the fair lady, distressed; "was it not thyself who taught me that all shall be well in the next life?"

"Ay," answered the sire, gazing into the blue sky; "and yet it seemed as though I led an Angel's footsteps."

"Oh, father!" she cried, hiding her face, more distressed by the praise.

"Hide not thy face, daughter," said the old man, very tenderly; "'tis the candour of a graybeard and not the gallant speech of a youth. Look yonder to where the towers of Zul rise in daring wantonness to Heaven, look around at our own tall battlements, and tell me, is not Sin hid under a fair disguise. Yet it is there!"

He spoke very bitterly and his words sank into my soul.

"It is beautiful," said Susi, her blue eyes filling with tears;

“but it is like the wasp’s nest and those bright beings like the wasps.”

Each was in perfect sympathy with the other; the fair lady’s soft, white hand resting on the old man’s hard, knotted one.

He sighed. “I make thee sad,” he said more cheerfully.

“Nay, but to see thee doubt, father,” she said, “thou, my teacher! How oft hast thou chided *my* doubts, telling me they were but trials of faith, and truly it makes me sad to see *thee* doubt. I, what can *I* do, then? Yet now can I think alone, and oft have fair visions dispelled my sorrow.”

A holy rapture shone in her face, and the old man caught the enthusiasm. With a movement of joyfulness he drew her towards him and kissed her forehead.

“Out of thy sweet lips speaks the Lord Jehovah to his old servant,” he said, bowing his head.

She blushed with a daring joy, that, however, was instantly suppressed by a meeker feeling, and then sprang to her feet as Shem approached from within, and ran to him.

The firstborn of Noah was a great man, as tall as Ham, which was among the goodliest men of Zul, and his hair was long and black. He kissed Susi and bade her retire; and made complaint to his sire concerning how the Tzan’s tax-collectors had descended on the flocks and herds. There followed him Gomer, the son of Japheth, which was the third son of Noah, bearing a tool for hewing wood; for he and Misraim, the son of Ham, with their workmen were building an engine of wood on the bank of a river that ran before the walls. He shook back his long hair to hear what his elders might say, and little methought then that he should be one of the first progenitors of a new race of man when that all save he and his families were dead—*eheu, O eheu!* my Love among them!

The economy of the State was thus: Each of the greater nobles had a portion of land with a great city on it assigned to him, and from all on the land and in the cities at the time of tax-collecting toll was exacted. The Tzan drew from every territory and every city, less in proportion from each. Thus

the Lord of each territory drew a yearly tithe, and all over the land the Tzan drew one-twentieth.

The season had been bad and the tax-collectors were overbearing and insolent. Bad feeling was aroused and in places resistance was offered, but Noah advised submission when his son angrily stated the grievance. Their family was not popular by reason of their religious opinions and intolerance of bloodshed, and the people would not aid any measures fully. He reminded him of Mehir's raid on Aten, and Rhadaman's on Talascan, which was the chief city of Atala, of which he was lord, to avenge a furious resistance to their collectors; how the latter had hanged the Governor and sacked the city, thereby impoverishing himself and having to make certain grants to induce people to go and live there again; which, however, would not keep Tekthah from taking an excuse to destroy all Tek-Ra to avenge himself on her rebellious lord, his son; which would also cause great danger to Ham.

"It shall not be for long!" cried the old man; "the sins of this godless people cry to Heaven for vengeance on them. The ways of God are perverted, and the Sons of God aid the ruin of the Sons of Earth. A day shall come when the sins of this people shall recoil in horror and destruction on their heads, and they shall be destroyed to make way for a race who shall carry out the end for which we are appointed!"

His words stung me keenly, yet without amaze I felt the sting. The vision of Susi was fresh before me, and her sweet, innocent beauty; and in a turmoil of emotions I groaned in horror and in terror. Even now, even now could I have saved my soul!

And turning away in sorrow, I wandered by a lake full of lotus flowers and feathery rushes, shaded by willows and elegant palms; and thereby sat two lovers. The man was Alam, and he was of the family of Pharno the son of Lamech, and his beloved's name was Myra. And long he strove with her, all unavailingly, for she was very young and foolish, perceiving not how great his love for her was in so ungodly a land that he did entreat her so gently. And from them I took more comfort to myself, seeing that all the love of Earth was not

withholden only from me; yet the thought of my selfishness tormented me in other days, for the youth grew from a gay, ardent boy to a man whose sternness was very great and cruel. And it was not until long after that I saw how things went with them, and marvelled at the going.

Concerning the meaning of the names of the sons of Noah there is much controversy. One division, (the Elohist, or priestly,) appears to assign to them a significance relating to the geographical distribution of nations, and another ethnographical. We see in Gen. X. 7 Sheba and Havilah as grandsons of Ham, and in ver. 28, 29 as descendants of Shem. But in these old histories there are many circumstances which alter apparent meanings; similarity of names, polyandrous descent, supplanting of one by another, and other things that we do not know of nor find mentioned.

Of Shem, Wellhausen thinks, taking the Hebrew meaning of the word—"Name"—that "sons of name" as opposed to "sons of no name," (Job XXX. 8, A. V. "sons of base men") would denote the pure-blooded Hebrews in antithesis to the subject Canaanites.

Of Ham, the *Encyclopædia Britannica* tells us that, "on the assumption that these early genealogies are geographical rather than personal or even ethnological, the name, which in Hebrew radically signifies "hot," would seem to indicate the torrid zone; and this inference, though not supported, so far as has hitherto been discovered, by any corresponding explanation of the names of Shem and Japheth, at least harmonizes well with the fact that on the whole Shem seems intended to denote the intermediate and Japheth the northern regions of the world as known to the compiler of the book of Genesis."

With regard to the statement concerning the corresponding significance of the names of Shem and Japheth to Ham, this appears to be modified by what Mr. Gladstone tells us of the latter. He says—the Japhetites are those, (Japhah = fair,) of fair complexion—which I take to possess an ethnological and geographical significance equal to that of Ham, "hot," and would probably indicate the Aryan races, which in perfect keeping with the words of Gen. IX. 27, "God shall enlarge Japheth", are to-day the dominant power of the world.

Yet, taking this supposition as correct, we find Japhetites subject to Gog, a Scythian prince, in Ezek. XXXVIII., where Meshech, Tubal and Gomer are cited as belonging to his great army which issues from the north. (V. v. 2. 6.) Now Magog signifies the Scythians, who were a Mongoloid race. But there need be no hesitation in saying that they were of a different race, for in V. 5 we find Aryan Persians and the Hamitic Ethiopians and Libyans in the same army.

CAP. XII.

A MAN AND A NATION.

THAT scene in Tek-Ra haunted me for ever by its silent index to what I should do, that nevertheless I impatiently dismissed, being foolishly and wickedly in love with Azta. For here Huitza could rule and make it the chief city of the land, counselled by Noah, whom he loved, and convertible to the old faith. And ever before me arises the form of Susi, beautiful and holy as an Angel and pure as a flower of Heaven.

Yet back in haste I went to Zul, and to quiet my soul entered the great temple, for long sitting with those three awful images that ever looked upon the burning fires below, gazing into the lurid spaces where forms of evil sat.

But a great shuddering seized me and a wish for human companionship, so that I went up through the square aperture above to the vast chambers, and the weird sound that dwelt there swept round like a moaning sigh. The eyes of the colossi moved upon me and the bright pictures on the walls flared and smoked, the enormous representations of Neptsis with her lunar crown and the vast embryo of Zul flashed into vivid brilliance in all their mystic imagining, wondrous in the amorphous darkness that rolled so gradually from the lurid glow of the pit, and lost itself in the darkness.

And above, sat Acoa before the brazier, on which slowly revolved a globe of lambent fire, clear as crystal, with a self-contained light that cast no shadow on the dark priest gazing upon it so earnestly. Above in the air tremulated Something, that lived and moved and breathed, but what it was I knew not.

In the bright globe events were taking place and figures moved. Forms and faces appeared and vanished and certain things happened with a suggestion of weird horror in them. I

thought I perceived a great, throbbing current boiling and flowing, now flashing bright and falling in tumultuous descent, and anon a great purple flow with dark red spots in it that progressed slowly and choked the whirl of wonder. Great waves of gold, mighty billows of blood and horror, with waving, spectral hands that rose therefrom and clutched and quivered; and awful, ghastly faces that seemed of terrestrial mould, but of so dreadful appearance as might not be seen but on the front of a Gorgon. These sank back and appeared to be stifled in the whirlpool, where there were dreadful despairing fiends that devoured their own flesh, and awful shapes not of Earth gnashing their serrated teeth in bloody foam and burning with fire, wriggling and writhing, disappearing under the boiling flood.

I gazed in horror on the dark man, who watched with eyes dilated hideously. He appeared not to breathe, and his countenance was as that of one long dead.

A flash of light fell from the Shape that hovered above, and in place of the globe of fire came a bright scene that compelled the attention to its little space until it appeared to occupy all the Earth. From the Sun came a figure of flame, and the god *Zulæ* stood upon the Earth; and before him bowed a figure that was Acoa's. And to him was given a sword of lightning; but a dark, indistinguishable Thing flew across the scene and blotted it out, as the obsidian mirror flashed the rays of the Sun, with swift graduation to a blaze of light, over the great hall.

"What is It?" whispered the High Priest, in a fierce, desperate whisper, gazing fearfully on the brazier, with the dilated pupils of his eyes shrivelling under the bright sunlight, his hands trembling with an ague and his chest heaving as though he laboured terribly for the panting breath that moved the froth on his lips. His long yellow robe shook from his shoulders to the folds about his feet, and I perceived that here the Spirit laboured greatly with a weak Clay.

"Might I but seek Thee!" he groaned, clasping his temples with his hands; "could I but arrest this drain of Earth!"

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With a wonder and a purpose in his eyes he walked slowly to his couch and cried aloud a thing I understood not as he laid himself down and composed his limbs, invoking the demon known to man as Asmodeus by powerful enchantment. Gradually the light faded and a vacuum formed, and then an icy atmosphere filled the chamber as with a wind from the intense cold of those spaces of uttermost depths where the starry worlds revolve, and a featureless shadow flitted before my eyes, from which two orbs of great penetration fixed themselves with a fatal intensity upon Acoa. He appeared to fall into a deep slumber, and I watched curiously as the flesh of his hands and face seemed to wither and fall in onto the bones. His jaw dropped and his large eyes, opening, rolled upwards in a horrid stare. From his body, as a mist rising, issued a Shape, and I knew that no mortal eye could perceive it, forming slowly and with labour into an outlined figure, tall and comely, in the form of a youth like unto one of Us, and the face was as Acoa's would have been in lesser years. Yet, gazing around, he looked as one astonished and bewildered and as seeking to hear a voice or recover some great thought that had escaped the memory, nor looked nor stirred when the dreadful Shadow with the fatal orbs took his hand. Then suddenly with a joyous look he vanished, instantly with the shadow.

I stood astounded that such could be done by one of Earth! what master-power limited the resources of such as himself—and myself? Perchance but the lack of the knowledge of a tiny germ stood between us and a power as mighty and comprehensive as great Jehovah's; perchance unknown oceans of differences separated us from it. Who could fathom these Earthly Things that looked as intelligently forth from an unfathomable mask! Godlike creatures that crawled from the teeming womb of Earth and overcame their Spirits by the overpowering might of tremendous evil, to die and with their foul corruption to breed more Life. Horrible! Horrible and awful!

I considered the wonder of the individual man, and how that each one acted apart from the body of which each one was a part, and plotted for this end or that, striving in the dark to check another's plot, yet not understanding it at all, and causing

endless confusion; and with a sudden thrill of fear knew that I was in such case by my own volition.

With a pang I looked on the children of Light, yet with a knowledge that I looked as Man might look, not caring to leave his Clay, yet wistful of good at intervals. Over my heart swept the sound of the harps of countless spheres, whose strings are swept by the fingers of Time in such grand, celestial harmony, and I wept. In deepest adoration my soul knelt before Heaven, yet it was not all holy, for I shut out from my conscience all regarding Azta, determining to myself to do that which was right.

And thus thinking I sped forth, careless of the daring mystery before me, and wishful of seeing my Love; as a rudderless ship running with the current upon the rocks.

Her I found by the fountains, perturbed in spirit because of the vision of the near-approaching Tournament, and uneasy, with all the people, at certain sights in the mountains, where the gods of fire dwelt. These with violence convulsed the earth, in thunder and smoke they leaped from the high points, and molten streams of lava, flowing over the valleys, drove the people away. From the mountain Axatlan a tall column of flame waved, like a larger sister to that on Zul, but wreathed in sulphureous smoke, from which were cast ashes over the land when the wind blew from the north-west.

Perplexed and terrified, the populace immolated victims and offered up sacrifices to their abominable idols, deluging them with blood and wine. A hundred slaves fed the flames of Zul, and Tekthah with his whole household attended the sacrifices. The Magicians, free from vulgar superstitions, terrified the people by drawing lightning from the clouds and playing with huge serpents, some women being especially celebrated for their diabolical witch-craft and sorceries. These in gloomy clouds caused spirits to appear, and monstrous shapes, *larvæ* of fearful aspect, that made audiences cry out with terror.

The populace believed the gods were angry on account of the disappearance of Huitza, (which thing Acoa preached in secret,) and clamoured for his return, meeting in threatening mobs and howling furiously. All in the palace were alarmed, even Azta was terrified, yet still Rhadaman waited in lethargic

indolence for the Circus, when he believed all would come well. And this was eagerly wished for by all in authority to distract the attention of the populace, and give them competitions to fill their hands and thoughts with.

The wrath of the gods was intermittent, the victims from the Circus might calm it altogether. So preached the various priests, wishful of their prizes, and the people hoped they were correct in their views, for they were fearful of the fire-demons.

As the day for the Tournament approached, runners were sent all over the land to proclaim the great event and to pray rich offerings. The gates of Zul were thrown open, the retractile bridges propelled across the sea-moat, and from near and far the people crowded in over them to participate in the games and the dreadful temple rites. From all the villages of the Havan coast they came, from the Astran cities, Surapa, Hanat, Sagara, Mutasara, Sham and En-Ra, from far Bitaranu and Bitsar, from Bar-Asan, Katalaria, Muzran and all the cities of Trocoatla, and all the cities of Tek-Ra and Chalac, from Reb, Hir, Anduku, and Talascan in Atala. Yet by reason of the fear of Huitza the governors of the larger cities were commanded to stay within their walls, and but half the citizens of each were permitted to come to the capital, toll being taken of each by special officers appointed; for that it was feared that the Chief might seize such cities, if undefended, and fortify himself therein. And it was also argued that if, despite, he seized upon such, they would have but half the number of inhabitants therein, and he might be besieged and crushed; for great concessions were about to be made to the people assembled in Zul to cause them to forsake their love of the rebellious prince. Also Ham and his family were securely guarded, lest in the great crowds they might seek to escape to Tek-Ra and carry information of value thereto.

I perceived the fear of Huitza to be very great, he being esteemed the ablest general of the land; and most would have wished to see him Tzan notwithstanding they yet revered Tekthah.

From such tribesmen as were from the frontiers came alarming reports of the prowess of the savage tribes, which were becoming

a great menace, driving back the hunters from the farther hunting-grounds and even approaching outlying cities and pallos, of which there were very many. The warriors who should keep them in check caroused within walls, and all complained bitterly of the apathy of their Patriarchs. Many of these border tribesmen spoke with vile and barbarous tongues, half of their own people and half of the savages, with whom they to an extent intermingled so that their offspring were degraded and often unowned.

Crowds listened to their stories, but their grievances were forgotten for the moment in wonderment at all they saw; for the grandeur and immensity of Zul greatly surpassed all other cities, even the larger ones; and the wonder of the sea and the shipping within the harbour held them speechless. They gazed on the great warships Tacoatlanta, Mexteo and others, and the crowd of smaller boats in wonderment, and frowned with awe on the enormous pile of Zul and the battlements and terraces of the grand palace of Tekthah.

Sauntering through the streets, tall hunters and herdsmen, clad in skins, looked curiously on the yellow-robed citizens of Zul and other cities, and gaped at the legionaries, shaking the large pendants of gold, metal or pebbles in their ears and nostrils with wonder at all they saw. The steps, pillars, columns, arches, paintings and sculpture, the vast temples and palaces of the great, were marvels to them. Sowers of grain, fishermen, miners and collectors of dyes, stones and feathers, walked shoulder to shoulder with hoary astronomers and astrologers and overbearing troop-leaders; gaunt, unkempt savages exchanged stares with exquisite, effeminate myrmidons of the palace, and haughty queens looked with invincible curiosity on wild-eyed daughters of the frontiers. Here and there the crowds scattered before the palanquin of some great lady, or gathered round an agile and marvellous juggler or an awe-inspiring Magician, terrified by his arts, breathless at his daring and blasphemous audacity. Long-haired barbarians traded valuable furs and shells for trifles of civilization with which to adorn their persons, or for foods and drinks which they never tasted the like of elsewhere.

ATLANTIS.

There was a vast encampment outside the walls, a city of tents and simple wind-breaks, full at night, but deserted in the day by reason of all the occupiers having gone into the wonderful city. After each of these annual festivals many women, attracted by the splendour, stayed behind and swelled the ranks of the wretched beings who plied their evil trade round the walls and barracks of the troops; and many were kept back by force.

Most of these simple people had brought offerings for the various gods, and had with them numbers of captives, taken in raids, which were handed over to barbarous deaths. Also they brought numbers of captured women and young girls to be sold into the harems, some worthy of the Imperial protection, but most sold or bartered to the first bidder; and one of the first things among the nobles of Zul on any visit of the tribes or other townspeople was to either go themselves to obtain the captives they were sure to bring, or obtain them through well-known agents.

All the land appeared to have surrendered itself to the pleasures of the body, and merely lived to appease bestial lusts and indulge in obscene excitement; the common peoples openly, the higher classes in stealth, and with a deadly insidiousness that sapped the virtues of husbands, wives and families, impregnated with the poison of every sin of Earth. Lust, Suspicion, Intrigue, Violence and Corruption sat in the high places and dared the wrath of the Almighty, and I trembled as I thought upon it, which, alas, I seldom did, and then but in rebellion that only certain courses could alter it.

CAP. XIII.

THE CIRCUS.

THERE were fearful scenes in the city, and of a night torches were used broadcast to illuminate the places; the Market Square was ablaze with the lurid glare of bonfires, by the light of which, and the torches, drunken revelries were carried far into the night, the day being devoted to sight-seeing. The strains of music from the palace and the roar of the lions that guarded the Hall of the Throne of Atlantis excited those who were within reach of the sounds, and they howled and roared as though wild beasts themselves, drunk with wine and full of mischief, revelling in the unwonted luxuries of the city, and particularly the herbs burnt in pipes and inhaled.

A legion from Trocoatla under the Governor Azco, passing through them, dealt blows right and left, cleaving its way by force of arms and moving onwards leaving a wake of stunned and wounded wretches in its rear, whose shrieks and moans, added to the pandemonium of wild minstrelsy, clang of armour, and heavy, measured tramp of feet, stilled for a brief while the noises of the revellers. Lewd songs were shouted and wanton scenes enacted, and here a furious brawl progressed where two men fought for the possession of some woman, who was usually abducted by a third. Nude wretches danced in bacchanalian wantonness in circles with joined hands, the women more fiendlike and abandoned than the men, and overpowered debauchees lay like corpses at the mercy of a myriad trampling feet. Wild shrieks rose above the uproar, Licence fed on fruits that dropped into its open mouth, agape with drunkenness; the populace was madder and more abandoned than ever before.

Above the glare of the fires, high above in the darkness, the cold, bright stars shone, but those in the palaces, and even

the priestesses in the temples, trembled at the roaring saturnalia, and forgot all but the danger of some mad outburst, indulging in resolves of clearing the streets at sunset when the next annual celebrations arrived.

So two or three nights passed, each more boisterous than the last, by reason of increasing multitudes, and then the first day of the Tournament arrived.

The Circus was thrown open a few hours after sunrise. The rows of seats, tier above tier, were crowded to overflowing, and when every one was seated a blaze of trumpets proclaimed the arrival of the Tzan and his household, and the High Priest of the temple of the Sun.

Conspicuous among all his towering guards and giant sons stood the old warrior, the founder of the Empire, who had consolidated the tribes and extended the sway of their conquering race afar. Before him was carried the National Standard and the Imperial Sceptre; behind him strode his private magicians and astrologers, those tall dark men clad in flowing robes who advised him confidentially; and behind them were led in chains four large lions, two slaves leading each. These men were immense, as tall as the Tzan and of enormous development, and from ear to ear their white teeth showed in dazzling contrast to their heavy, black features.

Then came the princes of Atlantis: Rhadaman with his great winged helmet, Mehir, Nezca, Amal, Colosse and a hundred other well-known figures; conspicuously Shar-Jatal, the People's Representative, smiling in order that the jewels in his teeth might gleam; the Chief Adar, covered from head to foot in glittering scales of bronze, beautiful and dreadful to look upon; all walking slowly and haughtily, their armour flashing as they moved, their cothurns clanking to their heavy tread. There strode Patriarchs and Tzantans in glittering armour, crested with plumes of ostrich, eagle and scarlet flamingo, horns of various animals and metal symbols, the sons of Tekthah with the vulture-wings, in all the glory of warlike panoply and magnificence, with flashing arms and ornaments and splendid mantles bright in the dazzling sunlight. All were there save Huitza, concerning whom a great murmur arose as those which

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knew of his setting forth told those nearest, and those who were ignorant of it loudly demanded to be enlightened.

In the rear of this procession of the warriors came the palanquins of the ladies, rich with yellow metal and gems, and green, purple and yellow housings. On these the eyes of the populace blazed with a daring wish to possess their lovely occupants radiant with powder and jewels.

There rode my Love, the haughty Azta, her hair falling in two great waves either side of her face, the returning ends brought up under the jewelled strap above which reposed in queenly majesty the Lunar crown of State, the headdress of the Tizin of Atlantis. From the crown, representing an egg, emerged on high the similitude of a serpent, which a great plaited coil of hair appeared to continue at the back, and either side of the shining crystal moon a great serpent upheld the structure, whose scaly body, resting upon the shoulders, supported the weight. Tekthah's crown was the same, save that in place of the crystal moon was the Solar disc of gold, and the topmost serpent carried outspread wings. Self-possessed and with a slight sneer on her pale face, Azta's disdainful eyes languidly hovered in their yellow fires over the waving myriads in the vast amphitheatre, whose various dresses formed a kaleidoscopic and wondrous effect.

There, also, rode Sada, whose great dark eyes and voluptuous charms won that admiration of the people that for the Tizin was lost in wonder and astonishment at her strange, unearthly beauty; Tua, with the softest of blue eyes, a daughter of Tekthah; Teta, with the magnificence of brown hair and the prettiest of lips, and Semaia, a rival to Azta in form. Pocatepa, in the full insignia of Neptsis came at the head of all the priestesses, who were there to claim the victims for the altars of the goddess; and all these, and many more, came in for open-mouthed regards. One popular favourite was missing—it was Faë.

Attendant upon each person was the peculiar suite; the shield-bearer, pipe-bearer, fan-bearer, and, of the ladies, scent-bearers, and large retinues besides, so that there was a very great multitude altogether, very splendid and magnificent, moving onward in an endless stream of coloured magnificence.

ATLANTIS.

The roar of triumph that had greeted the mighty Tzan continued unbrokenly as each popular personage came in sight; and, by the truth of God, it was a stirring sound and thrilling. What triumph for man, this applause of a nation!

And how brightly spread that myriad-eyed array! The gleam of gold and silver among the soft tints of mantles and feathers, the waving of coloured fans as a meadow of flowers swayed by the breeze, the sparkle of gems as some languid beauty moved a rounded arm on which golden ceintures held the wealth of empires, the glittering armlets of warriors, some formed as serpents, and plates fastened to bands confining the hirsute glories of some princess. Above some chevelures flashed gemmed tiaras of fabulous worth, and necklaces of priceless pearls from Astra enhanced the soft beauty of many a round, white throat. It was a gorgeous array of splendour and magnificence!

When these were seated, a trumpet-sound broke the expectant stillness. This was the first day of the Circus, when Rhadaman had said that in the night Tekthah should die, and I looked to where the Tzantan sat, and wondered would he wait until the prophetic third day before he took any steps.

A trap was opened beneath the seats and from it a horse bounded into the vast arena, surveying the scene with startled eyes and pricked ears, suddenly transferring his attention to a great, lithe, catlike creature that leaped from another trap, and, belly to the earth, crept swiftly towards him. As, with a snort, he turned, the spotted leopard leaped towards him with three lightning bounds, but the shying little savage of the plains avoided the fate, and with a swing of his heels rolling the leopard over, fled like the wind. He eluded another in like manner that was sent in to aid the first, and when the two were aided also by a third and caught him, he killed one and fought the remaining two with teeth and hoofs, but succumbed at length.

Then the victors had to fight a lion, who vanquished them and then killed a horse and a buffalo and was finally impaled on the spear-like horns of a large antelope.

There were many more such combats, and some where numbers of animals took part, all of which the crowds applauded or

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disapproved, exchanging bets on the results. α They licked their lips at the sight of blood, showing their large white teeth and red gums, at times uttering their formidable cries of approval or disapproval and calling on their gods to aid the combatant of their choice.

Among them promenaded vendors of water, wine and solid food-stuffs, long-handled fans to ward off the hot sun-rays, and small images of all the various gods. Musicians added discord to uproar, and from the Imperial quarter the odours of perfumes floated, sprinkled by slaves upon the air to ward off the odour of the multitude.

The combatants fought on down there, watched by the myriads of pitiless eyes, which began to perceive in them a sameness, so that there were roars of joy when human beings appeared to compete with the brutes.

The first was him I recognised as Gadema; and, startled, I looked to where Azta sat. Unflinchingly she gazed at him, and afterwards she told me that she had prevailed upon Tekthah to consign him thither for an act of insolence to herself; and now, as his pallid face sought her out, she drew a slave before her that he might not see where she sat. And his competition was this; that he should race the length of the arena against an auroch, and if he reached a little trap at the other side he could escape, but if not he must do what he might with a knife which he wore in a belt, which was also his only clothing.

Poor boy! There he stood, a figure of faultless symmetry, trembling with fear as the roar of his handicapped pursuer fell on his ear. for he had a start of one-tenth of the arena. Yet not alone he trembled, for Rhadaman and Shar-Jatal and others of the conspirators, perceiving him, and totally unaware of such an entry, were filled with the direst forebodings, believing all to be known and this the first victim of a wrath they feared. In mute dismay they sat, therefore, revolving in their minds

α It is not stated how many animals were in the arena at one time. But in the Roman amphitheatre, Scylla exhibited a combat in which 100 lions took part, Cæsar 400, and Pompey 600. This is on the authority of Pliny, who informs us that Quintus Curtius started the savage pastime.

this thing, and I perceived how their eyes looked more inwardly than on the arena.

The great bull leaped from the trap and Gadema sped off like the wind to race for his life; and so still was the multitude that the flying patter of feet could be heard. With death in his eye the bold auroch bounded after the white racer in front, whose only hope was in his speed, for he could not fight such an opponent with his hands, like it was remembered of the prince Azco, who, unaided and alone, had fought with and slain such another opponent.

Shar-Jatal, who ever kept a calm head, made an imperious signal to some one at the goal-end of the arena; and Gadema, perceiving the door of safety close, faltered in his stride and shouted aloud with a great despairing cry. For the merciless Tzantan was minded that he should not escape, being within the clutch of Tekthah, to whom, if he had not already confided ought, he never should.

It was no good racing. The youth desperately faced the beast; yet accustomed to be petted and pampered he was no fit combatant in such a contest, and his failing heart would not support the half-formed resolve. To the disappointment of the audience he again turned, in the very moment of time, and as the thundering auroch halted with a bound and raised his head, astonished at meeting no opposition, he beheld his victim skimming over the arena like a bird at right angles to his former course.

Most of the people, not understanding the reason for this, were astonished; for although they had heard the victim's cry and seen him falter, the glare of the sun prevented them from seeing the reason; for the door by which he might have escaped, sunk deeply, presented the same gray square whether open or shut.

How brutal was the mind of the crowd! For, with a futile hope in their pity, the youth, reaching the wall, endeavoured to climb up into safety. But handfuls of dust were cast on him and vengeful epithets shouted on his luckless head; clubs beat his poor fingers to pulp, and falling back on the horns of his pursuer he was cast into the arena.

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Dazed and trembling with terror and pain the youth again fled, and the people roared to encourage him, various war-cries and the shrill whistles of certain warriors of Atala rising high above the din. Blinded and bruised he staggered on, and only by falling escaped the auroch's charge. He clutched for his knife, but it was gone; but as in that was his only hope he rose up and, running with incredible swiftness, found it.

The baffled and enraged bull was on him again, and with a shuddering cry the boy plunged the blade into his own heart, preferring to die thus; and the body that, hurled by those cruel horns, went with the rush of a missile into the crowd, was a lifeless one.

Ill would it have been for Shar-Jatal had Azta known of his treachery to the hapless boy, for methought her eyes flashed furiously now that he was dead and that she repented of such scene having transpired. Yet other events followed so rapidly that there was not much time for thought, and I perceived Rhadaman and the other conspirators to be more at ease as the time went on. And that night Targul the pipe-bearer died by violence, being secretly put away by Shar-Jatal's orders lest he might be terrified into confiding any secret to Tekthah.

There followed terrible fights between men and beasts, in which sometimes the men had arms, sometimes not; and occasionally some godlike man would rend the beasts single-handed by a wondrous exhibition of giant strength. A few, like Gadema, ended an unequal combat by an easier death than any they could receive from their brute antagonists; and at such a culmination the multitudes cried out with rage and gnashed their teeth.

Night came, ending the sports for the day and starting its own diabolical saturnalia, and in the sheer movements of crowds many were killed. The next day was the same as the first, on a grander and still larger scale; the third day was for human combats only, to finish with that foretold scene when the Champion of Atlantis should fight with an unknown person, and—

And what! What would follow? I knew not.

C A P. X I V.

THE THIRD DAY.

THE morning of the third day broke, the day of great events and great expectations. For this day was proclamation of concessions to be made to all the people by Tekthah to bind their hearts to him and keep them from following after Huitza; and it was to be of great moment to Rhadaman and a turning-point of many things. For this day had many hearts waited, and it had come—and now is it gone, gone by afar and for ever.

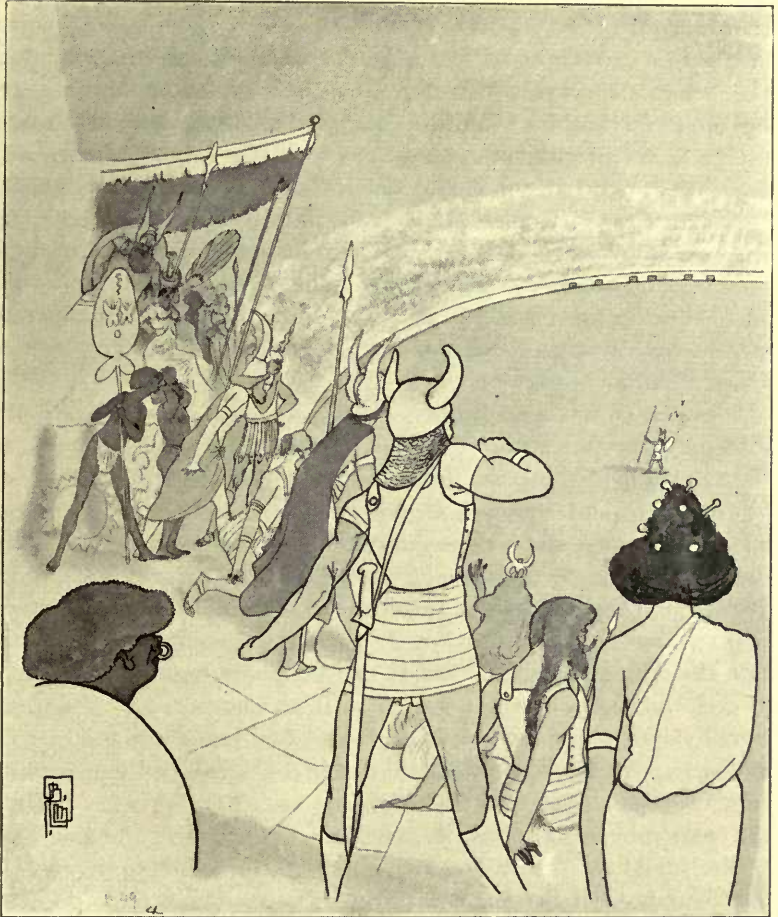
How eager they were in their strength and wickedness, those lusty ones who watched the arena, where men wrestled in oiled nakedness, armed or weaponless! Huge spears, hurled by Titanic arms with the force of thunderbolts, smote through four-fold shield and softer body, and stood smoking out behind, to the delight of the populace. Troops of warriors joined furious battle, and slings sent stones flying unseen, that sent horrid splashes of blood and brains spattering about. A few noted champions engaged many or fought one another, and the war-cries of various tribes arose shrill and long from the excited audience. Slaves and captives were butchered wholesale; smashed, stabbed, gashed, thrust through, strangled and broken by their savage and horrible opponents, who were of the race of their conquerors.

My heart sickens now to think of that carnival of horror which I perceived for the first time; but what power could have stopped so great a deed? And I also hoped for something, I knew not what, to happen after this dreadful fête.

At length came the concluding ceremony of the games, which sadden me to think of, and I looked to see now what I should see. This was the challenge of the Champion of Atlantis to dispute his right by single combat to the title.

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I understood this was, as a rule, an empty ceremony. A captain advanced to the centre of the arena and in a stento-



A GREAT SENSATION PASSED THROUGH THE IMPERIAL THRONG.

rian voice announced that the Lord Rhadaman, first-born of the King of the Earth, and Tzantan of the armies of Atlantis, desired to be known as Champion, and challenged all or anybody to

dispute the title by trial of single combat. Then, after a silence, the prince took the stand of the retired herald and was blessed by Acoa, and that ended it.

But this time, as Azta had said, a man entered from an opposite direction to that from which the herald had come, dressed in equal style; and, in the dead silence that followed the pompous speech, declared, in a voice that could be heard by all the astonished multitude, that there was one who would do battle in dispute of such title.

Tekthah started, and a great sensation passed through the Imperial throng, while all the conspirators believed themselves to be discovered, and this to be the commencement of their doom. I perceived Azta to pale and catch her breath, and a vast bewilderment seized all, who marvelled what manner of man it might be who dared defy the mighty Chieftain, son of great Tekthah!

I saw a dark frown gather on the Tzantan's brows, and the thought that this was the end before the beginning of an evil and bloody march to the throne, lay heavy on him as he rose up and shook his great body, looking steadily round on the warriors and princes about him. For a moment I perceived it was in their minds to do instantly some desperate deed; yet nought had transpired to show that the conspiracy against the sire was suspected, save the sacrifice of Gadema; and Rhadaman believed that if the plot was known and he had to die, this fashion would be as well as another, and if not, all would come as he believed; and no good could come of a wild uprising. As he passed Azta he said in a voice of menace and angry despair, yet withal breathing a savage pride: "Thou wilt remember! Thou shalt be Tizin of Atlantis!"

She nodded. The eyes of all were directed to a spot in the Circus, whence came, through that door that doomed Gadema to death, a tall figure. Completely hidden by his armour from any recognition, he carried spear, sword and shield, and stalked to the centre of the arena, casting a long, slow stare round the sea of faces.

A dense silence reigned, broken only by whispered guesses as to whom this might be. Now, facing him, Rhadaman ap-

peared, and immediate comparisons and notes were made and bets exchanged.

The combatants appeared to be equally matched, and the gaping crowds noted it the while they joyfully prepared to watch the unexpected treat. Both of towering and goodly proportions, splendidly limbed and of tremendous power, they were clad completely in armour, and the helmets had visors that hid the features,—Rhadaman's overshadowed by the golden vulture-wings, the stranger's topped by the horns of the buffalo. Over their shoulders hung the enormous round shields, ponderous and weighty, but on the stranger's was no token to disclose who he might be, and none could guess save at hazard. The visor of his helmet was but the leathern shield of the common soldier, but his manner and bearing proclaimed a high birthright.

At a flourish of trumpets the heralds withdrew and left the arena clear for the rival Champions; and looking at Azta, I saw her gaze on the stranger with her yellow eyes afire, her lips drawn tight over her teeth, and her hands clenched to her bosom as though to still the heart whose beatings I could almost perceive.

In a deathlike silence the duellists faced one another. Then, both turning, strode fifty paces apart and struck their spears into the earth; and again facing, drew their swords and advanced with uplifted shields.

At the display of knowledge as to the etiquette of the duel on the part of the stranger a murmur arose. The Imperial party leaned forward on their couches, watching anxiously, Azta with the look on her face that she wore while she read the vision. The combatants slowly circled the one round the other, watching for the slightest opportunity to direct a blow, yet Rhadaman seemed overbearing and confident, knowing the eyes of his fondly-imagined mistress were upon him.

He suddenly leaped towards his opponent, and quick as lightning his great blade circled and cut upward; with equal rapidity it was arrested on the opposing shield, and he sank down to escape a deadly sweep that flashed in an arc of light over his own buckler. With a shout he leaped up and swung his sword, it hovering in its mortal dartings right, left and in light-

ning circles; and rapid strokes were given and parried, the swords looking like lightning flashes; and the thud and clang rose fast and loud in the intense silence.

I saw wagers being given and taken quickly as the stranger's prowess became greatly apparent to all, but over the crowd a vast silence lay for the most part. So great a display of swordsmanship had never before been witnessed, and all trembled to perceive an unknown champion in their midst who could thus stand up against Rhadaman.

An upward cut from the unknown warrior was followed instantaneously by a manœuvre so rapid that scarce an eye perceived the masterly stroke that lopped one of the high wings from his opponent's helm and crushed down the other one. At the sight a subdued shout arose and rolled like thunder through the crowds; half of interest, half of involuntary dismay. The populace remembered the legends of gods fighting on Earth, and although they worshipped such with much joyfulness and sacrifice of the blood of men, they did not profess any wish to risk such an experiment as having one as a ruler, now that such contingency appeared possible. But their interest was quickly absorbed in the rapid play of blade and shield as the giants fought with labouring breath.

Presently blood flew into the air in a red flying circle from a whirling blade, and a murmur burst forth like the sound of a stormy wind as every man bared his teeth and drew his breath over them with a hiss. With anxiety they watched, hoping their champion would finally win, for no one knew what the other portended, nor indeed did they care to know. And the greater the prowess of the stranger became apparent, the less the people loved to perceive it, and the wildest guesses were made as to whom it might be who thus dared their best warrior to single combat in their very midst. Would that Huitza were here to engage the mighty champion!

Untiringly the combatants fought, their dreadful blows falling with a might that caused wonderment at their being withstood. The Tzantan retreated back to where his spear was standing, and suddenly reaching round, plucked the huge staff from the earth, changing his sword to the hand behind the shield. Before

his opponent could move to avoid the dreadful weapon it fell on him like a thunderbolt, driving him to the earth under his transfixed shield.

A deafening roar of relief broke from the vast concourse. Tekthah rose to his feet with a great pride in his first-born, but a cry broke from Azta, a sound of indescribable emotion.

The triumphant chieftain rushed on his fallen foe, and the shouts gave sudden place to hysterical silence. If this were a god, now let him show his power! And it was so that before the vengeful sword of Rhadaman could fall, a mighty sword-sweep from the prostrate unknown one shore off a foot at the ankle and bit into his other leg, so that he fell on the other's shield.

Triumph was turned to dismay, victory to direst uncertainty, as the transfixed warrior rose up, and shaking off shield and spear stood erect and apparently unhurt.

Rhadaman swept out at him in like fashion with his blade, but this the stranger avoided by an upward spring; yet not altogether, for a sandal flew off and a red stream of blood gushed from the wounded foot.

The fallen Tzantan crouched behind his shield, and the Imperial party groaned; yet not so did Azta, but gazed in marble silence. A hush as of death fell over the vast crowds, as with suspended breath they crouched in nearly uncontrollable excitement, craning their necks and exposing their teeth.

There was a stir in the Imperial party, hasty consultations and violent gestures. Over the crowds swayed a sound like the sound of a storm in the great forests, as they watched and speculated while Tekthah hastily discussed if the usual law of fight to a finish should be permitted. Whereat a smile passed across the Tizin's fateful countenance, serene and deadly.

The stranger allowed no time for such argument. In turn wielding his spear, the dreadful weapon transfixed the Tzantan's shield through the centre of the solar ornament and bored the sevenfold mighty buckler with irresistible force. Pierced through, Rhadaman leaped up and fell back with a groan, and the noise of his fall was as of a tower falling. Yet did he struggle up with the blood bursting from his mouth and deluging him from his beard, but it was his last move.

Quick as the vivid lightning smote the sword, and the head with its battered golden helmet leaped from his shoulders and fell, rolling and jumping, and spouting blood among the masses of released hair that flew with its circling like a veil about it. The giant body fell heavily, and the gushing blood rushed from the arteries in red rivers.

Not a sound was heard. Curiosity, intense and terrific, overcame all other considerations, and now it would be for the mighty conqueror to disclose himself. So intense was the silence that it became oppressive, and several women fainted. Tekthah watched with a terrible light in his eyes, the veins swelling on his temples and his hair seeming to bristle as he looked on that tall warrior who had slain his first-born, the only pillar between himself and Shar-Jatal, whom he began to fear.

With foot on his opponent's chest, the conqueror leaned on his red blade, as though enjoying the tension of the waiting hosts; and, not suffering himself to notice his wounded foot, repeated the long stare with which he had entered into their presence. To some it appeared to be menacing, to others arrogant, and all nearly cried out with the torment of waiting his disclosure.

Slowly he loosened the visor, and, allowing his weapon to fall on his antagonist's corpse, with both hands he lifted the horned helmet. And now, as, according to the fashion of the Atlantean warriors, he had wrapped his mane and beard about his neck for an additional protection, these masses fell loose; and as he raised his face to the vast assemblages the light glinted redly on his tresses, and a shout that rent the skies and shook the earth arose, a roar of joy and relief and enthusiasm:

“Huitza! Huitza! The god has returned!”

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THE CHILD OF DOOM.

COMING in such manner the hero returned, supported by the love and strengthened enthusiasm of the people; and without the walls lay his army, a great part of which, disguised, was among the crowding thousands in the Circus.

Acoa blessed the prince with impassioned fervour, proclaiming him Champion; and now indeed the fires in the mountains ceased, so that every one believed the Tzantan to be a God in truth.

The games and sacrifices were over and the crowds returned to their own lands and cities, confident that now their savage enemies would be swept from their frontiers and the land resume its proud status again under the general command of the popular warrior. There were many who declared that the Tzan should abdicate in his favour, for his supremacy had only been by the voice of the nation, enthusiastic over a warrior who had made the Empire and founded cities. Yet many again loved Tekthah for the sake of the old days; and although the Chieftain had sunk into the luxurious and overbearing Emperor, he was still the grand old warrior who had made Atlantis what it was.

In Tek-Ra Noah and his family rejoiced greatly that things were thus, for Huitza was a friend to Ham, who was held as hostage in Tekthah's palace. Yet would not the governor permit such outrageous doings in celebration as the people wished to indulge in, and they hated him and discussed a way to rid themselves of the entire family who forsook not the worship of Jehovah nor leaned to lewdness and unholy conduct. For as much as possible Noah prevented their evil doings, by which he raised against him a bitter annoyance.

Now Tekthah was greatly disturbed at the success and popu-

larity of Huitza, for he believed him to be a plotter at the sovereign power, and disquieting rumours regarding many wishes for his abdication reached his ears. The jealousy of his son and the wrath at his conquest over Rhadaman lingered with a bitter feeling; a vast annoyance that the daring warrior had had the audacity to present himself—a renegade—before a justly incensed sire, and in that presence to slay the firstborn of the Empire, which he believed to be the only bar to his rebel ambition.

The old warrior began to perceive his position insecure to an excess, and a feeling of furious contempt for the nation and rage against this man seized him, the more so that he believed Azta to greatly favour him, for which also he hated her.

Nor was Shar-Jatal less annoyed, for he believed this man would, with sovereign power, seize the hearts of the people so that any attempt to remove him would be dangerous. Therefore while Tekthah yet held power he pressed him for an answer concerning his post of power next to himself. And it came that Tekthah likewise looked to him as his tool, for he knew him to be unscrupulous, and ready to undertake any underhand work to his own advancement; and notwithstanding that Huitza was his son first-born by the Tizin Atlace (as he believed), he hated and feared him, and preferred that Shar-Jatal should hold power before him.

So to this bad man he confided his fears, reminding him that the Tzantan had many and influential friends; the Tizin, Mehir, Mico, Acoa, some of his brothers, and many others, among whom was Ham; which one, as concerned one of their larger cities, was very powerful in such a case.

And to him Shar-Jatal propounded a plan, speaking in questioning metaphor until he perceived that the Tzan fully understood the grave campaign; when he placed before him a horrid scheme that should strike terror to the hearts of all who dare cross the path of Tekthah, and seat him more firmly on the threatened throne.

Now to my Love had been born a little son, for whom she claimed the Tzan as sire, he being ignorant to a great degree of myself, nor imagining the love I had for Azta, and forgetting in the number of his mistresses that she never suffered him.

Yet was this offspring of our love a wonder to both of us, being hermaphrodite and larger than ordinary babes, growing also prodigiously and of a strange beauty, giving promise of a brilliant career and raising fresh fears also in Tekthah's breast. For knowing (and fearing far more than he knew) of the Tizin's regards for Huitza, he dreaded him the sire, and greatly feared so powerful a combination. And in truth the child certainly bore a great resemblance to the Tzantan, having ruddy hair, which was an unusual thing; but Tekthah dared not openly interfere with the mother, knowing by many rumours of her strange powers. So to Shar-Jatal he intrusted all the carriage of the wishes of his heart; and the evil man, who had long wished in secret to possess so rare a beauty as the Tizin, vowed to also remove her and the child from the Imperial path.

Therefore, in pleasing expectation Tekthah walked in his gardens, and I perceived how bloody a man he was and by what unscrupulous means he would secure his position. Through his expanded nostrils he inhaled the air in large draughts, and felt with pride the still vast muscles of his arms, the while he laughed in his throat and anon cursed Shar-Jatal in no measured terms, vowing to raise his own son Tala to the chief power. Which one hated the People's Representative, who was a rival to the affections of his half-sister Semaia, among many others.

Azta, walking with her little child and old Na, perceived him in such mood and would have turned away, but the old lion motioned her to him.

"Ha!" he said in a great voice, "a brave whelp! a worthy offspring of our union, O Love. After what style is he named?"

"He is called Toltiah," said Azta, her curious and terrible eyes rivetted on her lord's with half a menace in them; so that even in his present mood he felt uneasy.

"Another strengthener to our hands, fair mistress; in these days of many rumours the Throne hath need of support; what thinkest thou?"

He tried to terrify her with his presence and bearing, and the pointedness of his remark; but her expression faltered not.

"Does Tekthah hearken to rumours?" she asked sneeringly.

"Keep thy tongue more governed, woman!" cried the Tzan, with roused ire, "else remember Faël!"

She gave him one long scathing glance of deadly challenge and strode away with the child Toltiah and the old slave. To her arbour she went, where now I lay involved in a purple cluster of fruit, and reclined on her couch, playing with the plump creature as a tigress would play with her kitten, and decorating his hair with sartreel flowers with a vast weird pride.

"How like thou art to *him!*" she laughed, yet with a tone of savagery; "yet why is he returned, and to conquer thus? O heaven-born whelp, what will come to thee? Is thy path a long march of blood, my baby, to reign after me o'er all the Earth? Little one, little one, would it have been better hadst thou never been born at all?"

Entranced with her beauty I appeared before her, and rising up, she held forth the child towards me, her eyes full of a great pride and joy. I took it in my arms and gazed with delight into its features that were framed with beautiful curls like unto Azta's, its eyes being also like hers, while the large, full limbs gave promise of a great stature beyond the common.

"Truly has our love been blessed," I said; and putting an arm round Azta, I drew her down beside me into the couch, seating the child on my knee.

"How greatly I love thee, my Love!" I cried with joy, "and for thy love to me shall come power on earth. Before the child lies a great future, when he stands the King of men, leader of warriors and maker of Empires when Tekthah is dead; and thou and I, Love, will ever live together and I will show thee more than ever thou dreamest of or ever could imagine. Yet, Azta, troubles will come, and woe is me that I love thee so well, for I fear greatly. Nay, gaze not so on me with those eyes of fire, for perchance my might can prevail; and much have I been thinking of late, and great distances have I travelled, such as thou wouldst estimate. Leagues to the North, where lands are that thou knowest nought of; lands where the everlasting ice covers vegetation that once bloomed tropical before the hand of Jehovah turned the World of Earth, pivotted on its axis, and covered the poles with Death; where the bones of

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unknown fearful animals are buried forgotten, the embryo forms of living creatures that lived before Man was."

She lay on my breast and looked up at me in wonder, holding one of Toltiah's little hands in hers; and in the background old Na hovered uneasily, as she ever did when I was near, not comprehending my nature and the manner of my appearances.

And my mind being troubled concerning the council between Tekthah and the People's Representative, I told to Azta all I had heard concerning her and the child; whereat she looked now troubled and now scornful by turns. For concerning herself she feared not, yet knew that Tekthah feared the child because of the mystery of his birth and the reason that she was his mother and bore no regard to himself. She resolved to send away the child Toltiah, but herself refused to shun the impending doom, yet why I did not guess, believing it to be but her recklessness. And distressed by such determination I unfolded to her the manner of arresting an assault by the power of volition applied in opposition, that no mortal might lay a hand on her if she willed it not; for already she possessed great power of her eyes. To this end I bade her look upon me, and gazed into her eyes so that her spirit came forth, and in an intense concentration of feelings showed her wonders that caused a cessation of carnal life with a lightning increase of perception, seeing the new power rushing in her veins, potential and fearful.

She gave a little laugh and stretched herself. "Now am I powerful indeed!" she cried arrogantly.

"Nay, my dear Love, boast not thyself," I implored her: "I have not done well to show thee this thing, yet of my great love for thee I did it. But beware how thou usest thy power, for toleration is the art of God."

And that night was a great feast proclaimed, and all the army within Zul was to be fêted. But Azta, with all a mother's love, anxious for her baby, determined to send away Toltiah to Tek-Ra, and place him under the protection of Noah until such time as she should send for him, yet in sorrow, for she loved not such parting. Nevertheless she sent him with Na, and a strong escort under Nahuasco went with them, which one

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was well entrusted of the Tizin, being chief of her guards. Him she gave many gifts to, and on his sword the warrior vowed to stay by the young prince and devote his life to him; and also to deliver the message to the governor that this charge placed within his walls was born of Heaven and would one day become an avenger on the nation for their sins and again raise the altars of Jehovah.

And such I also fondly dreamed, yet forgot that no good could be begotten of sin. And in after days Na returned to Azta with comforting assurances, for she could not live apart from her mistress whom she had nursed from her infancy.

C A P. X V I.

THE FEAST OF DEATH.

IMMENSELY grand was the scene that night in the Hall of Feasting. How bright the flaring torches supplied the last light of Earth that so many eyes of the assembled nobles would ever see again! For on that night the bloody plan of Tekthah and Shar-Jatal would be consummated, but none save themselves and their ministers knew that it was as yet the appointed occasion; not I myself even. For myself, I was blinded to affairs of Earth that I would not undertake save for my own pleasure, and perceived nought unusual in such a proceeding.

Below Azta reclined the one in whose honour the feast was given—the Tzantan Huitza, who, in full panoply of war, compelled the admiration of all eyes by his majestic figure and princely bearing. Yet among his brothers was not wanting jealousy, and I knew that Tekthah and Shar-Jatal hated him. And, although lost in contemplation of the coloured throngs and diverted by the subdued roar of conversation and music and the myriad odours of the flower-decked board, gradually over my mind spread a presentiment of impending doom, so strong and terrible that I nearly cried out for fear, yet could not, for my speech was taken from me. I noticed that many of Tekthah's mistresses and sons were absent, and I knew that I was to watch a fearful deed of sin that need not have been; and to look upon a direful wrong of Earth that my vacillating policies permitted, unchecked by aught of Heaven; and yet, ah God! to write it . . . a great thrill of triumph ran through me at the thought of my great rival's death. But for an instant lasted that awful jubilation that branded me a murderer and brought such punishment, and then, with a wondrous horror I looked around over the torch-lighted scene, wild, barbaric, immense, and

noted sadly how the Tizin's eyes did feast themselves on the great man below her, yet with a weird unrest, and that Shar-Jatal ate with haste next to him. With a great perception I knew that I looked upon a feast where black Death sat by Tekthah with sword uplifted to fall, and in the dancing shadows I saw forms of horror that brooded over the company; and among them stood the dread Accuser. My soul cried on Acoa, trusting to him with a great longing to appear; and then in mute agony, abashed at my position, to Heaven.

Yet all those mortals appeared happy and at ease, and I knew that in the market-place the troops were carousing. Mehir reclined in happy enjoyment of the plenteous fare, slashing with his sword a huge joint on which to regale himself; Sada, talking earnestly to the abstracted Shar-Jatal, seemed absorbed but in him, on whom Semaia flashed evil glances: Amal, Colosse, Nezca, Mico—all looked indifferent. Yet methought the weird features of the sorceress Pocatepa were alive with interest, and her black eyes looked devilishly to where, through the lurid mist behind the Tzan, gleamed arm and buckler and flashing helm.

The conversation grew louder, as was its wont, while the slaves distributed the contents of the immense bowls of wine round the board, drunken bursts of laughter and occasional shouts proclaiming the usual results of its progress. The red mist gathered in the roof until to me the hall seemed hung with a horrid cloud of human blood, and beneath swayed the coloured mantles with the gems and armour gleaming among them, like sparkles of light in a sea of autumn leaves through which peered white faces with their strange spiritual eyes.

I felt as though but two people lived in full enjoyment of intellect to watch the throng—myself and Tekthah, looking as in a dream on the mass of living colour—and I glanced up to where the Tzan sat, grim, terrible and without movement, beneath the Solar crown of State.

Suddenly he clapped his hands, and instantaneously with the sound a huge spear whizzed and buried itself in Huitza's broad back, coming with a rush of blood through his chest.

With an agonized roar he staggered up; and save but for a

piercing scream from Azta a horrid silence fell, as with startled eyes all gazed at the stricken hero risen to his godlike height with the murderous weapon balanced through his body, his own spear in his hand.

"Thou old traitor!" he gasped, turning on the sire; and raising his own mighty weapon hurled it towards the Tzan. But the bolt drove through a Captain of the guard who came toward him, and rolled him, spouting blood, on to Tekthah; while the hero sank in death at Azta's feet.

Simultaneously with this attack Shar-Jatal had thought to do similarly with Mehir, but, whether warned by instinct or impelled by fate, the imagined victim rolled over in time to avoid the spear-thrust, that, dashed upon the floor, shattered the weapon at the binding of the metal and sent the shaft whizzing and spinning among the viands.

The murderer uttered a curse and turned to fly, fearful of the wrath of the giant; but Mehir was too quick for him, and bounding to his feet with a shout, as cries and shrieks rent the air from all quarters, he caught the treacherous man by the knees and hurled him at an advancing rush of spearmen, who were swept off their feet by this tremendous missile.

The hall was in instant uproar. The slaves cried out and shrieked with terror, the fan-bearers casting down their heavy fans and running in all directions, and those which bore the shields covering their bodies with them as they ran. At that moment the High Priest of Zul rushed in, dishevelled, with his long white locks streaming and his yellow robe flying around him like a cloud. He appeared to see nothing as he hastened through the shouting crowd, but pressed to where Huitza lay with his head on Azta's lap, and with a terrible cry, sank on his knees beside him.

Screams of wild terror arose, and vengeful shouts, as through the heavy odorous atmosphere flew hurled joints and great amphoras, spears and human bodies, blood, bones, limbs, brains. From peace the scene had changed with terrible suddenness to war and murder; and as warriors, fully armed and harnessed, rushed in from all sides, the torches were swept from their metal buckets either purposely or accidentally, and huge forms

plunged and wrestled in semi-gloom in lakes of wine and hot blood and heaps of smashed bowls and mingled viands.

Piercing shrieks of women rose above the din, and the echoing roar of the lions, who were excited by the noise, added its thunder to the storm of sounds. By the light of one or two torches left burning, fearful scenes were enacted; spears transfixed the swaying bodies, and great stone and metal axes crashed through skulls and smashed bones, witnessed in terrific pantomime through the awful twilight. As many as could find the exits, fled; and many, lying down, pulled the dead or dying bodies of others over themselves, hoping so to obtain immunity from the sweeping butchers.

Upon Azta, sitting terrified but calm, a huge slave rushed; but with half the leg of an ox she felled him to the ground at her feet. Acoa, his head buried in his mantle, sat regardless of the terrors around him, as one himself dead, and to my mind came a great consolation at the thought of Toltiah being safe and far from this dreadful seat of sin.

The sounds were atrocious, and a rush of combatants swept Azta and Acoa violently apart from one another and the corpse of Huitza. I took my Love by the hand, more clearly now perceiving what to do, and we went thence into the gardens, among a terrified collection of women and slaves, huddled together, most of them trembling and sobbing, their clothes gone and their bodies wounded.

Some among these latter, however, unmoved by the murderous horrors of the past few moments, were abominable in their conduct: carrying off, as the darkness allowed, some among the women whom they had long in secret regarded, seizing their tender victims with violence and smothering their cries with their hands. And that nought should come of it afterwards, and having sufficiently satisfied their lust, they stabbed them to the heart, and carrying them into the dark hall left them, cast among the dead warriors; first breaking their teeth to obtain their gems.

So, among many others, perished Teta and Semaia: so would have died proud Azta but that I stood by her, and oftentimes warded off a death that hovered nigh. Yet her wild agony of grief smote bitterly on my soul with a message I would not

hear, but that nevertheless poured burning adamant slowly into my heart with unowned pain and scathing.

And now bright lights began to flare again, as the scattered torches seized with their flaming fat upon all inflammable things. In the hall men still fought, but the soldiery had silenced most of them overcome by wine, yet nevertheless the armour they wore, protecting them from many a ghastly wound, greatly prolonged the struggle. The thick, yellow smoke from fallen torches yet unextinguished, and the pungent smell of roasting flesh where human beings burned within their fur mantles, rose above the reek of blood. The sputtering crackle and explosive sounds of bursting skulls that the flames cracked, the sharp *crick* of the heated pots and bowls, the crackling of burning bones and sizzle of flames that came in contact with moisture rose sharp above the soft moans of dying men and women too terribly hurt to cry aloud. Yet now and then some wretch hidden beneath a pile of corpses, licked by fire, would rise from the scattering heap and rush for an exit, leaping and crying out.

In a short time all human sounds ceased in the hall, for everyone there was dead; and in pools of blood, among burning rugs and broken crockery and bones and weapons they lay, the corpses of nearly four hundred human beings; and the lions, scenting the blood, roared all night long. All that could burn flared redly, and now that the need for light had gone the bright flames began to throw their tongues of fire over the scene of that carnival of Death. Running upwards upon a hanging curtain they laid hold upon the rafters of the roof, which fell crashing down and covered all with a dusty coverlet of charred wood, clay, and tiles. But by reason of its sudden fall, and being isolated, it caused no ignition to other roofs of the palace.

It was a fitting floor-piece to the horrible paintings on the walls, now more horrible by reason of gory patches and smudges and the delineations being in places destroyed by lines of smoking soot and the purifying flames; and all night long unclean dogs fought and fed and chased each other through the smoking dust, disturbed by the roar of the lions, and flung red splashes about.

The Tzan and Shar-Jatal and many other influential ones had bribed over a great part of the army to their side; and next morning a herald was sent to the legions in the Market-Place, yet heavy with great debauchery and surrounded by those bribed ones, and demanded of them a fresh oath of allegiance to Tekthah, new officers being appointed to them. For the old ones of any importance had been especially marked for slaughter, and among these was Mico, the chief of the archers. And many also of the old officers who survived were seen no more, being secretly put away. Yet the Imperial Guards, all young nobles, though serving under a captain, were in their hearts furious at the murder of many friends in that massacre; and many also, perceiving that Shar-Jatal recovered, hated him as representing in upstart guise the mass of the people, and being now appointed next in power to Tekthah. Likewise a vast feeling of insecurity was now engendered, for no one felt safe. Azta being removed to a great tower by the Representative's orders and there hidden, the rumour being spread that she was dead. Alone, with but old Na to comfort her, she remained in wild anguish, nor would permit me to approach her; so that my soul fainted within me at the thought that she believed me to be the murderer of her Love.

There was a time of danger from the enraged population, who, shocked in their luxurious habits by the news of the massacre (that was felt all over the land), gathered in crowds and had to be dispersed by force of arms, and at times even the majestic presence of Tekthah could scarce calm them. By degrees the news spread to the farthest boundaries, and then a strong rumour gained ground that their great chief would appear again, and all Atlantis grew to believe in it and look for it. Which rumour Acoa instituted and spread with furious zeal, yet in secret; and I was bewildered at the mazes of results, of plot and counterplot, vaguely perceived, yet not understood. Also I became possessed of a sad apathy, a dull heavy sorrow that dragged down my spirit, and I could not leave Azta, yet longed in vain for herself to invite me to approach her.

Tekthah was startled and appalled at the prophecy of his son's reappearance, which overcame his joy at the news of

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Azta's death and the death of Toltiah, for those detailed for this bloody deed dared not confess their errand unsuccessful. And to farther increase his uneasiness, the body of Ham, the son of Noah, could not be found, nor was any member of his family to be discovered; for they had fled under cover of the murderous attack and had gone to Chuza with the evil tidings. Which, hearing, and knowing that now Huitza was dead the people, who hated him, would rise against him, Noah fled with speed, taking all his family and the boy Toltiah; and no man knew whither he had gone.

And now Tekthah became furious and apathetic by turns, so that none cared to approach him, and lands of dead nobles and princes were suffered to remain with no master but the tribe-leaders. And in such wise had he believed he could make himself safe and unmenaced, and deal out a dire lesson to all who might cross his will and power; yet in place of living enemies arose armies of larvæ and horrid Dreams, and those days of Tekthah were terrible.

C A P. X V I I.

THE PASSING OF TEKTHAH.

THE days passed slowly and in sorrow. Superstitious and impulsive, Tekthah had repented bitterly of his fury, and now like a living presence the shade of Huitza stood above his mind and he appeared to believe more than anyone else in the legend of his reappearance; for he feared the power of Azta even in death.

But to me was the greater sadness, for a horror I could scarcely explain lay on my soul, the knowledge that I was voluntarily giving up all for what I nearly perceived to be a shadow, yet dared not dream of such. And in sad perplexity and sorrow I did but hover near my Love, to whom the Tzantan Shar-Jatal, madly desirous of possessing her, went at times and importuned, using all his courtly arts to that end. He prostrated him before her, threatened, prayed, but all in vain. To the same argument as dead Rhadaman's—"Thou shalt be Queen of Atlantis when I am Emperor"—she had answered, "Thou wilt never be the Tzan." And when, maddened by her taunts, he had rushed on her, she smote him by my arts so that he staggered back and lost all his courage.

And so she lived quietly with old Na to wait upon her, and grieved sadly; yet would make no attempt to escape because she would thereby lose all chance of power that was very dear to her, and the wild hope of vengeance.

And then I looked upon another phase. It was night on Atlantis, a dark, troubled night, where voices seemed to cry in the air and spirits floated like horrid larvæ in the atmosphere. Clouds were over the face of all the sky, and the long, flamy streamers waved like fanciful human figures from high temples, flung by the wind. The moan of the sea rose unceasing as

long billows dashed in masses of foam up the yellow beach, and the wind howled in the trees and shrieked with fearful sounds through the ghostly sartheels and swinging vines.

In the palace all was still save but for the sound of the wind that fluttered the coloured hangings in the entrances, scaring prowling dogs that had escaped the sentries' notice; which ones walked fearfully, terrified by rumours of horrid appearances within those walls where lay the Hall of Feasting in disorder and darkness, uncovered to Heaven. Therein appeared to brood the spirits of dead warriors and murdered women, and broad splashes of blood on the walls remained to speak of violence and treachery that hurried victims to hasty death, and burial scant of rites or decency. None dared feast there now, nor, unaccompanied, pass through it. Time would never cover those memories.

The palace was full of soldiers, and in the gardens the legions thronged, secretly gathered by command of Shar-Jatal and officers who were his myrmidons, great men and very influential. All were silent and stern, casting glances around as huge moths flew by or the high wind rolled the tapestry in bellying shapes. There was much trouble in those days, with promise of more to come; and as I flew, disguised in the shape of a moth, I wondered where it would all cease. Besides disquieting rumours concerning savage tribes, dangerous by reason of many of their leaders being of the Last-created race by intermarriage or the result of raids, there was the unrest of their own peoples; and such cities as had been relieved of a tyrannical lord slain in Tekthah's horrid massacre seemed to resent the idea of another being appointed, the governors of such cities secretly encouraging the feeling for their own advantage. And especially Talascan grew averse to such, and being a very powerful city, caused much uneasiness to those who considered upon it. Indeed, I perceived that now Tekthah had lost his high authority the whole land was falling to pieces in its evil, and all that was in danger of falling before now broke off and divided up into many factions. The chance I had neglected to take was gone with Huitza, and I looked in fear on a land of unchecked passions guided by a

thousand rulers whose authority was measured by their power of evil.

And I perceived that Shar-Jatal was not displeased at Noah's flight, for he had ever been a menace to such as worked evil, and under the power of Huitza would have risen in great might; and so it puzzled me that Huitza had not therefore by the grace of Heaven come to power without my aid. But I knew not the human heart, neither indeed could it well be known, and therefore I misunderstood and worked out vain imaginings. And concerning Shar-Jatal's fear of Noah, it was spread abroad that the patriarch had worshipped demons, for outside the walls of Tek-Ra lay a great machine, complete to what extent they did not know, with vast beams and cross-beams, bound with ropes of twisted gut. On which, when he was gone, the people had cast curious eyes, marvelling at its quaint construction. One man, more venturesome than his fellows, climbed into the end of the greatest beam, while six others, sweating at cross-bars secured in a rope twisting beneath their efforts, pulled the beam, with him on that end, downward, until it bent from its opposite fastenings like a great bow. And that end, where they were, giving way, the cross-bars were flung all apart, cracking skulls and backbones and flinging mangled bodies about, while the great beam shot up with a tremendous recoil, and, striking a cross-beam with a concussion that sent it hurtling among the people, hurled the wretched man upon its end with tremendous velocity nearly across the river upon whose banks it stood, killing him thereby. This was the Catapult, but as yet not recognised.

Thinking upon such things, I watched, and in the dark night heard the voices of Shades that cried out. How the Sun-spirits were fighting with the demons! Acoa on Zul's highest tower stood there with his Divinity, his body undulating and quivering like the column of flame before which he stood, his eyes flashing with mad excitement as the bright Thing swayed and leaned far out before impetuous winds, appearing as though about to leap from its pedestal and fly.

The Tzantan Ju, Chief of the Navy, was on shore to-night, against whom Shar-Jatal cherished hate and sought an evil

THE PASSING OF TEKTHAH.

pretext to destroy him, on account of his being the lawful husband of Pocatepa. He held beneath his command the crews of the Tacoatlanta and Mexteo, who were ordered to remain by their ships in the harbour. These men were more superstitious and fearful than all the rest, and wondered if any monsters, born of the storm, would terrify them with their huge bulks when they embarked again. They invoked the Spirits of Waves, whose white figures they saw of a night vanishing in smoke and spray before the wind, and the goddesses with the fishes' tails.

The archers, now under Arioch, Mico being dead, were in the gardens, and beneath the shade of one of the man-headed lions stood Shar-Jatal and Izta conversing earnestly, with their cloaks wrapped closely around them, Izta's of red, his leader's of the purple of the Imperial household to which he now aspired.

Over beyond the trees waved Zul's columnar flame, and by the fitful light of it they could perceive the High Priest. Then the howling wind ceased for an instant and a weird stillness settled down over all, causing an unknown terror, as above the palace the black sky opened and a Figure fell from it. Wan, nebulous, vast and grizzly, it moved through the air, and as, in the semblance of a human form, it sped across the great red building a sword of lightning flashed from the outstretched hand and the vision passed in the portentous majesty of WAEF, the Accuser.

The chiefs, staring at Zul, started as the blaze of light fell on their dazzled eyes, and I perceived them to be talking earnestly, nor had I unmoved seen that wondrous sight, which was observed in different quarters of the city and over all the land, causing much great terror.

Now these two evil men ceased their consultation, and orders were passed round to Tzantans and Polemarchs and sub-chiefs. Certain movements were undertaken by the troops, and the slingers and spearmen came up and lay round the palace, alert and ready for aught.

The Imperial Guards were within the buildings, and all of them were newly chosen by Tekthah for fidelity to himself,

being sons or favourites, and I perceived it was for their suppression that this great gathering was assembled.

There commenced a silent entry by many, and there was in the dark, disappearing figures a dire suggestion of horrid deeds that made me tremble. How terribly I perceived myself to be involved in all Earth's evil! Powerless to stem, unable to flee from it, I groaned. All sounds of human presences were hushed, and at times when the moon appeared (to be almost instantly hidden again), the vast dark façade of the palace seemed to give a deserted appearance to all around as it rose majestic and immobile among the swaying trees, with its great stone statues looking like mammoths in the faint light.

As in bewildered unrest I entered the building, suddenly the lions roared. The Hall of the Throne of Atlantis leaped into light as fires flared from torch and brazier all around, swiftly ignited by the twirling-sticks turned by a bow that all used to produce flames. Then all was silent again, save but the moan of the wind and the murmur of the great cat-like beasts that blinked their gleaming eyes and sighed, nor noted with any demonstrations half a score of warriors who stood on the platform below the throne, under the golden Sun that flashed back the red lights from the braziers in splendour on the marbles. These stood mute in the lurid glow of the torches that sent black shadows and bright wavering lights flitting over the floor as gusts of wind rushed through and swayed their flames. They were waiting for their leader to appear with red hands and reeking weapon, and in the silence they listened and started at every noise caused by the tempest.

A sound—another—rather felt or imagined than heard—a clash of arms—a formidable shout, “Ho, Guards!”—and the black group by the throne buried their faces in their large mantles and each man raised one hand entreatingly to the golden Sun as the lions at the doors leaped to their feet and thundered in wrath.

There was a rapid rush of feet, heavy breathings and sounds of sickening blows, the more horrid for being unseen, and as the warriors looked up, dismayed, a giant form rushed towards them between the lions, leaping towards the throne with great bounds, closely followed by other forms.

THE PASSING OF TEKTHAH.

The light flared on the streaming white hairs and the awful front of Tekthah, horribly encrimsoned; who, scattering the terrified warriors, mounted the steps and fell at the foot of the throne, where he perceived me, seated as a great moth, with a grievous look of terror and despair, for I was the Divinity of Azta.

But rising with a curse, he smote at me with his sword and then turned to face his ferocious pursuers like a lion at bay, looking eagerly to where he could hear the clash of arms and the shouts of the Guards without. In a few moments these ceased and men began to pour into the hall, while a bitter groan fell from the Tzan on perceiving such conduct. The lions roared aloud, and as though the sound were a war-cry of encouragement to himself the old warrior raised his towering form proudly and glowered over the crowd, that began to move uneasily; but the blood that fell from gaps in his head and trickled through his teeth to the platform told how sorely he had been wounded. His vast chest heaved convulsively: fury, indignation, reproachful scorn and challenge flashed from his glazing eye. His hand still held his mighty sword, crimson from hilt to point; and a dreadful sight was that godlike man, more grand in his robe of blood than ever in golden armour, a king and a warrior to the last.

Awestruck stood the silent traitrous crowd, appalled by what their word had caused, shrinking before the silent majesty that seemed to breathe a curse from Heaven on them.

Shar-Jatal, white with terror and frantic with his baffled success, yet perceived with quick diplomacy the spreading emotion, and greatly feared lest triumph should be turned into disgust in its infancy. So he raised his sword and leaped up the steps with a shout, whirling the mighty blade in circles round his head. An echoing shout answered, a roar of encouragement from those evil ones who now wished to see such horror ended, and fearing what would befall should Tekthah live.

The old warrior felt the hand of death on his heart, and perceiving he could not cope with this unwounded antagonist, he heaved up his great sword in noble wrath and hurled it towards him, crying out that he loved not to fight with a

woman; and Shar-Jatal, raising hand and blade to save himself, so turned the whirling bolt that it smote off his left hand, which fell with a spatter of blood; while the avenging sword transfixed a guard's helmet and fell with it clashing to the floor.

The maimed chief, with a great oath, swept off the head that sank in death before him, which, spinning and bounding, fell down the steps, the horrified warriors scattering before its progress.

Shar-Jatal raised his sword. In the silence that should have been broken by shouts of victory a loud clang was heard, as something that resembled a gleaming meteor fell from the ceiling.

It was the golden Sun, and a long, dismayed, shuddering sound broke from the vast assemblage now gathered, as its clanging circle hid the throne from sight, and the lions continued the reverberations with a prolonged thundrous moan.

There were many who attempted to raise it, but it resisted all their strength, and therefore the murderer, reckless with pain and annoyance, commanded them to set him upon the sacred symbol; and being raised by them, seated himself upon one of the wavy rays, lifting his blade in signal of triumph.

Yet but an angry silence ensued. Even to me it seemed a pitiful spectacle, more partaking of sacrilegious buffoonery than aught of majesty, and stood in chilling contrast to the sublime scene of the dying old hero facing their thousands so unflinchingly; and when, raised on the point of a satellite's spear to him, he held aloft the grand grim head of the man who had made their nation what it was, no sycophants' shouts could drown the long, menacing hiss that broke forth almost involuntarily, and spread over all the crowd, signifying the wrath of the Divinity of Zul.

And thus died Tekthah, Tzan of Atlantis.

CAP. XVIII.

THE HALT OF TRIUMPH.

THE land heard the news of Tekthah's death with mingled feelings of dismay, sorrow and hope. Shar-Jatal, as the Representative of the nation, was expected to do many things, but none could define their wishes.

In the Hall of the Throne, beneath the restored Sun and surrounded by his warriors, the new Tzan had been consecrated by Acoa as King of the Earth, the Solar helmet of State being placed upon his head and the orbed sceptre handed to him by the Keeper of the Throne; while, preparations being made for the same ceremony to be performed on the highest platform of the temple of Zul, the people were summoned from all over the land to attend and swear allegiance, by messengers sent by the High Priest.

Yet these messengers returned not, neither did others who were sent after them, being especially instructed by Acoa. For these preached the return of Huitza and exhorted the nation to stand from Zul, which was accursed of the gods, and warning them against the new Tzan who would vex the land. And thus from all the provinces came the murmur of rebellion, causing no small uneasiness, particularly as concerned the very strong city of Talascan in Atala, which lay upon the river Hilen and could prevent any access if the warriors of Astra on the one hand by the coast, and those of Axatlan, upon the other, were agreed in aiding them, which it seemed they were.

Dismayed and furious, the half-crowned chieftain called a council of war, and from the throne gazed over as goodly an assemblage as ever met a leader's eye, for there were all the Princes and Tzantans of Zul and the great men of the city. And also were most of the Imperial Guards attendant on him,

for such as would swear allegiance he very gladly took, yet several were secretly done away with, among whom were Tala, and Dodanim a son of Huitza, and many of the privy officers of Tekthah's household.

Stern and grim they sat, those giant warriors, formidable beings of irresistible prowess, their large, sullen eyes gazing steadily around. On the first platform next to the throne sat Acoa, which was much trusted of Shar-Jatal, and Izta, to whom was given a winged helm and the title of Chief of Armies, being also Lord of Astra aforesaid.

Without being as superstitious as Tekthah (which one was consumed in the crater of Zul by night to cause no commotion, and his ashes swept into the pit), Shar-Jatal nevertheless was afraid of many things. The falling of the golden Sun; the rumours of the passage of the nebulous Form across the palace, and the return of Huitza, beloved of the gods; the disaffection of Azco, Governor of Trocoatla and a son of Sumar, whom he nevertheless counted on, besides the uneasy feeling that he himself was unsafe,—all these things made him fear; and the loss of his hand was very grievous to him. But most he feared that rumour as to Huitza, believing it and thinking that it would corrupt all hearts from himself.

To avert this he promised from the throne great concessions to all of Zul, stirring them up in hatred against the cities, and particularly those of Atala and of Tek-Ra, whose governor, being fled, he declared to be the maker of the mischief, being straight-laced and foolish and no believer in the gods. To Izta was given the rich province of Atala, and other cities to other nobles, and to all was granted some consideration or higher position, military or civil. Yet must the land be brought under subjection, and in this the treacherous chief perceived a favourable opportunity for ridding himself farther of obnoxious ones, particularly Ju, the lord of Pocatepa.

I perceived the chiefs to be well pleased by the generosity of the new Tzan and not unwilling for war. And farther divisions were made of the establishments of many dead nobles, some of great worth; all their lands, women, slaves and riches. All the temples received munificent gifts, their priests being pliable,—

THE HALT OF TRIUMPH.

among them Mah, who held Pocatepa in his power and might now scheme afresh; and to every man in Zul was given this or that.

The rebellion of the cities caused great trouble to many, their resources being in danger by reason of it; yet the people of Zul could not be taxed as yet, which was an additional reason for war, so that the rich cities might be sacked. Yet it was a serious matter that those of Zul, although the greatest of the land, should have to cope with the thousands of Atlantis, and there were held many anxious consultations, and much time passed.

But the new ruler wished also another thing, which was to subjugate proud Azta to his will, and my resentment against him waxed great on account of this. On those days of blank horror I yet look with pain; for, amazed and terrified, I hovered in a darkness between my great passion for one who loved me not, and my rebellious feelings against Heaven. In a maze of Earthly complications I stood, not understanding, and wondering whether to aid the visionary Acoa in obtaining power, or the stern, realistic Mah; and through them right myself on the path from which I had wickedly strayed, still yearning for good.

Shar-Jatal, being so determined as I have said, betook him to the apartments of the Tizin, yet not altogether easy in his mind, remembering her power. Her he perceived, reclining on a settee, with the nurse Na at her feet, wrapped in deep thought. Great passions had made her more pale than usual; the insult of imprisonment, the conflicting wishes to escape and go to Toltiah, or to stay and scheme for power, the sorrow for Huitza's death and her regards for myself. She gazed on the chief with a thought in her strange orbs, and I perceived he liked it not; nevertheless he advanced, hiding his left arm beneath his purple cloak, a demoniacal smile wreathing his lips.

"I kneel to thee, fair Azta," he said, with feigned admiration that indeed he felt in a great measure, bowing with courtly grace as he fell on his knee.

She returned his salutation with icy condescension.

"Shall the fairest woman of Earth be content to remain hidden and alone when half the throne of Atlantis will be proud to

hail her mistress?" asked the chief; and again as in a dream I saw dead Rhadaman with the same question on his lips, and saw the same struggle in Azta's face, but with blunted feelings.

But her furious resentment against this one overcame all other feelings.

"Begone, false flatterer!" she cried in a fine passion; "what are thy promises! Have I not known thee aforesaid and seen thy smooth tongue lure victims to death? Upstart slave in the purple of thy master, liar, murderer—go!"

Old Na glanced at her fearfully as she half arose in her wrath; and I, pleased with the boldness of her who was my Love and all my hope—alas, to say thus!—came as a bright wondrous fly into the room and hovered above her, so that she looked up and smiled, yet sadly.

As one who has been smitten the Tzan stared, with parted lips, kneeling and petrified. His left arm fell involuntarily from beneath his cloak, disclosing the under robe of yellow sown with gems and golden symbols. The lady's eyes perceived the mutilation and a great sneer curled her lip.

It recovered the astounded man, and with a dreadful oath he leaped up and laid his hand on his sword-hilt.

"Art coward as well as murderer?" asked Azta, scornfully, glancing on the trembling Na, and outstretching her hand towards him so that as in obedience he stood still.

"Thou wouldst deride me, the Tzan?" he growled in fury.

"The Tzan! How did the wolf kill the lion?" she retorted.

"There were two lions, and the stronger triumphed!"

"Never were there two lions after the Lord Huitza died! and now the wolves have pulled down the old lion and the biggest wears the suffocating skin. Fly from my insulted presence, thou upstart slave!"

I wondered at her words, believing she must have some strong scheme by which she could accomplish all she wished without this man's aid. But rendered mad by her biting taunts, he drew his sword and heaved it up to smite her.

She sprang to her feet with a cry, and before her as a tower of flame I stood. The weapon, blasted to the hilt, dropped from his hand, and in a swoon the Tzan fell to the

THE HALT OF TRIUMPH.

floor with a great crash. Old Na covered her face and also fell down straightway, nor dared look up, so that none perceived by what means I conveyed my Love away.

Yet it was so that when Shar-Jatal rose up he searched every niche and corner for the Tizin and made strict enquiries of the guards concerning her, but to no purpose.

Azta was gone.

LIBER · II

AND · GOD · LOOKED · UPON
THE · EARTH · AND · BEHOLD
IT · WAS · CORRUPT · FOR
ALL · FLESH · HAD · COR-
RUPTED · HIS · WAY · UPON
THE · EARTH ·

GEN · VI · 12



C A P. I.

PREPARATIONS.

OE, Earth, for all thy rebellion and foolishness, for the trouble of to-day to ensure a result that recoils on thy head in ruins or eludes thy grasp! Builder of towers, where are all thy mighty works now, and who knows thy sons' names? Men of unsurpassed greatness were they, of godlike presence and terrible power, but

they are gone and none know of them or of manner of their passing. Only God lives on forever as at the beginning, perfect and deathless Life and Love, awful in unswerving evolution, passing onward through the centuries and long ages, sublime, remorseless.

Thee would I contemplate in wondering awe, almighty and mysterious, and feel with thrilling terror thy presence in all atoms, of brightest deeps of immense space or darkest centres of Worlds; feel thy vast Life in the subtle air and flame and the core of adamantine rocks Thine eye watches from leaf

ATLANTIS.

and stone and star, Thy voice speaks in all sounds, and I—fallen,
fallen!—tremble for ever in Thy constant and unavoidable presence.

Thee would I contemplate when soft night throws her gemmy



WEEP WITH WONDERING ANGUISH THAT EARTH CAN ATTRACT A SOUL BY ONE BEWILDERING ATOM.

veil high over the Earth, and hear in the cool depths, unhindered
by details, the music of Thy Life that never sleeps, and weep
with wondering anguish that Earth can attract a soul by one
bewildering atom.

PREPARATIONS.

Yet is sorrow and remorse unceasing, and for ever and ever might we fitly bewail our sins; but thereby we should not profit others, for each soul stands alone in its blindness and will not see. And my Love, for whom I gave up all, could not perceive until the Earth had passed and left the spirit free; and I know not if my state would have been different if she had. O Azta!

There were long seasons that passed, and many who prepared themselves in them for calculated results; for after one great blow had been struck there would not be left to the vanquished aught but surrender. And thus they of Zul, and especially many princes who wished to supplant Shar-Jatal, yet being fearful of one another, spent many months in great works of war, manufacturing engines to batter in walls, and a great number of kites wherewith to carry up injurious things to drop over the enemy. Enormous quantities of all manner of arms were made, of swords, spears, bows and arrows, bucklers and helmets. And as particularly Talascan was wished to be seized, the warships Tacoatlanta, Mexteo and others were looked to, and more built; for the city was most pregnable from the river front on the Hilen river, and was a most strong centre for warlike operations. The idols were greatly propitiated to grant success, the fish-god by the waterway, which held in its hands the model of the Tacoatlanta, being much entreated of all seamen. Acoa advised long and careful preparations, and greatly hindered many things by omens and feigned messages from the gods; also causing an irksome taxation to be put on the people, so that, in spite of the need, Shar-Jatal became unpopular.

Now Noah had fled with his family afar from Tek-Ra to the mountains beyond Talascan, and hid himself so that none ever chanced on him; to where also I conveyed Azta. And there was with them Nahuasco with his guards and the child Toltiah, which one rapidly increased in stature and beauty and loved the practice of arms, being held in some awe by reasons of his strange monstrosity and the swiftness of his growth, having a voice that was of a mighty volume yet as musical as a woman's, and combining also a giant's strength and rudeness of arrogance with a feminine grace and persuasiveness that

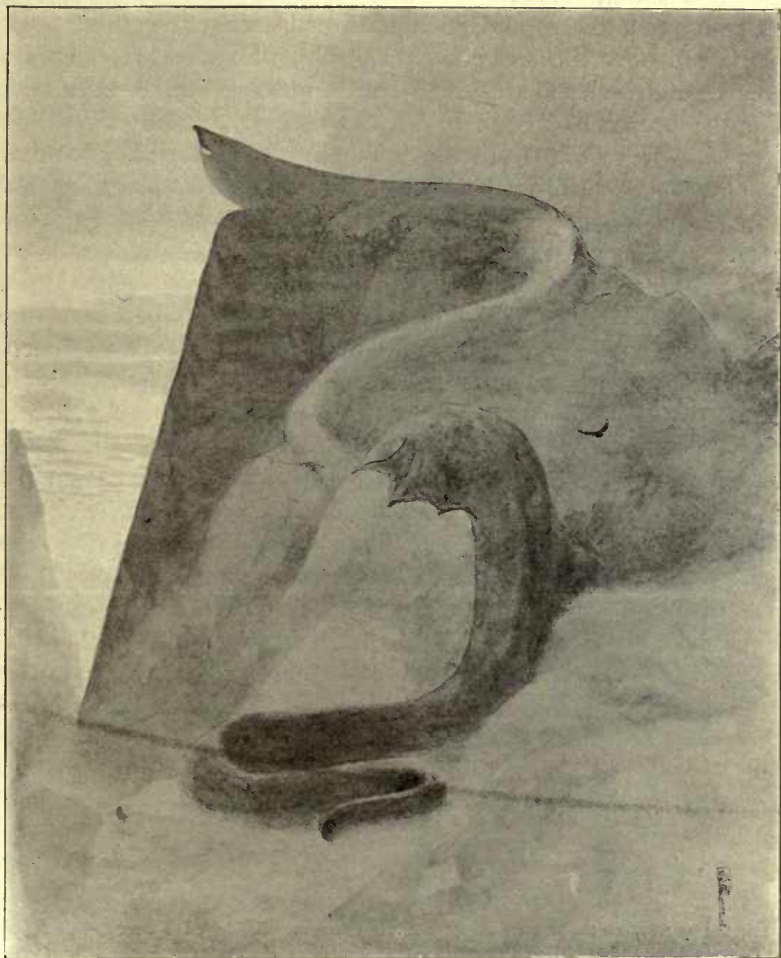
caused him to be beloved and feared after an unearthly fashion. To the woman Susi, who was as a mother to him, he bore a great regard, and Azta loved the fair woman for her kindness to him, and wept over the boy and ever gazed rapturously upon him. Which thing was a great sorrow to me, for he was wondrous like to Huitza; yet to my Love I did not show the sorrow in my heart. But oft I looked upon the fair Susi, and envied her lord the possession of such an one! Why was not my Love as this? And yet I too clearly perceived that it was not through her that I suffered, but through my own headstrong wantonness.

To Talascan occasionally went messengers from Noah, to strengthen the report that Huitza should return, and to perceive how the feelings of the people ran. And there was much information known respecting the great preparations of Zul for the subjugation of the land, so that all feared exceedingly; nevertheless the cities had agreed to fight for freedom and to aid one another, and the smaller cities and villages had been deserted, their inhabitants aiding to swell the fighting strength of the larger ones. Yet what would have come had there been separate governments granted to them then I know not, save much dissension, and Zul would have ever boasted herself ruler of all, and become paramount by sin and by all the great ones flocking thither.

Now concerning Talascan, the city lay on the farther bank of the Hilen river from Zul, and behind rose the peaks of a great volcanic range of mountains, trending to the west, then south-west and south. Their lower hills at intervals lay on the river banks, enclosing level tracts of land covered with mighty trees, the territories of Atala and Axatlan. Through a natural valley in the highlands of Astra, whose northern boundary was thus terminated by it, the Hilen flowed into the sea with a swift current, a great span in width at its mouth, between two tall cliffs called the Gates of Talascan, and inland its tributaries watered a great tract of country. Axatlan lay farther to the west than Atala, and held the burning mountain that so affrighted the people, where the great serpent Nake was

PREPARATIONS.

believed to keep watch over mines of gems and quarries of red stone which were of the Lord Nezca. *z*



WHERE THE GREAT SERPENT KEPT WATCH OVER MINES OF GEMS.

z Mr. A. W. Buckland in his "Anthropological Studies" gives most curious and interesting information concerning serpents and their worship. There must, as in other curious things, be something to give rise to the legends concerning the mystic creature, when we notice the strange persistency with which he and the gods, of whom he is the emblem, are associated with agriculture, wealth, power, honor,

Under the shadows of the mountains, surrounded by forests, streams and meadows and with the great river surrounding it on three sides, Talascan was a beautiful and healthy city, raising its walls and towers and columns from a sea of verdure.

Chanoc was the Governor of Atala, who also loved Huitza greatly and believed that he would appear as the rumours said. For the prince had gone to Talascan secretly and declared that he would free them from the bondage of Rhadaman when that he had captured Zul for himself. He commanded them to spread no rumour of his presence there and to disclaim all knowledge of it; and many of their warriors went with his legions. He also promised to give the Talascans freedom on condition that they would always help him if required; for he perceived the natural strength of the place and how it could be stoutly defended, having, as it were, the river for a wall; the which could only be forded by an army many miles up above the city, being too mountainous below for such. The Talascans, who were hardy and brave, would aid him greatly; and thus, exacting a solemn oath from Chanoc and the great chiefs of the city that they would ever be faithful to him, he had gone forth; and the next news they heard of him, which thing many also perceived with their own eyes, was that he had returned to Zul and had slain the Lord Rhadaman in single combat.

The people were in high spirits, but the following news of Huitza's death damped them. But Chanoc was ambitious and stirred up the people to resistance, sending a secret invitation for all who had loved the prince and wished for freedom to come to them.

Still they feared the wrath of Tekthah, yet were they not

gold and gems; and as Mr. Buckland says, the deeper we delve into this mysterious past, the more numerous and important do these serpent legends become, bringing to our view whole tribes who were supposed to be half serpents—kings and heroes of semi-serpentine descent, and gods either serpentine in form, or bearing the serpent as a sacred symbol; and it is a strange fact that all these gods and men thus singularly connected with the serpent have *always* some inexplicable relation to precious stones, the precious metals, the dawn of science and of agriculture.

But this state of serpent-religion would appear to have developed later, among mythic histories of the Deluge and the legendary demi-gods, and a point might well be argued as to the connection of serpent with seraph.

PREPARATIONS.

also a great community? There were many mighty men there, for Rhadaman, after the dreadful raid spoken of by Noah to avenge resistance to his tax-collectors, had made great concessions to induce many to go there. For from Atala came the beautiful scented woods, colouring woods and earths, great quantities of gold and very handsome women, and much fish from the river. Yet many feared another raid, remembering the day when the legions of Rhadaman made a furious onslaught; when the huge bulk of the Tacoatlanta, crashing through their little fleets up to the landing-stage, disgorged its freight of fierce warriors, and their streets ran red with blood. That day the war-ship lay in a red harbour, and only night put a stop to the fratricidal carnage.

Then came a rumour that Huitza would return again in the flesh, and after, that Tekthah was dead and Shar-Jatal reigned in Zul. So that every one was glad, by reason of the usurper's popularity. Yet messengers arrived from the great High Priest Acoa, commanding them to resist such an accession, saying that Shar-Jatal was accursed of Zul in that he had murdered the Tzan, and exhorting all to unite against him and wait for Huitza to appear. Whereupon was much bewilderment, and the messengers remained, as also did others; and then arrived the news that Izta had been created Lord of Atala. Now Izta's reputation was an evil one, and, Tekthah dead, (whom all feared yet revered,) it was determined that the greater cities should remain free, offering to shelter and protect the inhabitants of the smaller ones.

How greatly was I bewildered with it all! For Nezca sent by stealth to Axatlan, bidding his people defend the river and he would make to them great concessions, and Azco stirred up the new Tzan's own land of Trocoatla to resistance. All the country rose in wrath against the Representative, who was as one of themselves and had dared to do this thing, yet feared the reports of the preparations being made against them.

All was forgotten save war, and evil enjoyment while yet there was time for such; but long times passed and nothing happened, only went on manufactures of weapons and of all sorts of arms, and all manner of foul preparations were placed

in bowls on the walls to hurl upon the besiegers when they came. Some cities surrounded themselves with moats filled with water, one beyond another, others with barricades of combustibles that could be fired by flaming arrows from the walls, while nomad tribes were loaded with gifts to harry the enemy when he appeared and give timely warning of such appearance.

Chanoc barricaded the river front and constructed in the Hilen below the city a vast boom to prevent the warships coming up, and the rows of idols on the walls were entreated to prevent mishap, for all cities had these hideous creations along the fortifications.

All these things I saw, and wondered which should conquer in the end; and in these years Azta's love for Toltiah grew and increased with his growth, and I knew that it was spoken that he should be Lord of Atlantis. Me she suffered as much as I would, yet I knew in her heart she loved me not, and oftentimes I wished that I had never seen her; while her nature, exasperated by conditions that caused me to despair in silence, grew violent and outrageous. But her beauty chained me with the chains of Hell and I could not depart from her now; knowing that I never should had she loved me, and only would do so because her heart was turned from me. I had sinned deeply and could but wait events; which indeed were interesting while they lasted, for none know all the Future save God alone.

And Toltiah grew more fond than was seemly of strong drink and was also enamoured of the smoking-herb. By reason of my virtue he had great knowledge of hidden things, pondering deeply over all the instruction of Noah. And many things such as should not be known he imagined, and was much exercised in his mind concerning them; searching into such that concerned life and death, yet not with reverence, but with curiosity. He grew tall and strong and greatly excelled in the use of arms, being instructed by Nahuasco therein; while the sons of Noah taught him many things in hunting and arts, so that he became greatly accomplished, and far more than they, becoming also taller than Ham, which was the tallest of them, at the appointed time that was spoken.

CAP. II.

THE SHADE OF HUITZA.

YET being much smaller, Talascan was built after the fashion of Zul: and the great ports, shut above the moat, bid defiance to any attack from land, but the river front was open. The architecture, though not equalling the massiveness or grandeur of the capital, was nevertheless sufficiently remarkable. There was a vast temple to the Lord of Light and many others also; the Governor's palace where also the Lord of the Territory resided whenever he visited it; the Market-place by the river, surrounded by bazaars and having a collection of deïstic symbols and representations; and innumerable houses built of lava stone.

Down by the waterway lay a fleet of boats and rafts, numerous others being tied to the banks or lying on them. Single tree-trunks, hollowed by fire, formed the greater part of them, but there were many rush-framed and skin-covered boats and rafts floated by whole skins of animals inflated. There were no large vessels there, and the only one they had ever seen of large size was the Tacoatlanta, which at times came up the river through the Gates of Talascan with a great wash of water around her, either to call there or go beyond, and occasionally smaller war-vessels from Zul would come up. These were such as were designed to sail round the encircling moat, and were shallow boats.

The population reminded the visitor of Zul during the period of the annual tournaments, for here there were always many hunters, miners, fishers and collectors of gums and feathers; and, although every man was a warrior and liable to be called upon to attack or resist an enemy, there was nevertheless a troop clothed and armed uniformly and kept in idleness for any emergency.

Here, also, in addition to the vices of a barbarous civilization, was exhibited the natural life of the country before cities were built, the life of the single-handed warrior and hunter searching for his daily bread with no farther care or ambition; yet who had also fallen into idolatry and worshipped whatsoever his fancy gave him.

As at Zul, there was kept, in the temple of the Sun, Tekthah's standard and symbol, a four-armed cross; and all over the city, on pedestals, in temples or niches, wriggled in wooden or stone semblance the worshipped offspring of degraded ideas: there a bird-headed Thoth stood, and there foul Lamia writhed their serpent-coils. Dagon and Bellerophons, Centaurs, antlered men and winged monsters and the hermaphrodite gods of Atlantis were represented under various names; but by far the greater number were the most grossly prostituted representations of female forms, the producers and nurses of life. Before them burned sweetly-scented natural woods in earthen braziers, and strong animal odours were offered to their gross nostrils. The human mind went out of its way to exaggerate and degrade, and crazed priests, mad with excesses, fanned the popular enthusiasm and preached the righteousness of it all.

The nobles followed the lead of Zul, and I saw how terrible a thing is a bad example set in high places. For ambition Tekthah had poured violence and excitement into the people's hearts, and now he had himself fallen beneath the whirlwind. It seemed that nought could check the chaos of sin, and no terror of nature turned the nation's heart to God; for when to the west the thin vapour that ever wreathed the head of Axatlan lifted at times to the rush of a column of fire that burst forth with a roar and outpourings of rivers of gold, the people would but offer up more victims and drench their idols with wine, imploring them to hear and save them.

Large of limb and but half-civilized were most of the Talascans, cursing the Lord Rhadaman and crying to the Sun to burn him; yet they went not elsewhere, because if the master were not Rhadaman it was Izta or some other; and also the human breast was strongly inclined not to leave the place of its birth, thereby preventing some places becoming overpopulous

and others empty. And this, notwithstanding that they might be desert, or subject to earthquakes, or greatly overrun by noxious beasts or insects.

The Talascans, as all of Atala, I have said, were hardy mountaineers. Great hunters were they, armed with axes and spears of flint and bone and metal, with which they killed the large bears that lived in the caves. In their forests were the elk and the mammoth, and others huge of bulk and terrific in appearance and power, rending the trees and devouring the crops of wheat and maize; and there were great saurians in the rivers, whose teeth were used for spearheads, while a very large species of land-crab at times invaded them and covered the earth with its multitudes. Eagles harried their flocks, and serpents of vast length terrified them; a certain fowl, with a body as great as an ox and formidable mandibles, α furnished dangerous sport for the hunters, but was excellent to the taste as meat; and the fierce aurochs ran in dark herds on the borders of Axatlan and to the south, many lives being lost in the pursuit of such. There were lynxes and panthers that carried off the domestic fowls, and also vexatious wild cats and dogs and smaller vermin.

Yet the land was rich, and the people always had enough wherewith to pay the taxes; while by their prowess commanding respect they were always well cared for and favourably noticed at the Capital when they went up to trade or attend the Circus festivals.

Out beyond the river-mouth and Astra lay the great pearl-oyster beds, whose white gems were so much in request among the belles and fair women of Zul, commanding great prices wherever exhibited and being a valuable revenue to the land. And this

α Before such a statement as this we can but bow the head in silence. Neither the oldest histories nor palæontological researches have discovered so great a bird, although there were of old larger animal forms than now. The Dodo, which, classified among the pigeons, was a giant of its species; the gigantic ostrich-like *Dinornis* of New Zealand; the *Pelagornis*, a winged monster of the albatross tribe; the Moa, the *Gastornis Parisiensis*, whose remains have been recently found in the Eocene conglomerates of Meudan—all these as birds far surpass any we can muster now, but would not furnish a parallel to the bird of Atlantis, although they might prove the descending scale of size.

was a great covetousness to Chanoc, for if the country were swept by fire and sword the new Tzan could not destroy the pearl-fisheries, which could be a revenue to them against the rest of the land.

Great meetings were called for discussion of defence against the threatened invasion. Often messengers arrived from Acoa, declaring that the gods would aid Huitza, who might shortly be expected; and at length came one who asserted that he had seen the prince himself. This one was sent by Noah, for the time appointed had arrived that Toltiah, being now grown, should appear.

And in this manner the youth came to Talascan: Noah and his family, with Azta and Nahuasco and the guards, arrived before the walls and were admitted, causing no small comment, for all knew Azta and many recognised the Tzantan Nahuasco and most of the family of the aforesaid governor of Tek-Ra. The patriarch declared that, Huitza dead, he had been drawn into the wilderness to seek him, and would now reveal the reappearing leader to the land. Crowds gathered around the group, and my Love, with her wonderful presence and surrounded by the glamour of a myriad tales and romances, real and imaginary, greatly aided the enthusiasm attendant. Noah vowed that he would next day produce Huitza in the flesh before all, sent to them by the Lord Jehovah to avenge his forgotten and insulted name, being also Father of Zul before whom other gods were preferred. He reminded them that Huitza was greatly beloved of Zul, and at his words Azta's eyes flashed so that my soul fainted with sorrow. Running messengers were despatched to every city and all the tribes to tell them, Huitza comes, rejuvenated, pregnant with victory, to bring freedom to the land and avenge the nation on the tyrants that ground it down.

Thus he would come, and in this favoured city would he appear, preferring it before any of Tek-Ra, and would make it a mighty name in Atlantis.

The populace was in a state of wild enthusiasm; Chanoc gave a palace for Azta and Noah and their people to dwell in, and that night the city flared with bonfires. Everyone was

drunk with wine, and the large square of the Market-place was full of revellers in a state bordering on insanity. They shouted and shrieked, pouring wasteful libations over the bestial images until they shimmered under the lurid glow of the fires, with their trickling, odorous streams. Skin-clad hunters shook their spears in the air, leaping like madmen with formidable cries, some imitating the roaring of lions or the trumpet-call of the deer; and women with dishevelled hair and bared bosoms ran shrieking among them, their eyes flashing in the lights as they rolled them with wanton glances. The banging of drums and shrieks of whistles added greatly to the din, but the chiefs and nobles discussed the advent of the great Huitza and wondered what should come of it.

Myself, I dared not interfere. These mortals knew the temper and inclinations of one another better than I, and surely one born as Toltiah should be able to cope with matters of Earth.

Thus the next day Noah came down to the Market-place attended by Chanoc and his guards, with Nahuasco's troop, his servants and his family, among whom was Azta. Mounted upon a block, the patriarch stood elevated above the thousands who came running from all around, leaving the walls and barricades at the call of the Governor's trumpets, waiting to hear what he might say to them and forgetting his corrective reputation in the knowledge that he was the trusted vizier of their great chieftain.

Among the crowds mingled warriors of the city guards, their bright helmets flashing above the more sombre headdresses, and shadowed by the beautiful plumes of the ostrich, which were eagerly obtained, or that of the wild swan. None in all the land wore the plumage of the peacock, fearing it with a great superstition, and holding it as the emblem of the setting sun, of which they supposed its spread tail to be a symbol.

Azta, in a slung carriage, commanded nearly as much enthusiasm as the expectation of Huitza, for there were weird legends muchly connecting the twain, and all believed her to be potential in the matter. Tall Shem stood impassive and watchful, Ham and Japheth leaned on their spears, the former

rolling his eyes with vast amusement over the crowd of whom he stood one of the tallest. The women and children, among whom stood the fair Susi, were timid and fearful of the multitudes, yet confident in their leader and their God. Only I had no place there, and should scarce indeed have been there at all.

Beyond the rustling of the crowd and the occasional clang of armour there was no sound. Noah began to speak, rousing the people's anger against the usurper, Shar-Jatal, and all the evil lords of Zul. But as yet he would not denounce the evil doings of the land, preferring to wait until the monster of Sin with bruised head should lay at his mercy; in which hope all my soul was also, and I greatly dwelt on its fulfilment.

Now Toltiah lay in the midst of his people, hidden and as yet unsuspected; but after a prayer of exhortation from Noah this one stepped forth and mounted on to the block which the patriarch surrendered in his favour.

The crowd perceived a godlike beardless youth of vast stature and splendid presence, with the ruddy hair and commanding eye of the great Chief. There, younger, taller and still more majestic, he stood, a very miracle before their astonished eyes, a dreadful beauty enstamped upon his features that were like unto a very beautiful woman's. A golden plate covered his chest, broad as an archangel's, and upon his head he placed now the winged helmet.

The silence was broken up, and the air was rent by a vast roar, deafening and prolonged. Four tall warriors, mounting him on their shields, raised him high above the heads of the people, shout on shout rolling to the sky, and Azta's child, in the character of Azta's Love, seemed exalted to the altitude of a god.

Those nearest to him noted that his eyes were yellow and of great penetration, and his hair as dark molten gold. Never had such perfection of form been seen before, such splendid limbs and carriage, and I felt a great pride in my own sad heart as I looked on him and wondered how so strange a being would act. With enthusiastic shouts the people raised their swords and spears, and the crowd swayed under a veil of tossing yellow mantles. Young girls and children were lifted towards

him, and in the delirium of their joy even the abominable idols were pulled down and abased before him, all manners of excesses being committed in the frenzy.

And this was also my child, this strange, beautiful being! What power lay within the grasp of this splendid Amazon-like man! For one moment, as I thought of Zul and the land of a thousand cities, I felt a great joy at the thought that it would be his own and he would wield the sceptre of Atlantis from that great red palace, and influence the peoples for good and for Jehovah. And then, perchance, might I claim my Love for mine own and purge my folly in righteousness.

Yet I liked not the look upon Toltiah's countenance, which was one of great arrogance, bespeaking an Earthly spirit. He kissed his thumbs towards the shouting people, seeking the warriors particularly with his eyes and casting a long stare upon Susi, who had refused his secret advances. On Azta, his mother, he smiled triumphantly, and with still more triumph she returned his glance. I perceived the great emotions with which she gazed upon him—the love of a mother—and, O God! of a lover!—the confidence of nigh satisfied ambition that filled her eyes with tears of joy as she watched and heard the roars of enthusiasm that hailed the youth's appearance. His foster-brothers were loudest in their demonstrations, waving spears and shields high with exultant glee, and all were happy save myself. For in that long, deep breath of freedom and the lustful stare around I saw written, as with a flaming finger upon the clouds, my completed doom; and gazing with a horror of longing passion upon Azta, saw that her whole absorbed attention rested upon that shield-borne Majesty that should drag Earth to its doom—the consummation of her foolishness and mine.

Mine! I could have melted with agony; and then my attention was fixed again. Suddenly shouts of a different import spread rapidly through the crowd. Above the river barricades appeared three moving poles, the foremost topped with the Cross of Atlantis, and no explanation was needed to tell the crowd what they signified.

Agape and silent they stood for an instant, the moving poles coming up rapidly amid a crashing, creaking and splashing

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medly of sounds from the flotilla of shipping, and instantly an iron grappler flew to the top of the barricades and held there.

There were many, among whom was Toltiah, who knew not what was portending, but a great shout of dismay enlightened most of them :

“The Tacoatlanta!”

C A P. III.

THE RISING SUN.

HIGH above the cries of the people rang the voice of Chanoc, claiming attention and distilling confidence. The women ran to hide themselves in the houses, terrified and shrieking, while Nahuasco and the city legionaries ran to repel what might threaten.

There was no time to be lost. Messengers were despatched to the garrisons round the walls to bid them be ready to resist any attack by land, while bands of warriors sped to aid them, and spies were sent to the highest roofs to give warnings and issue directions.

With the guards, towering above all, ran Toltiah, with sword and buckler, eager for the fray and recollecting now all that he had heard of the war-ship and her manner of attack. But most were sorely puzzled as to how the vessel had passed the boom and why no warning of her approach had been sounded. The city was in an uproar, drums heating and whistles shrieking above the long-drawn war-whoops.

Azta bade her bearers remain where they stood, her heart too full for expression with unknown fears, as, astonished to find the massive barricades opposed to them, the men on the Tacoatlanta nevertheless ran her close up to the landing, with a proud and ferocious confidence in the irresistibility of their wild onrush and the moral effect of their unshaken valour upon those before them. Clustering upon the bulwarks, they prepared to leap upon the defences when the great vessel could be hauled near enough by the ropes attached to the grapplers, aided by the slaves at the oars.

The defenders were scarce in time to repel them as in scores they crowned the barricades. Toltiah waved his mighty blade

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in flashing circles and smote at the foremost, shouting "Huitza and Zul!" The warriors took up the cry; as the sound of a storm it spread from mouth to mouth, and the Imperial troops perceiving the ruddy mane of the leader and his resemblance to the dead chief, remembered the prophecy, wavered in dis-



CLUSTERING UPON THE BULWARKS, THEY PREPARED TO LEAP.

mayed confusion, and were hurled backwards, many falling into the water and drowning in their harness.

It was a victory, for the cry spread through the attacking forces, and some of the grapplers were hauled back to them as the warriors hesitated. The heads of the Talascans were raised above the barricade with triumphant shouts, and the

archers on the warship let their weapons fall as Ham and Nahuasco raised Toltiah on their shields in full view of all.

But now shouts arose from the roofs and a distant uproar told of war along the land battlements. Leaving his victorious comrades, Toltiah sped thither, accompanied by Shem and Nahuasco, which one would not leave him. The streets were empty, for all were round the walls, but as Toltiah sped Azta cried out to him victoriously, watching the splendid being eagerly until he was gone.

By the walls men fought hand to hand with the glittering warriors of the Imperial Guards, who had landed from the warship to the number of five hundred and were furiously assailing them. Now, above the clangour of armour and the clash of swords, the shouts, shrieks and groans of the combatants and the cries of the captains, rang out a formidable war-cry: "Huitza! Huitza and Zul!"

The Talascans with shouts of victory rushed forward, driving the foe from the breaches. Men slipped in blood, and spears were buried in human flesh: limbs dropped, shorn clean off by the heavy swords, and the godlike form of Toltiah, pressing through the swaying crowds, forced its way to the front.

There he fought, the tall wings gleaming above the press, the ruddy hair that there had been no time to wrap round the head flying in yellow masses; the returned Chief, the Prince on whom the hopes of Atlantis were centred!

The unconquered warriors of Zul stared in wild dismay and hesitated. The Tzantan Nezca cried out that they surrendered to Huitza, while the erstwhile foemen shouted his name exultingly, raising spear and sword in salute.

Flushed with his first success, the youth could afford to be gracious, neither had long wars steeled his heart. Stepping forward, he took Nezca's hand and placed it on his heart, himself performing the same action on the other's person, looking with great regard on the chief, for he was a very goodly man. "We are brothers," he said, and all the warriors shouted with joy, climbing the walls and kneeling in obeisance to the prince.

But I caused a voice to speak to Toltiah; "Go, seize the

warship, for there are others that come;" and speeding swiftly to the barricades by the river, he cried, "Seize the Tacoatlanta!"

He was too late. With a confusion of cries, with trailing rigging and mingled oars the great warship was drifting sideways down the centre of the stream; and as the victors crowded down to take her with the little boats that were left unharmed, the painted sail on the fore-mast was raised, the huge steering oars were brought into play and, the other two sails being set to the wind, the monster moved rapidly away, while the pursuers hastened back on perceiving an armada approaching. For, clearing the wreck of the enormous boom, three more warships, towing rafts full of men, were approaching, but stopped on perceiving the flight of the Tacoatlanta and the crowding foemen.

The victors were disappointed in this failure to take the warship. Messengers were instantly despatched to warn the Axatians who held the fords, eight leagues above the city; for beyond that to the West the mighty stream flowed through defiles and deserts, prohibiting the passages of troops and stores, and even far-wandering hunters knew of no other place for such purpose within any practical distance.

Yet the warships could float over the fords, and therein lay much danger; and a great council was held.

From Nezca was learned that yet another army, under the Tzantan Izta, was on the march against them, with great stores and many engines of war and a multitude of warriors. This army had laid waste the land as it marched, sacking towns and villages and pitilessly murdering all the inhabitants, and going afar from its course to destroy the cities of Tek-Ra and all the territory of Huitza. Upon Chuza was made a night attack, and ere the morning sun had risen the houses and streets ran red with the blood of midnight revellers surprised at their debaucheries and slain, only such escaping as managed to climb up into the great pallo, whose reduction would take more time than was agreeable to accomplish, it being amply stocked with food; for it was used to a great extent as a granary, and there was a well of water within. But the town was left in ruins and the walls razed to the ground. A messenger brought back the news to Zul, and, the army on its

march for Talascan, four warships had started under the governance of Budil, a son of Shar-Jatal; and it was hoped that, Talascan crushed, the land would be at the Usurper's mercy.

Then arose the daring ambition of Toltiah, who declared that he would do no less than march upon Zul! This boldness pleased the chiefs, and that night was the youth proclaimed publicly Tzan of Atlantis, king of the Earth, and presented amid impressive ceremonies with the National Standard, taken from its temple for the purpose of being used as the battle-standard until peace should come again.

Crowds assisted, and the city was jubilant. The new Huitza appeared more than victorious, a promise of unlimited joy and freedom! He refused to have an Imperial helmet made, declaring that he would wear Tekthah's and none other.

Azta was triumphant, with an immense pride in her heart, being considered the next most important person to Toltiah. Also she was treated by him (who also stood somewhat in awe of her, being indeed a stranger) and the rest of the populace as Empress, occupying the half of a double throne with him in the palace of Chanoc. Her presence, rendered more majestic and imposing by her sublime pride, impressed all very greatly, and her mystic eyes touched their superstitions deeply. She was supposed, nay, reputed, to be of celestial mould and power, and to her was ascribed the reappearance of Huitza, while her furious impatience of delayed respect made her feared by all.

Mere repute was turned into certainty by her coldness and continence, which commanded respect while inflaming desires, and with the wish of possessing her the thoughts of all who deemed themselves of sufficiently high degree dwelt with a daring joy on possibilities; in the which I perceived much future trouble, yet none could ever encounter the glance of those yellow eyes without feeling a sensation of chill and fear.

Toltiah would fain have rested a while to form a court and establish a household. Arrogant with victory and believing himself to be, as the people declared, a god, he wished to enjoy those growing passions that possibilities bred and nurtured; but the savage impatience of Azta and the exhortations of the

governor and the Tzantans advised him to be energetic until the Throne of Atlantis was actually beneath his feet.

Yet now fresh preparations must be made, for they were not ready as regards the offensive, being but as yet desirous of protecting themselves from the power of Zul. To every city was sent the news that Huitzà had returned, and it flew abroad on the swift wings of rumour, strengthening the weak and rejoicing the strong; and warriors began to gather across the river by the fords, and journey to Talascan. But the warships and armaments in the river were a vast menace, and perchance had Toltiah more experience he would not have thought of aught yet but protection. But all believed in him, and while residing with his chiefs in the palace he formed a camp also without the walls, bidding all the cities of the province mass their warriors around Talascan; and his genius rising with his power, he showed them how to make a fortress of the city and directed how to form another boom across the river.

Preparations for an immense armament commenced, and the peoples of the city and the tribes without were formed into various legions. Runners were sent to bring in the wandering tribes and even to treat with the western savages and some of the weird peoples who lived in the mountains and deserts of Axatlan. Noah preached a holy war, greatly enthusing all by his frenzy and his zeal, and Azta's gracious words to the Tzantans rendered them eager to commence already a rush on the capital, regardless of the warships and the approaching army of Izta. Yet Nahuasco, and Noah, and such as had followed Tekthah in the old wars, advised caution concerning such a move; for here they would face men of their own race behind impregnable walls, which would have to be surrounded by an encircling trench that would forbid any desperate sallies and bring a long starvation. Nor would this dire famine cause themselves less suffering, seeing how great an army was being raised, which could scarce be fed upon one spot.

But Toltiah would brook no caution; weapons of war were manufactured in great quantities, and because of the clouds of slingers that hung on the flanks of the warships and rafts these had to keep far down the river and on the other side, waiting

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for Izta to arrive. Bows and arrows were made as fast as eager workers could turn them out; and now Japheth remembered the great engine constructed by his sons outside Chuza, the catapult, heaving a vast bolt upon the enemy. Therefore he set to work to construct one; gangs of men worked at the engine, exulting in all they learned of its possibilities, and the city rejoiced greatly because of the powerful men who had arrived to aid.

The first catapult was set to command the river below the city, in which direction lay the armada, and afterwards more were constructed, and the new legions trained in archery, for all knew the use of spear, sword and sling.

CAP. IV.

THE CAMP OF TOLTIAH.

EACH day brought reinforcements from all parts by tribes and thousands, encamping under the orders of their own Patriarchs, but all owning the supreme authority of Toltiah.

From the plains came the wild herdsmen of Assa, Het, Emok, and Alorus, powerful chiefs with many followers, the tribes of the Owl standard, and all the spearmen of Enoch; the tribes of the Vulture, the Unicorn, and the Crow.

From the raided province of Tek-Ra came fugitives: from Chuza, Bab-Ista, Bab-An and other cities; from Sular, Karbandu, Azod, Bitaranu, Surapa, Sham; and other great chiefs of the plains with their stout followers and countless herds of sheep, goats, and oxen.

And I saw where the young chief Lotis, of Kataralia in Trocoatla, gathered his tall borderers in battle array, his mother being that Yeteve, sister of Azco the governor, who had great distinctions given to her for compliance to the wishes of Shar-Jatal in past days. And notwithstanding that she was a hard woman, she loved her son with a mighty love and was in great distress that he should so depart from her, entreating the gods concerning it upon her knees with floods of tears. Fain would she ever keep her boy by her side, gazing upon him with all the best love of a mother. But San, his beloved, although sorrowing equally with her, would prefer that her lord should go where glory might be reaped. She vowed that she would not survive him, yet loved not to keep her warrior back in shameful security; and although in his absence she wept with the sad mother, in his presence she was brave and exalted, speaking of nought but of glory to be reaped.

And here were two loves, and of the two which was the better?

THE CAMP OF TOLTIAH.

And in the issue Lotis went forth with all the many thousands that ran to join Toltiah.

How great an enthusiasm was there! The hope of sacking Zul aroused their savage hopes to a terrific pitch, and the name of Huitza was a power, in itself, promising a future beyond all dreams of spoliation and rapine. The total effect of the crowds was as of that great congregation which gathered round the capital at the time of the Circus games; for, stretching in a dense selvedge around the walls of Talascan, some encamped under tents of skin or cloth, others dug holes in the earth, with screens, stretched on poles, surrounding them; while hunters, accustomed to all the hardships of their existence, lay on the ground, encamped round fires. Some of these last, clothed in the whole skins of animals, presented an extraordinary appearance, many wearing over their matted hair, which was usually gathered at the back into a plaited thong, the heads of wolves, bears, aurochs, and stags with the spreading antlers. Some wore horse skins from which the long, thick tails swung, and one or two carried the horn and cranium of the dreaded unicorn. *α*

But among these semi-savages were races who cultivated the arts of cities, and tribes whose wealth permitted the purchase of elaborate war-harness; and among such the plumes of the eagle and ostrich towered above metal helmets, adding to the splendid stature of the wearers clad in gleaming vantbraces and cothurns, cuirass and backplate,—their arms of metal and obsidian looking formidable among the clumsy stone axes and mighty tusk-studded clubs of their humbler comrades.

The southern warriors brought with them beautiful women, who fastened lantern-beetles among their ebon tresses, where the lights glowed until the creatures died; and these women were the occasion of many broils and quarrels because of their beauty and wantonness, dallying with any who would.

It was a gay scene of warlike splendour in that great city and the country surrounding the walls. Mingled with rough aprons

α The name Unicorn, as its etymology denotes, is given to any animal with one horn, but generally, I believe, refers to the single-horned rhinoceros. In this case it as probably indicates the antelope mentioned in chapter IX.

of hides there were mantles of leopard-skins and the beautiful furs of the beaver, bear, lynx, lion and rabbit; there were breastplates of rough silver from Trocoatla, the whole shells of large turtles bartered from the Astran fishermen, and tortoises from the forests of Axatlan; cuirasses of stout leather, covered with the formidable shield and attached horns of a species of wild ox, or with the spiked scales of the Hilen saurians.

Over far-spreading shoulders hung huge, massy bucklers, leather-covered and studded with metal bosses, some being entirely of metal and very glittering, yet showing dents and hollows received by weapons of war. Some of the Tzantans wore mantles of feather-work, and among the birds that thus gave their coloured beauties for a warrior's ornamentation were conspicuous the white swan, the scarlet flamingo, various macaws and the gem-like humming-bird. The skin-clad hunters gazed with envy on these gorgeous trappings, yet their own sterner robes of lion-skin cost more than feather mantles in manly prowess. There were other garments, of woven cotton and silk, dyed in various colours, and bartered for eagerly in Zul at the Circus periods; but most of the military cloaks were entirely scarlet, being plain but of striking effect among the other ornaments and trapping.

Abandoned women thronged to the camp, idols were set up to be worshipped and propitiated, and some of the nomad tribes who owned no god at all, were initiated into this or that belief. Those from the southern plains were awe-struck by the mountains, and worshipped the hill Axatlan, visible on the very far horizon; and there were those who had never seen a city and were terrified by the walls and the mighty uncouth colossi that supported the buildings.

Some tribes of savages came in, but these were panicky and fearful of their white companions, and were especially awed by the great city. There were many thousands in the great, roaring camp, more and more arriving as the rumour of the gathering and its object spread, and still the army of Izta came not, and still the armada in the river waited. There were some terrible peoples from the western wildernesses, some huge, some small, all deformed and monstrous, who hung on the outskirts of the

THE CAMP OF TOLTIAH.

vast gathering, feeding on earth-roots and the offal of the camp; and from the north came a great number of Amazons, whose advent seemed likely to cause a strife in the camp, as their reputation, exaggerated and half-mythical, aroused the keenest interest among the licentious crowds.^α There were many dangerous episodes and not a little bloodshed before this extraordinary and warlike race was understood to be capable of defending its creed, and some of the best warriors of Toltiah had to own to the strength and courage of these tall, ferocious women, and their skill in the use of weapons. Lithe and agile as panthers, with rounded but sturdy limbs, and thick hair tied in knots under their helmets of animals' craniums, they wore their skin garments girded up under a belt, while their small breasts did not prevent the most perfect use of their arms in wielding spear or axe, most of them wearing over them a tough ceinture of hide fastened round the shoulders. Leathern cothurns covered their legs, and sandals protected their feet; their shields were oblong, made of wolf-skins, with the tails flapping from them, and the heads fastened to the centre. They gazed with great curiosity upon the women of the cities, sneering at their use of powder to decorate their faces, and staring amazed at their jewelled teeth and elaborate head-dresses, and their inhaling of smoke through pipes.

Azta was greatly interested in these warrior-women, whose Queen was a majestic figure, taller than herself; and between the two sprang up a firm friendship. To the Amazon the splendid symmetry and mystic beauty of the Tizin was a wonder and a delight, while no less was the latter's admiration compelled by the high bearing and the bold, free carriage of

^α In most ancient histories we hear of Amazons, and these women warriors have been usually regarded as mythical, although they were apparently quite equal to the men among the Sarmatians, the *Sauromata* of Herodotus. This race occupied the steppes between the Don and the Caspian, and the women rode, hunted and fought in battle like the men. Indeed on one occasion we learn that Amage, the wife of the dissolute King, accompanied by 120 chosen horsemen, delivered Chersonesus in Taurus from the neighbouring Scythian King, whom she slew with all his followers and gave the kingdom to his son. The Sarmatians appear to be superior to the Scythians, but by speaking a nearly identical language would probably be an allied race.

this woman who dared to compete with men in war. This was the life that won her admiration, and now she wished that, Tizin of Atlantis, she could be surrounded by such guards, their Chieftainness. Yet she could but own herself scarce fitted for the stern hardships of actual warfare as she surveyed the large, strong limbs and hard features of the Amazons and compared them with her own softly-rounded beauties.

Thousands of the new arrivals were drafted into the various legions, everything displaying on the part of Toltiah a genius that might well have befitted the prince he was supposed to be, and Chanoc, Nahuasco and experienced leaders were content to approve and aid in everything he did, pleased in his daring scheme and the vast preparations made for carrying it out. Far and wide thousands more supplied the army with food, and great drafts of men were sent to the fords. The mechanical genius of the camp was exercised to discover engines for siege, to be constructed when near the threatened city, for human limbs, though of formidable strength, were powerless against turrets of rock and stone, and those tall warriors whose godlike fronts were so terrible in their iron-muscle power would face men of like mould, Tekthah's veterans and the haughty lords of Zul. The prowess of Shar-Jatal appalled none, but there were men there like Iztli, the dread conqueror of the territory of Trocoatla; the mysterious and mighty Toloc; the gray-haired Colosse and the giant Amal with the seven toes on each foot, who had marched with the Tzan from the North. The witch Pocatepa would raise the legions of the dead against them—that black-eyed sorceress with the aquiline nose and voluptuous lips—and perchance even Acoa would fight against his Sun-favoured children, Azta and Huitza, and cause a terrible night to over-spread them.

In spite of all the great preparations, a certain idleness was already beginning to work mischief, and the chiefs advised a speedy start before the masses should become demoralized or lose their warlike ardour. Each night was a roaring saturnalia, bonfire-lighted; and although reinforcements came in daily, there were also vast desertions. Riots occurred and much wantonness was committed through suppressed energy, yet the leaders could

scarce deem such rabble as was most of that vast array prepared sufficiently to conquer Atlantis. All were inexperienced in the storming of walls, and the chiefs feared terrible reverses.

The thousands were ordered to make spear-heads, hatchets and arrow-heads of bone and flint, while legions were raised and practised in warlike manœuvres. It was at length decided to leave the rabble behind, for the greater part, while the trained legions, with some thousands of hunters and some of the more superior tribes, should cross the river, and, surrounding and crushing the army of Izta, strike terror on the armada and treat for its surrender.

To that end a great concourse of archers, crossing by the fords to the opposite side of the river, so galled the ships (who thus were enduring a storm of missiles from both banks without being able to obtain immunity by the too-near centre of the stream), that they moved away round a bend, sea-ward; and this prevention being gone, a great boom was constructed across the river, made of trees fastened together with hide ropes, below the city, so that the warships might not interfere with the passage of the troops. This work kept crowds employed with great efforts for some days, and the legionaries played games of chance, exhibited their terrific muscular powers or philandered with the women; hunted, fished in the river and quarrelled. Not a day passed without some rupture, the outcome of idleness; not a night without some wild scene of debauchery. The savages, made to work like slaves on the boom, and losing many lives, deserted by the hundreds. Large rafts were constructed for transporting the troops, who were filled with a vast enthusiasm and were confident of victory, causing a danger by their very confidence. Their leaders were not so ready to leave the city in the face of the armada that ever menaced, for their only trust was in Nezca's guards, the Talascan legions, the Amazons and a few warlike tribes. The rest would only bear the brunt of the carnage and serve as a hindrance to the enemy by disjointed and persistent attacks.

But it was the only thing to be done. The army could not be left longer idle, nor might it be allowed to lose confidence by hesitation. The next day the transportation would commence,

and at the evening camp the warriors reclined around flaring fires, with mirth and wildest enthusiasm. It was a strangely grotesque crowd, encamped over miles of land on plains and among forests. The moon shone bright from a cloudless sky, lighting the great white city and almost hiding the red vapour that rose from Axatlan. The structure of the lower catapult stood black and grim against the sky, completed and formidable, only waiting to be brought into use when its range should be ascertained, for it was not desirable to display its deficiencies by wanton aim: from the city-wall to where the opposite bank showed darkly, floated the tide-swept boom, like the backbone of some mighty cetacean.

Suddenly exclamations arose and the wanton shrieks of women. Far off, but distinctly visible, a great dark shadow swept round the bend of the river with a foamy wave of water around it, from which it rose square and threatening. It came up rapidly, keeping in the middle of the stream, and when the spectators imagined it about to approach the boom at speed it reduced its proportions, and with a great back-churning of waters stood revealed a long, low shape with three bare poles rising from it; and again arose the dismayed cry of "the Tacoatlanta!" as, slightly heaving on the waters, the warship lay as though contemplating the opposing obstacle with its great human-like head.

Then slowly she moved back again and vanished. The moon set and darkness lay on the waters. Men watched all night, and some believed they heard strange sounds from the river, but a kite sent up with a flaming torch attached revealed nothing, and none dared venture on the boom of a night for fear of the great reptiles and the river-demons.

But next morning the huge boat lay opposite the city, and the boom swung down stream by its opposite ends, severed in the middle.

C A P. V.

THE TACOATLANTA.

WITH shouts of rage, men clustered along the water's edge, and in anticipation of an attack the garrisons went to their several posts; although the Amazons, required to keep the walls while the men took the field, haughtily refused to obey, and held themselves in readiness for an attack.

The slingers, archers and spearmen were in their respective camps, ready for the passage. The hunters and savages, scattered along the banks in a long, dense array, were ordered to be on the alert to oppose any attempt at landing. Some thousands of these untrained but formidable men were in the walls, and harassed the enemy by slinging stones and offal within his bulwarks. Another boom was prepared and made ready to swing across the current, twisted hawsers securing it to the bank; while to the chiefs, Shem propounded a scheme, to cover such enterprise, of floating down some of the vast trunks, with their forests of branches intact, on to the warship, following up the confusion by an attack with boats and rafts.

The foemen hurled abuse the one at the other, roaring fearful threats and vowing horrible tortures to the vanquished; and suddenly a cry spread among the warriors on the banks as the three other vessels were perceived to be approaching, towing rafts full of men. The Mexteo led, her two large sails bellying to the fresh breeze, her many oars sending her along apace, with a swirl of foam around her and astern.

A shout of welcome went up from the Tacoatlanta, a howl of rage from the Talascans. The warships and rafts came on up to the larger vessel, dropping grapplers and swinging to the current by the twisted skin hawsers. On and around them flew a hail of missiles, so that all lay under their shields; while the

army of Toltiah, besieged by these comparatively few men, roared and shouted with rage, sending in hot haste to the Axatlans to prepare for an attack by the armada, while large rocks were brought and piled up secretly for the catapults. But few had any knowledge of the use and power of this direful weapon, and had those on the armada known its range they would scarce have dared to venture so closely; yet, untried, it was decided not to use them yet and fruitlessly, preferring to make an attempt to capture one or more of the warships.

Presently the Mexteo and her two smaller consorts shifted their moorings, and, hoisting their sails and aided by their oars, went up the river with the towed rafts. All looked propitious for swinging the boom (which would be received by those archers who were upon the other bank), and for a night-attack on the Tacoatlanta, which lay opposite the waterway; and while great trees were hauled to the water's edge for launching down on her, the warriors who were to attempt the capture were selected.

Akin would lead them, an old, tried chieftain, and used to the handling of boats, and to him was given full powers as to the conduct of the affair. The warriors were to embark after dark, to wear no armour, so that if thrown into the water they could save themselves by swimming, and were to attack simultaneously at all points.

Word was passed from chief to chief, from the Tzantans of the armies to the tribal Patriarchs, Polemarchs, Centurions and Captains, to hold their men in readiness to cross at any moment; the time probably being when the Tacoatlanta, enmeshed with the trees and violently assailed, would be so engaged that the new boom could be drifted across the river, men being posted to swing it by the hawsers, and others to run swiftly across the moving mass, leap to the shore and secure it with the aid of those others.

All eagerly waited for the night, yet fearing it, because of the demons of the waters and the reptiles that lay beneath them. The gods were propitiated in trust that they might aid the attack, much sacrifices being offered to them; and in the temple of the Moon Azta prayed, invoking all the spirits of night to aid, and such as flew in winged shape.

THE TACOATLANTA.

Thus all were enthusiastic when night came, and with her clouds hid all light. Hundreds of tall dark figures crowded rafts and boats, keeping carefully out of the reach of such slight glow as reached them from the near temple of the Sun, yet which spread not far, being suffered to burn low.

Whispering crowds thronged round the attackers as in darkness they pushed off silently and disappeared like shadows on the bosom of the water, with keen eyes striving to pierce the night to where, from higher up, the floating trees bore down on the vessel, secured to one another in order to be the more formidable. Enormous bats wheeled and squeaked over the stream, and bright insects flew like moving torches of fire, terrifying the watchers. The tension was very great, the legions waiting anxiously the signal of the formation of the boom to prepare for crossing; and sudden and shrill, splitting the silence with a thrilling yell, came a long, tremulous whoop, rising to a shriek.

Shout upon shout answered and drums were beaten for encouragement. From the river came crashes and thuds and the sounds of war. Sparks flew from crossing swords, and it appeared that the warship was not unprepared, for amid the distant storm of sounds rose the heavy splash of oars in regular fall, audible above crashes, shouts and shrieks. Yells came from furious throats, yet to the anxious, thrilling watchers the uproar seemed to be moving farther off.

Yet now how greatly rose thy daring genius, Toltiah! For, revolving in his mind the great benefit of destroying the army of Izta and seizing his stores and engines, he perceived a chance of passage. The Tacoatlanta was drifting down the current, possibly disabled, and messengers, despatched by the prince, flew from post to post and to the engineers of the causeway who waited to let the restrained mass swing across the stream.

Slowly the huge boom, released now from its restraining moorings, felt the current. Levers pushed forth the long trunks of trees, and the swift stream swung it in its joined masses across to the far bank. Already nimble hunters, reckless with haste and excitement and mindful of future reward, had run to the opposite end, and many more, wielding levers, secured more firmly the several portions; and while returning from the attack

on the war-ship, on battered rafts or swimming like fishes, dripping warriors with streaming wounds climbed from the river, reporting a futile attempt at capture and the escape of the Tacoatlanta, the mighty boom was signalled secure, and over it began the passage of the army of Toltiah.

Through the barricades they poured, vanishing into the gloom; first Nezca with the guards, then the Amazons, and then hundreds of long-haired, skin-clad hunters. Many, overcome with excitement, and valiant by reason of much company, plunged into the river, and soon the churning water was alive with heads. With spear and sword strapped to their backs they swam with long powerful strokes, and hundreds of the savage tribesmen, from far up the banks, emulating them, plunged in and braved the waves.

The breast of the leader was full of hope and joy. In imagination he saw the defeat of Izta and rejoiced in the welcome necessities captured; he saw the surrender of Budil and the armada and then the triumphant march to the Throne of Atlantis. Then a glowing light sprang up from down the river as a war-kite sailed slowly up, carrying a blazing torch, and by its light showed an appalling spectacle. The Tacoatlanta was returning! The noise made by the passing army had reached the ears of her crew, Shar-Jatal's myrmidons and formidable opponents, and with eager oars and filled sails she was coming up with rapidity.

The passage of the army stopped, the nearest to either shore going onward or hastily returning; while another light leaped from the bows of the warship as a bonfire was ignited on a protruding platform.

A murmur rose like the sound of a storm, and Toltiah and all the chiefs beat their breasts with clenched fists, and growled in their throats. The archers were ordered to send their shafts into the galley while men flew in eager haste to the large catapult, crying to the gods to be propitious, regulating the range and directing their aim. A rock was placed on the beam, the levers tightening the cords at the opposite end until they sang. The huge missile, released, flew forth, hurled with gigantic power by the beam, and falling into the current astern

and beyond the warship, raised a watery column that gleamed golden in the blaze of the bonfire.

But straight at the boom, fretted with moving forms, the great hulk rushed, and struck. For an instant she stopped dead, her foremast falling with a crash, the bonfire flying in lines of light far in advance. A terrible shock convulsed her and the boom, and by the faint light of the far-soaring kite the watchers could see the causeway was cleared of men as it slowly swayed forward, and then, rushing with the stream, parted with a great rending, and drifted downwards, divided, the Tacoatlanta slowly forging ahead. With gathered speed she went onwards again, and dark forms in commotion were seen on her bulwarks busy among the floating heads, stabbing at them with oars, smashing them with clubs, splitting them with swords and spears and axes tied to poles

Howls of rage rose from both shores at witnessing this daring deed. The Amazons yelled their long, clear war-whoop, and a formidable sound of beaten bucklers arose as the warriors smote them with rage. The leaders held a consultation, fearful of the approach of the army of Izta that would destroy the army on the farther bank. It was decided to move in force to the fords, where, wading to their armpits, they might have a chance of boarding and capturing the vessels there, the archers killing the rowers and slaughtering the crew by pouring their shafts through the port-holes.

All lay on their arms till dawn, when, with the first light, the divided arrays poured flights of missiles on the Tacoatlanta as she lay between them, preventing attempts to repair the damage of the fallen mast and compelling all to lay beneath their shields. Azta, lying in an open palanquin, watched the dark vessel and cursed her by all the gods of Zul and the demons of darkness. The catapults were prepared for use, not being understood by the enemy, who had not fathomed the meaning of that watery column that rose so near them in the night-attack, and such even as perceived it judging it to be a Spirit risen from the wave. Now three of them raised their dark beams from the walls, one below and one above the city, and the large one that had fired the bolt in the night, the

course of which was influenced by other wedges of rock placed beneath.

To an extent the presence of the army on the farther shore was comforting, for the ships could not land men to revictual the larders, and soon all believed the provisions failing would cause a retreat if all else failed, for the fish had too much food to eat to venture on a hook, the bodies of many warriors feasting them to the full. The march to the fords was prepared for, where it was hoped to find that the enemy had attempted to land, and consequently, wearied with fighting and perchance in disorder, would fall an easy prey.

Camped around fires, the warriors were breaking fast, when a shout apprised all that something claimed attention. The Mexteo was coming down the river.

Azta perceived her approach first, and her quick mind revolved a scheme. She rose up in her palanquin, raising her voice in command to the hastening warriors, her proud head raised high and her eyes flaming with enthusiasm. "To the catapults!" she cried; and standing to her full majestic height at the added height of the shoulders of tall negroes, waved her arm with a sweep from horizon to horizon, crying that the whole world lay before Huitza and all who followed him.

Shouts answered her, the warriors declaring her to be a goddess, while the artillerists manned the engines, and trumpets and drums sounded all over the city. The missiles were fitted, and as the galley arrived opposite the machine above the city, a huge bolt flew through the air and plunged into the waves under her beam, sending a mound of water over her and the oars into inextricable confusion.

A roar of triumph rose from Talascan and the thousands beyond the walls who witnessed this. The boat, under confused orders, slowly drifted into the very range, and the artillerists, shrieking with eagerness and sweating at their work, fitted another missile. The army on the farther shore raised howls of gleeful jubilation, and the crew of the Tacoatlanta ventured from under their shields to watch what might happen.

With a twang and a whiz the rock sped. The breathless thousands watched it as it flew, presenting all sorts of shapes

in its gyrating path. It fell with a crashing thud on the bulwarks, and a shriek of terror, drowned in another prolonged burst of exultation, rose as, amid splinters and blood, the water swirled into the breach. The warship lurched horribly, but the shouts of triumph drowned the shrieks of despair of her heavily-harnessed crew, which, falling down the inclining deck, fearfully increased the list that the flooding waves gave the vessel. With a lurch forward and a heavy roll she turned over, the eddies swirling around her; and only her sails on the water, like two great domes with the air they enclosed, kept her from completely turning over.

The Tacoatlanta with grapplers down watched the dire sight. Tentativeness changed into the wildest dismay on beholding the unfortunate Mexteo wallow and overturn. But for Budil and other leaders the crew would have surrendered at once, fearful of such fate; but these, with threats and blows, forced them to hoist the sails, while, abandoning the grapplers, the oars beat the water.

Within range of the catapult below the city a vast missile flew forth, striking the mainsail and tearing in from the mast, which snapped at the foundations and fell, drenching all with bounding waves, heaving the vessel greatly on the swelling wash and mingling the oars in confusion.

Cries of terror arose, drowned by irrepressible shouts of enthusiasm from the army. Some of the galley-slaves, mad with terror, leaped overboard and dived deeply so that they drowned; upon the catapult a man mounted, waving a cloak and gesticulating towards the artillerists, who wound down the great beam preparatory for another shot. All down the barricades clustered thousands of warriors, and now they began to stream through on to the waterway. On the pedestal of the colossus Mele, a water-god supporting one end of the architrave shadowing the steps of the river gate, stood Toltiah; on the top step was Azta, standing as a goddess in her palanquin, jubilant with triumph, who had travelled along the battlements in glorious victory.

Ignorant of the powers of the dire engine, the enemy believed it to be able to follow them up and sink the ship, and terribly alarmed by the startling warning they had received, hauled down the remaining sail; while a cloak was waved in answer to the one on shore, as the great warship sullenly rowed up to the waterway to surrender.

CAP. VI.

THE FIRST STEP OF FAME.

ENTHUSIASTIC crowds watched the galley, as, towing the hamper of two masts she came up and struck. There was no need for grapples: hundreds of hands clutched and held her, warriors swarmed over the bulwarks, and but for the authority of the chiefs she would have been sunk by sheer weight of numbers.

The crew landed, among them being a few of the notables of Zul, come on what they had deemed a pleasurable trip. Not a few were wounded by the fury of the night-surprise and the ceaseless missiles of the army; most of these were secretly murdered and with those who were already dead thrown overboard; while the warriors, enraged by the mischief wrought, hanged the Captain Budil from his own masthead. The body, barbarously profaned in the market-place, had the head struck off, the which was sent by a tall hunter to be cast into Zul in token of what would befall when Toltiah were master. A score of the Mexteo's crew, clinging to their wreck, were killed with sling-shots and arrows; while, under pretence of enrolment with the conquering legions, all the crew of the Tacoatlanta, together with those notables, were overcome by violence and murdered in a place beyond the walls.

And now all was bustle again and a rush of preparation for the interrupted passage of the army to be continued before the other war-ships might appear. All thoughts of gratitude to the gods were forgotten. Boats carried ropes across the river from bank to bank, and the wrecks of the two booms were by them hauled together and secured. Nezca's spies, looking in far-reaching circles for Izta, gave yet no sign of his approach; and now, crowding the boom and on rafts and boats, and thousands swimming, the army crossed; and the menace of the approaching

one, albeit disciplined and terrible, lost its sting. The ill-fated Mexteo, smashed and waterlogged, was drawn up to the waterway and secured, to be raised again as soon as preparations were ready; while a catapult was fitted on the Tacoatlanta and her masts replaced, the body of Budil being suspended by the heels from the foremast. Her management was left to the Talascans, who were used to the sea and river, and Akin commanded them.

The boom was crowded with arrogant conquerors, and in the sunny streets of Talascan women and children swarmed again, the fear of violence removed. They laughed and chatted and gazed with awe on the tall catapults, revering them as gods. To the populace the name of Huitza was a power in itself, for besides being that of a popular hero, it was, with Tekthah and Rhadaman, one of the three that reminded the people of the old days and the glory of the land. Shar-Jatal was hated as a brother who had objectionably seized a sire's power, and Izta, his right hand, was hated likewise for his upstart insolence and tyrannies; while Japheth was lauded with mighty enthusiasm, being called saviour of Talascan and Wielder of the bolts of the gods.

But on Azta and Toltiah the regards of the people were poured with a frenzied enthusiasm, and images were made of them and sold to be worshipped. And now with levers and inflated skins, (the people hauling on ropes,) the Mexteo was turned on her proper side, and, the water being bailed out, floated in ordinary fashion upon the water, the breach being repaired by skilled men and everything set in order. There were many bodies of drowned warriors within her, but these were flung with scant ceremony to the waves, while jubilant Talascans ran freely from bank to bank over the causeway. On this a catapult was constructed to hurl a volley of missiles, but at the first trial the levers broke and hurried violent death to many, nor was it until much time had passed that confidence in it was restored.

In the darkness of the night one of the two warships by the fords came down the river to see if aught had occurred, and dimly perceiving the Tacoatlanta, rowed up to her. Whose crew, also understanding what the crew of the galley took to

be the case, permitted the approach, and grappling her, made an easy capture; and thus Toltiah possessed three of the four vessels of the armada, and the people rejoiced greatly.

With the dawn of the next day the three warships sailed up the river, the great Tacoatlanta displaying at her fore the ill-fated Budil, dead; and at noon perceived where the rafts lay, and the other galley. The landing at the fords had been barricaded with pointed stakes and piles of wood, which in places showed where the devices of the enemy had fired it. These, believing the approaching ships to be full of their friends, shouted to them, and the crews replied; the while surrounding the galley, which was named the Tzan, the one captured being named Tizin. The vessel, being thus hemmed in, would have surrendered, but the savage attackers would take no tameness like this, and pouring over the sides, killed every man on board. Yet they too suffered in a great measure, for the Tzan's crew fought furiously as long as there was a man left.

The Axatlans and all those which were sent down to aid them were greatly enthusiastic seeing how things ran, and began to pour missiles upon the crowded rafts, of which there were three. These, with hot haste, began to make for the farther bank, but the crew of the Tacoatlanta, perceiving this, prepared to fall upon them, fitting also a missile on the catapult. This plunged between two of them, causing a great wash of water and much consternation; but they redoubled their efforts to escape as the huge galley bore down on them.

She struck the first with a devastating crash, again sending the foremast, with its horrid burden, overboard, with much havock to the bulwarks; but cutting this adrift, continued on, and by the crew going astern, in order to raise the long bows, the second raft was completely submerged beneath the mighty bulk of the vessel.

The river was crowded with heads and shoulders. Half-drowning men plunged about in their harness, making for the farther bank; but mad with excitement, the light warriors of Axatlan swam like fierce sharks after them, and the Mexteo and Tizin, victorious, came along, towering from the crimson waves. The high Tacoatlanta bore down on the third raft, and its crew,

perceiving this, and how merciless were their enemies, prepared to surrender their lives dearly; and as the dark mass reached them they leaped like cats upon the sides, or, clinging to the oars, thrust their spears through the port-holes to slay the rowers.

So furious was the attack and so desperate were the doomed warriors that, had there but have been the Tacoatlanta to contend with, the chances would have halted for a space. But the Mexteo and the Tzan bore down among the struggling men, and the fierce Axatlans swam and dived among them, stabbing their bewildered foemen on all sides, and many a haughty legionary died there in the crimson water. Not one escaped, for the swimming pursuers darted about and cut off every fugitive that the warships, awkwardly handled and fouling one another, could not get near.

Joyful messengers carried news of the victory to Toltiah, and vast rejoicings celebrated the return of the warships. The conquest of Zul appeared to be but a little thing to all that had been already accomplished, and it was greatly wished that Izta's army would appear.

Arrangements were made for the great march to the capital, a large guard being left behind for the protection of Talascan, and another at the fords, in the event of Izta slipping past their flank. Messengers were sent to all the cities far and near to bid as many as were able to come from their walls, to join the marching army; and these spread the certain news of the coming of Huitza and of the great successes that had attended him thus far. The armada was to stay in the river, guarding causeway and fords, and the former was not to be destroyed unless very seriously aiding a siege. Indeed it was well defended, for in addition to the catapult below the city that would keep rafts from coming up the river—unless, comprehending it, they forsook the centre of the stream for the farther side—there was that one in the midst of it, now faced to the shore from the city, that threw many bolts at once. Also messengers could always be landed by night to carry news to the army if necessary; yet those left behind thus were greatly discontented, and only on agreement of equal shares of spoil with the rest would they agree.

But the army refused to move without its women, loud demands

being made to bring them out from the city and the camp, and mocking insolence being cast at the leaders, who had brought their harems with them. The hunters and the more savage tribes were particularly clamorous, and the more degraded thousands became riotous. In vain their leaders explained the hindrance of a female following; they swore by all their gods they would not march without them, nor were the trained legionaries less obstinate. A body of the rabble suddenly attacked the camp of the Amazons, where was Azta with the wives and mistresses of Chanoc, Noah, and other chiefs, and this resulted in a furious and determined battle on both sides, which might have ended with dire results, for the rabble was largely reinforced continuously.

The Amazons fought with a noble fury free from any trace of fear, defending their terrified charges well and dealing death with their great axes; yet, fearful, I summoned Toltiah, who with his chiefs and Nezca's warriors, propitiated, attacked the rebels in the rear and drove them before their onslaught on to the vengeful weapons of their foes in front, all who escaped being publicly tortured before the army as an example to others.

But advised by Azta, Toltiah gave the army its women, which as they came over made a large crowd of themselves. There was a great wonderment at the delay of Izta's army, and the Tzantans wished to wait for it, feeling secure with the catapults and warships behind them, and mistrusting the quality of their vast armament. In the centre were the guards of Nezca and Chanoc, the Amazons were to the rear of these. Right and left were immense bodies of archers, spearmen and slingers, and unnumbered tribes and thousands of irregular warriors, hunters and savages. The forests here would prove a fearful trap for the advancing army, but by no signs of the flights of birds or animals, nor by far-circling scouting-parties could they perceive it.

The primitive hunters thought that the gods had devoured them, and the superstition of all was greatly exercised concerning this thing. Yet in the inaction an apathy began to settle down over all, and Toltiah, under pretence of visiting Azta, dallied long with Marisa, leader of the Amazons, and

wasted long whiles in foolishness with Azca, who was of great beauty, while the warriors gambled with their gold and metal ornaments, with their arms and armour, and with their women. They held gross competitions among themselves and shouted continually out of wantonness. There were jugglers among them and sword-swallowers, men who devoured fire, and women who stood naked, wreathed in flames and uttering incantations. Many were murdered and their bodies flung to the waves, and women giving birth to children killed them that they might not be troubled with them on the march. Sometimes bands of men were decoyed into a wild spot and killed, that their women might be obtained by the murderers, nor did the chiefs scruple to use this end to their enjoyment.

Also I looked upon a fearful sight, where many of the hybrid savages, hungry for food, crossed the river to where that crew of the Tacoatlanta was killed, and fed themselves upon such stark bodies as the wolves and vultures had left. Yet it was not much, for vast numbers of animals hung on the outskirts of the army, and overhead the eagles and vultures sailed in circles; but beneath the pile of bodies lay some untouched, and these the dark beings, rooting like hogs in the putrid mass, pulled forth and ate.

At length a captain of the archers, by name Maxo, disappeared, and the fear of what inaction would lead to terrified the leaders, so that the order was given to march. With scouts and flanking parties and a loose array of thousands of the irregular warriors leading, to throw the enemy into confusion when they came upon him, the forward movement began. Drums beat and whistles and trumpets shrilled above the shouts and songs, as with the war-cry of "Huitza and Zul!" the march to the Throne of Atlantis commenced.

And I, brooding upon the banks of the Hilen, rested in thought and looked around by night, when the bright stars reflected themselves in the quiet waters, with only the long boom and the shadowy masses of Talascan to speak of the presence of man. Yet thence methought I heard a shriek, and on the water were voices and soft moans, and many spiritual appearances. I longed for rest, for the sweet innocent love of

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such an one as Susi, whose pure face was ever before my mind with its deep, serious eyes, chiding my presence here. Yet with a fierce pang of anguish I turned me to contemplate Azta, my Love! I would not own to my mind that she did not love me, and thus I ever hoped and believed in a lie; and, yearning for the innocent and mighty joy and power of past times, could not leave her. What should happen now? I dared not consider the apparent character of Toltiah, her son and mine, nor what should come of it; I dared not pray to that Throne that ruled the Worlds to aid my Earthly love.

And thus I sat and pondered on that starry night, what time Toltiah marched with his legions to the conquest of Atlantis.



CAP. VII.

HUITZA AND TERROR.

IN Zul Shar-Jatal lay, surrounded by myrmidons and sycophants, yet standing uneasy beneath the crown and the great power that he felt himself unable to administer. From all the Imperial province of Hava the warriors of every city had been forced to the capital, lying in great camps within the walls and happy with the thought of great pillage over all the land, when they should march forth to conquer. But among the chiefs Acoa spread dissensions and thereby weakened the power of Shar-Jatal, there being also many of the haughty lords and ladies who plainly regarded him as an upstart, and only trusted to his cleverness to save them now from the vengeance of that prince whom terrifying rumour said again led the armies of the land. Handsome, vain and licentious, the usurper was withal indolent, and became greatly embittered by reason of the loss of his hand. The only one who bore a real regard for him for his own sake was Pocatepa, the wife of Ju, whom also Mah held in some thrall; and with a wicked passion she loved him, greatly upholding his power by her arts. More than all the rest was she disturbed at the rumour that Azta was in Talascan, because she knew Shar-Jatal loved the Tizin and that her power was very great in the land, all believing her to be under the special protection of Zul, and a goddess; thus, inwardly deploring the weakness of her chosen lord, she stirred him up to resist the failings of his nature, to take his power and dispense it as became the Tzan of Atlantis and master of a headstrong nation threatened with dissolution.

She held her lord completely by her willing pandering to his wishes, and both that twain were much discussed for their licences and wantonness. But they feared the friends of Ju,

particularly the chiefs Zebra, Eliaz, Ombar and Eto-massē, who were powerful among all such as lived by the sea and all sailormen, and whom they durst not put away secretly, (for already there was great disgust at many such proceedings,) and were uneasy and amazed as the time passed with no message of the sack of Talascan. Tek-Ra was in ruins and soon would Azco be brought in chains from Trocoatla to answer for his insolent rebellion; but, before that, Talascan must fall, Shar-Jatal's territory being far off.

Yet the Tzan's love for his mistress grew colder as a horror settled down upon him and a great distrust to every person. For Pocatepa warned him of Acoa, whom he relied upon greatly, and the thought came to him that the falling of the Solar symbol upon the throne had turned the regards of this one against him. Of a night the spirit of Azta appeared to him and fearful larvæ haunted his dreams: the shade of Huitza threatened him with atrocious gestures, and in sweating horror he perceived a whirling sword menace his life.

An uneasiness spread abroad as there came no news of Izta or Budil, and a gloom that was of unquiet consciences sprang up and lay over all. Everybody feared a certain vengeance for the sins of past years: the services to Zul were conducted fervently and the evil crowds bowed down before their divinities, performing those rites which were abominable and obscene, prostituting themselves to their own foul creations. In the silence they perceived an approaching Terror, and committed vast excesses, hoping to make up by the exhausting and reckless enjoyment of to-day for what awful thing might come to-morrow.

And Mah, mindful also of his ambition to become ruler in Zul and the first of a Priestly line, persuaded to his scheme a great multitude of other priests and as many followers as they could collect for the purpose of seizing the power when opportunity offered, which plan came to the ears of Acoa, who was not unwilling that there should be dissension in the city, for the army there was very strong and there was much material of war and many engines; so that any civil strife would greatly weaken them. And the plan being ripe, Pocatepa was

summoned by Mah and bidden to administer to her lord a certain potion that would destroy him.

But alone with him in their apartments her heart failed her because of the love she had for him, and summoning the Captain of the Guard, whose name was Bel, she bade him see the watch was well kept, and adjured him on his life to seize any loiterer by the palace, whomsoever it might be. Whereat Shar-Jatal was greatly disturbed and demanded what such orders might portend.

“My dear lord,” said the weird woman, smiling on him, “this day would I show thee how my love for thee triumphs over all considerations of power. Watch thou!”

Now it was the time of sunset, and on a mirror of polished gold the great light flashed, dazzling and beauteous, glittering also on a black veil covered with bright metal stars that overshadowed the flashing circle. From the ceiling there hung diaphanous draperies like clouds, and cabalistic symbols were set on the walls; upon a pedestal sat a huge black ape, and beneath, in chains, was crouched a human figure with the head enclosed in a bronze cage. This was old Na, on whom the dire sorceress had rivetted the incubus because of her refusal to concoct certain subtle perfumes that Azta was envied for, and this cage prevented any free movement on the part of the old woman.

Pocatepa, wearing the mystic insignia of Neptsis, reclined on a throne-like seat, of which the arms were carven to represent a large sort of beetle that came up, shining, from the earth of a night to fly in circles; which also was her Divinity, her slaves and guards wearing its emblem upon them. Her footstool was a block of marble formed to represent the same insect, and over it lay a cloth covered with scales of innumerable elytræ of the real beetle and iridescent with bright stones. Behind the throne was a mystic circle of luminous atoms, the centre representing the moon, and thousands of stars filling the circumference; yet only I knew the awful significance of what the daring idea pretended.

The lady summoned a slave, commanding him to strike from off the head of Na the bronze cage, which, being done, the old woman stood forth free. Half she hoped her mistress had

caused this, and on her wrinkled face was a smile as she waited what should come.

“Come hither,” said Pocatepa, her harsh voice attuned to sweetness; “come and drink to my lord and me from this golden goblet that shall usher in thy freedom. See, my lord, in her hands I place the cup, and soon perchance shall we envy the lot of this old slave.”

Amazed at her words, the bowed woman took the massy cup, brimmed with generous wine, yet methinks she drank a curse to the pair instead of a blessing, as Pocatepa threw herself back against her uneasy lord and watched with an evil glitter in her eyes.

Na dropped the bowl and her sunken eyes grew large as they rested on the sorceress before her. She swayed and sank to the ground, and in an instant a slight froth rose to her lips and the golden skewer through her nostrils was flecked with tiny drops of blood. So she stayed, dreadful in silent immobility, and then Pocatepa spoke.

“She hath passed, my lord, and is free, whilst ourselves—”

“What is this, woman!” demanded the Tzan, clutching the hilt of his sword, and greatly dismayed.

His mistress cast herself upon him, kissing his lips and caressing him. “Fear not,” she said, “the danger is passed, and what might have come to thee love hath turned aside”: and to him she revealed the heavy plot of Mah; while I, watching her amorous play, wondered why only to me should no love be given.

And of her sort Pocatepa was fair to look upon. Clad in a black, transparent mantle, her eyes more brilliant than the shining plates on her forehead and of a mystic fascination, with bright diamonds gleaming in her teeth, she appeared as a goddess, yet of evil. Her breasts were bare, the mantle gathered closely beneath them by a belt covered with symbols; her arm was encircled by a living snake, fastened by tiny gold skewers and rings, and tremulating occasionally, causing myriads of little gems with which it was studded to scintillate, whilst its forked tongue waved incessantly.

The Tzan suffered her caresses sullenly, fearing her somewhat,

and uneasy at his position, yet shamelessly she importuned his embraces. Suddenly it grew dark, and in the darkness I saw Acoa as before I had seen him appear to Azta. The two people gazed around, believing some power of Mah to be upon them, and thinking the potency of the poison in the dead slave at their feet to be rising to their brains, yet hoping it to be but the coming of night.

Still the darkness seemed to roll down in palpitating waves, almost visible, and the throne-like settee, from which they had arisen, stood out gradually in fearful relief against a background of phosphorescent light in which circles seemed to revolve all ways. To their sudden fright at such proximity they perceived a figure seated there, which forbade them to stir; directing their attention to where a clear round of brightness showed the mirror standing, untouched by the surrounding obscurity. Whispers, as of voices, floated through the air, and a blast of deadly chill made the terrified pair shiver, while an impression that the figure, in the proportions of a giant, huge, black, awful, had arisen and was regarding them, held them spell-bound. Their hairs crept and the blood ran cold at their hearts, as their eyes, dazzled by the luminous appearances and the moving blackness, fixed themselves on the clear bright surface of the mirror that appeared to regard them as a great eye, their straining optics directed and focussed by the darkness around until it seemed as though they gazed down a tunnel into a very bright place. The mind contracted itself to this observation alone, and with all their souls they stared at the disc of glowing light that claimed the attention irresistibly.

The darkness around gave place to another phenomenon, that was not light, for there were no shadows and nought was visible, yet was no longer darkness, for a bright atmosphere assimilated itself with the brightness of the mirror. There was a feeling of the spirit standing alone in infinite space, expectant: a possession of fear, a wish to be elsewhere, as an impression of passing long periods was apparent. Years, centuries, appeared to roll by, unmarked, unbounded; there was nought to start from, nothing to be reached; only a knowledge of life in a glowing atmosphere, a sensation of wonder and waiting; and

through it all the circle of light compelled the terrified attention that strained every tight nerve to concentrate itself yet more fully in a fearful effort of contemplation.

On rushing pinions the soul sped to the centre of potential attraction, yet never reaching it: on and onward with panting heart and vast exhaustion, striving with bursting nerves to reach a point whence came sounds less dream-like every instant, and certain complications of vague movement.

As if a veil had been lifted away the sounds deepened and a Thing was visible, wavy and shadowy—a mass; indefinable and nebulous. The atmosphere shook and a figure stood forth, vast, grisly and of faint outlines; a larva that overpowered by the horrid sensation of being in the presence of a floating cloud of black immensity with the knowledge that this dread thing was a man. The weird horror was overpowering; it would suffocate, overwhelm in oceans of air and in silence made awful by the movements that caused no sound.

The glow had given place to a pale green brightness: the vague shadow slowly took shape and form and the outlines appeared, human, yet how vast and unnatural! These contracted and the shadow darkened.

An appearance as of a stroke of lightning sprang from obscurity and vanished: the figure seemed to move and stretch its limbs as awakening from sleep, and, in an increasing light that brought out its features with distinctness, to turn its face on the expectancy. The eyes opened, the lips compressed themselves tightly as a frown settled on the face, and the Tzantan Huitza looked again forth in human guise.

A long shaft quivered through his body, the blood-dripping point protruding through his chest. With a movement, as of a dream, he drew the weapon from his back, and, poising it, cast the long shaft upwards. A flash of brightness fell, dazzling and terrible, and a shriek cleft the atmosphere.

* * *

In the streets of Zul was great rioting and disorder, where the adherents of Mah and the priests who followed him met the legions sent by Shar-Jatal to take them the next morning.

Terrified by the vision he believed to have been sent by Mah, the Tzan wished to seize him and demand an explanation of it, which thing Pocatepa greatly urged; and for a lesson to all whom it might profit to learn, it was commanded that not one of the rebellious people should escape.

And many, on the appearance of the armed legions, fled and disclaimed all knowledge of such a plot, but many joined battle, led by priests, and very furious in fanaticism.

There were huge missiles cast from roofs that crushed many, and long streams of blood trickled down the streets, but the warriors of the Tzan overcame the rioters, putting them to the sword; and as many of them as escaped fled to the temple of Neptsis, which was accounted a sanctuary for the vanquished and such as would plead for life. But Shar-Jatal, reckless in his wrath and terror, caused them to be slain, and the blood of scores drenched the outraged altar of the goddess until all had ceased to live. And among them were many of the eunuch priests of Zul, but none could find Mah.

The city was uneasy by reason of this thing and many others, and in the evening the people discussed many things concerning the rebellion and the massacre of the priests of their gods. They were much exercised in their minds also by the lack of news from before Talascan, to where swift messengers had been sent; for they believed that the great army of Izta and the warships of Budil should by this have returned triumphant with great numbers of captives and much spoil. They vowed oblations to the gods and told how the altars of Zul should smoke with grateful sacrifices, for Acoa had said there should be vengeance taken for the murder of men who ministered to the gods.

Yet the warriors by the walls sang lewd songs, unheeding, and talked profanely among themselves of the same subjects. A group sat recounting what they would do when the rebel cities were conquered, and disclosed the grossness of their minds by rehearsing tortures, and what would happen to this one and that, and laying indecent bets on various performances that they would undertake. Something fell by them with a thud, and, looking up quickly, they perceived a long spear

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quivering in the ground; and, gyrating around it, a human head, fastened by the long, thick hair.

It was the head of Budil, and dismay fell on the city.

And all, remembering the rumour concerning Huitza, and fearful that they, the attackers, might well become the attacked, forsook their waning arrogance concerning the conduct of the war. Hurried councils were held, whereat it was commanded that the huge granaries of the city should be filled, and flocks and herds from without should be driven in. The bolder ones were minded to go forth and avenge the insult, yet on all men's hearts lay the fear of treachery and unscrupulous ambition; and at all councils were many dissentient voices to every scheme of safety, mocking at caution.

CAP. VIII.

A VISION OF WARNING.

WITH songs and merriment Toltiah's army marched onward, drums, whistles and all manner of instruments of music sounding, wild and discordant, above the tramp of myriad feet, waving spear-points scintillating like gems above the moving masses, o'ertopped by all sorts of standards and rallying-poles of various tribes. Reinforcements joined them occasionally, and thousands of wolves and wild dogs followed the march, while overhead ever hung that winged army of fierce birds which all believed would carry the souls to the Sun. With the Amazons went Azta in her slung couch, accompanied by Toltiah and some of the Tzantans and a great number of messengers.

They passed rapidly along, camping around villages by river-banks or on plains, where hasty shelters were erected for the Tizin and one or two of the more luxurious among them. The women following the army shared the hardships and the stony couches of the men, and a few joined the ranks of the Amazons; yet such were very few, for the manner of living of these women-warriors was hard, and one among them was put to death for a violation of chastity that would have passed as nought among the women of the towns.

Now in the distress of my thoughts I had held myself from Azta; yet not blaming her for my sorrow, which was caused by myself, but because I cared not to force her regards. Therefore I kept aloof in a great measure, concerned by sad thoughts, unfitted for Earth and fallen from Heaven. And in those days I loved the sea, for in its restless waves was my soul comforted, and its voice cried to me from wind-kissed wave-top and hidden depth of unknown mystery. Yet my passion for Azta tormented me, and one night I came in to

her, the army being encamped among uncouth ruins that caused much amaze, herself being beneath a canopy. All around blazed the innumerable fires of the multitudes, who pulled down the luxuriant vegetation hiding up the old places that but few of the hunters even knew of; and among the high mounds many believed there lurked the larvæ of that ancient people whose existence they perceived in the ruins by sundry rude weapons of war.

I looked upon my Love with the same wild, deep yearning as of old, and perceived her to be affrayed at my presence, whereat I grieved sadly.

“Be not in fear of me, O my Love!” I cried, embracing her tenderly; “have we not conversed enough for thee to trust in me? I will not force thee, my Azta; neither indeed can I, for the heart that is not fully given is not given at all, and though for a few brief moments our souls mingled, yet thou canst never love me.”

“Yet I do love thee, Beloved.” Her words faltered under my stern and searching glance that pierced her soul as the eyes of the angels Zora and Zarabel sought in the tombs for what the professions denied. Kneeling beside her, I kissed her forehead with a chaste salute and took her hand in mine.

She looked out to where in the flickering fire-light dark shadows stalked slowly at times across the space of vision, and imperiously bade the young slave-girl who combed her hair, retire.

“O Asia,” she said, “to-night my thoughts go very deep and I would speak to thee, whom I fear not; yet when I see thy tall form come with such stately stride and such solemn majesty something terrifies me. Nay, hear me,” she said, as I made as though to speak; “to-night, I know not why, I think of that night on which I first saw thee. Yonder shines the moon as it shone then, and still those spirits fly, perchance the same ones, in the mystic shadows; yet then I fretted with vain hopes and impotent ideas that now will be fulfilled. For see, poor Love, in this strange being that is our child hast thou given me an accomplished ambition to thine own disastrous cost, for also as thou art ever before my mind’s eye, majestic, silent and

sublime, I see in thine eyes the soul's agony, (which I know,) the hopeless, despairing horror of one who looks on the heart and only sees there a forced sentiment that dies in the absence of its object. In Toltiah I see Huitza, the one who aroused in my bosom a passion pure, strong and unconquerable, and at times methinks he is in verity a reincarnation of my Love, a child of Zul, grand beyond Earth, almost as thyself. Yet have we many loves and next to this comes the love of thee, who deserves of me the most that I can give, a better love than any that Earth could offer."

She ceased and a shudder passed through her, great sobs broke from her heart. The barriers of my callousness were broken down.

"O God! O God!" I cried in the torture of hell, "behold, I love thee more than all the times before!" A long time passed in horror and darkness, a period of wild, awful grief, where embracing one another we wept. Ah, the hopelessness of Earth! The subtlety of Souls! My Love's words misjudged me, for though I deserved her love I had forsaken my own fealty to Heaven to strive to obtain it; and now, Ruler of the Worlds! I had lost all!

And thus we stayed until Toltiah prayed admittance from without, and entering in all his splendour of person stared to perceive me.

"Welcome, my child," I said, with a bitter gnawing pain at my heart, noting how the moonlight shone on his ruddy mane that fell over his breast and shoulders. He blushed deeply at the hesitance of address, and bowed low in somewhat awed salutation, yet with a certain hauteur; and because of the place wherein we were encamped I was minded to show a thing.

"Thou hast attained to a great station, O youth," I said, "wherein lies much danger to such whose inclinations tend to evil and unseemly ambition, and whose ardour overruns experience. Great indeed canst thou reign, leader of a free and enlightened people, if thou wilt follow the laws of Jehovah, the God of thy fathers and of me. Cast pride away from thee, for of what may mortal man boast himself? Body and estate are given and taken away, and for gifts should such be thankful, remembering

they are bestowed by One who can remove them at will. For consider! Thou wert a babe, or beautiful or hideous it were not thy making; naked, than didst not clothe thyself; mighty or of no account, it was written so in Heaven; dead, thou canst not aid thy Soul, nor will thy God-given Talents do aught but demand of thee for why they were used this way or that, save it is in the way of the meaning of thy Creator, to whom thou art in debt for all."

Toltiah hung his head, but an inner anger overspread his countenance, and looking upon him, I felt wrath to perceive a mortal so arrogant.

"This night," I said, "will I show thee a thing for a warning and an example, and to thee also, O Queen. Look upon the mounds. They are the past dwellings of a race that lived long centuries before the foot of Adam pressed Eden's soil. Come and see what may be revealed concerning them who followed not the plan of God on Earth, thereby causing confusion."

I looked on them with the look of power that compels the mind of man, so that they believed themselves to stand upon a mound, and, gazing around, noted that they were the only people in sight and the time was of noon. The army was gone, and in their ears that which seemed to be rather a thought than a voice spoke:

"What matter? Men come and go, and the great event of yesterday is a fading remembrance of to-day, a sentiment of absolute indifference. Only God and Love go on for ever."

They looked upon one another, yet without emotion, and gazed around on the mounds, nor were surprised to perceive a large structure of stones and rock near them. Upon this a figure of human outlines squatted without motion, and they even deemed it dead; but as Toltiah made a step towards it the creature fled with precipitancy, seeming to doubt whether to escape to some holes near by in a hill, or to caves formed by huge masses of stone builded one upon another. On perceiving no pursuit it returned to the stone structure, uttering a loud cry.

Other cries answered, and several figures ran past them, of great size and bulk, most of them larger than Toltiah, leaping

with great speed on hands as well as feet. One stopped near the pile, regarding them fixedly with an eye that looked forth from the back of its head, α which, slightly moving, gave to the weird orb a rolling movement. It was a human-like creature of uncouth and vast muscular development, with enormous feet and long arms, and clothed all over with red hair; and thus it rested with its back to them, ready to fly to its retreat.

The watchers stood still, and presently from similar erections all around other forms issued, vast and weird, most moving backward, ready to run again to the caves, but the bolder faced them. Some carried huge clubs, and amongst them were beings of monstrous growths and frightful aspects, half human and half animal, which uttered strange cries.

"Behold," the voice said, "the disorder of Earth and to what things the violence of Man leads him; his thoughts ever tend to evil and to the working of iniquity, and how can the purpose of God be fulfilled when His laws are set at nought?"

Then appeared a great shadow, moving rapidly upon the earth, and looking up they perceived a winged creature of the shape of the animals that lived in the Hilen river. Azta cried out to me to save them, while Toltiah loosened his sword and grasped his spear firmly, advancing his shadowy buckler.

"Fear not," I said to my Love; "yet now does thine heart know that I can protect thee more than this one which is half of Earth."

"In thy love I trust," she said.

"It is well," I answered her; "and ever in thy nature shall there war distinctly the Spirit and the Flesh. Yet watch further."

The inhabitants of the stone city had all vanished as the winged beast swooped. It was a marine animal, β and Azta, looking through an opening in the masses of stone, perceived

α This third optic has been often stated by modern writers to have existed in archaic man, the seat of it being the pineal gland. Dr. Carter Blake of the London Anthropological Society tells us that Palæontology has ascertained that there was actually a third real organ of vision among the animals of the Cenozoic age, and especially the Saurians, a fact upheld by Sir Richard Owen, who points out its presence in many fossil animals.

β An entirely unrecognisable species. If allied to the Pterodactyle, it would carry man's antiquity very far back.

the scintillating glitter of wavelets, and fancied she heard the roar of the surf beating on an iron-bound shore. As though conscious of a certain anxiety she glanced around in search of something she could not give form to.

But now the inhabitants of the stone caves had crept forth with stealth upon the beast. Two huge clubs, simultaneously applied, blinded it, and with uncouth cries it rose into the air, falling with a tempest of beating pinions, amid streams of blood, among the rocks, where it was despatched with cruel weapons.

“Thou seest that without these caves man could not live among such beasts as the one thou hast seen,” I said: “it is his nature to live in colonies together and to build cities; yet, with vague longings for grandeur, which is of the soul, he combines the body of an animal smaller and feebler than the brute beasts, but directed to violence by skill of imagination. And see the pity of it! that mind that should steer to great accomplishments, disregarding the laws of Nature that serve for a mind to the beasts, is exerted to commit all manners of confusion. See how he would pervert the ordinances of the Creator!”

Azta looked and perceived horrible shapes that basked in the sun, being scarce human. She understood that a period had passed, and these abortions were the offspring of foul unions, their vague eyes lacking any emotion; which thing would in course of time, affect all creation. One came forth, bearing a small new-born monster, which by-and-by it dashed upon the ground and proceeded to tear limb from limb to devour, others coming up likewise for the horrid repast.

With curdling blood Azta turned to me. “Such was the world,” I said, “before Adam; one long series of evolutions, of failure through sin, of destruction and re-creation. See, the end of this degenerate race is come!”

Water trickled between the rocks, running and falling, while around was an amorphous darkness that had come instantly and yet seemed to have been gathering for a long period, and in the water a long way off lay a fearful vision. A long dark body, motionless and phosphorescent; a giant shark whose evil eye looked menace and death, watching and waiting with others

the flooding waters, and heedless of the storm. The waves swirled in increasing volumes through the rocky interstices, and gurgling sounds and little squeaks arose as hundreds of tiny monsters were swept out from lower caves where they had been hidden. Many hideous females ran forth also, and many that were feeble or sick, but the waters surrounded them on all sides.

Cast down and tossed about, sucked beneath the waves in vortices and dashed on rocks, the wretched beings died; yet still hundreds of terrified creatures ran from the caves and climbed to the highest rocks, fighting and struggling among themselves for any point that offered above the waves. A tempest of waters swept down from the sky, and animals mingled with human beings in the rush for degraded and impossible life.

A vast creature with floating mane, stranded on the stormy waves, beat the waters wildly with distorted limbs, throwing them, leaping in torrents of foam in its death-struggles, from a trunk that elongated its hybrid head, the while plunging under water the strangling forms of smaller beasts and men. The shark was among them now, and horrid things that were more like vegetables than animals drew down with slimy tentacles the miserably struggling creatures beneath the waves encrimsoned with blood.

Now to the horizon spread a long expanse of heaving waters from which all of life had disappeared, save where the fins of sharks cut the waves as the monsters searched for more victims. The deluge had ceased, and in the waters all was still; but from them seemed to rise larvæ of vast shapes, that, spreading over all the sky, became clouds.

"Thus after death alone are such of use," I said, "contributing to the development of another generation by causing the elements of the atmosphere to keep their proper proportions, as their bodies nourish the earth."

The waters subsided and the hills arose, the stony monuments erected instinctively by a gregarious race showing above the diminished waves. The Earth, pregnant with life that fed full on its great feast of animal matter, threw forth vegetation and covered them all.

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Another race of men was there, filling all the Earth and wondering at the great collections of piled-up rocks and flower-grown mounds that no records told of. A camp—the army—the dawning day and remembrance of the march on Zul.

“Now write it in your hearts,” said I, “that thou hast looked upon the primitive Man, that might have developed and grown to give great praise to his Creator, but was hindered by his own folly and weakness and was destroyed before he could stray yet farther. Unto whom also came Adam, the Last-created Man, to lead the way to Heaven. And having thus seen, beware!”

CAP. IX.

THE MARCH OF TOLTIAH.

NOW there came news of the army of Izta, brought by the scouts that were far in advance of Toltiah and his legions, which said that the warriors of Zul were encamped in some far-spreading villages that lay by a river, round a great pallo. The army halted and the chiefs held a consultation as to what should be done, advising a great attack by night, which, being agreed upon, the legions were secretly disposed so that an onslaught should be made upon all sides at once, and chiefly was it arranged for a great number to surround the pallo and prevent any access to so impregnable a citadel whose reduction would take many men a long while to accomplish.

And in the darkness, when Izta's fires blazed afar and the wanton legionaries debauched themselves with the enforced cheer of the villagers, it was but the myriad-voiced war-whoops of their enemies that gave them warning of the portending fate; nor could they, unprepared, withstand the rushing thousands that poured upon them lying in disorder. The ribald songs and merriment were drowned in shouts and the shrieks of women, the blazing fires were quenched with spouting blood, while round the useless engines of war the corpses lay thickly where men gathered as to a standard and fought hard for life. The Tzantan Izta with some of his great chiefs, nobles of Zul and men of high degree, fought fiercely and slew many of their enemies, but the great hordes pressed upon them so that they went down in the rush and were seen no more.

By the lights of flaming huts the combatants fought, but soon there was but a great dark field whereon lay dead and dying, and in fear the carnage stopped. Only the degraded and monstrous savages from afar, that followed the army, crept among

the bodies to gorge their obscene stomachs on the flesh and blood of men and to steal whatsoever they could of what pleased their fancy. And the next day, of those left which were unable to escape because of the encircling warriors, most were killed, but some were taken into the legions of Toltiah.

There was great joy because of the victory, for many villagers had escaped upwards into the pallo and served greatly in preventing Izta's troops from gaining access to it, being in favour of starvation rather than sharing the unhappy fates of their companions in the lower villages. These rejoiced, being made much of as allies in the enthusiasm of victory, and of the enemy there were many women captured and engines of siege and much store of arms and food and prepared herbs for smoking, and luxuries which were distributed all that day; and in the night, when the legions encamped around the flesh-fed bonfires, when the swift bats flew above the countless numbers of the living and the dead, they drank deep draughts of wine and shouted with enthusiasm, toasting their leaders with little stint.

Thus with great joy was the march resumed, and the kites and eagles fed full on the bodies that stayed upon the field. The savages were forced to move the engines, being also the carriers of stores; and to the farthest parts were sent more messengers to declare victory and demand reinforcements.

From the West came other companies from Chalac and Trocoatla, tall plainsmen, enduring and hardened by border warfare, leaving their defended walls; and many of whole villages from there also. They marched beneath the standards of the Vulture and the Serpent, and rallied to the cry of the large prairie antelope that carried a formidable spiral horn between its eyes, the horny base protecting the whole forehead. This cry, which was a succession of grunting barks, emitted from the vast chest of a Trocoatlan troop-leader, was in itself sufficient to appal, and the ferocious appearance of these men rendered their presence welcome. The warriors of Chalac wore a circle of ostrich plumes dyed black at the tips, these nodding head-dresses lending to them a terrific aspect of warlike majesty, as of a portentous storm-cloud moving along. The Governor Iru led these, a squat man of vast build; those of

Trocoatla were commanded by the Prince Azco, wearing the vulture-winged helmet of a son of Tekthah, between which wings was a grand mass of ostrich-feathers.

Past cities and villages, levying tribute, and through vast forests marched the legions, and ever reinforcements followed; for the most remote peoples wished to be present when Zul should be sacked, and great hordes of these were of tiny stature and monstrous forms, pink-eyed and with spots and stripes like the brutes, squeaking and making unseemly noises for speech. They fought over the offal of the encampments with the birds and beasts, and my heart was sore as I looked upon these poor little beings brought into a world of lust and loathing by the unnamed sins of others.

By great streams where quaint animals dived beneath the waters, and herds of others fled inland, were yet more ruins, vast and grotesque, wherein perchance lived, in those days when all was huge, some mighty nation that had subjugated all the land and then had vanished, and no man might tell whence their footsteps had gone. And in the desert were great refuse heaps of encampments and vanished towns of the nomad tribes, and tall mounds that were like the Pyramids, yet being formed of piled-up rocks and stones, upon which many of the army that were of the plains cast more stones. And these I learned were the rude mausoleums of departed chiefs, and beside them were the smaller ones which rose above their wives, being thus in the pair, male and female, which God had ordained. And the stones, being first cast above the Clay to prevent the wolves carrying it off, were greatly added to by all who passed by, until at length they became of great height and pyramidal. Thus were they copied in such form in stone of comely proportions for a symbol and a thing of awe; for indeed there rested upon these buildings a vast solemnity as the last of the army passed by and left them standing in their solitary state above that which looked ever with upturned face to the Heavens. Yet few saw them thus, for a thick dark cloud of dust arose behind and above the multitudes that spread to the horizon. And occasionally also there were tall pallos built upon hills, to which their inhabitants fled in fear, leaving their fruitful fields; for

such people, cultivating the soil and being always upon the same place, (whereby they could easily be found), were preyed upon by any nomads who chose. Yet within the strong citadel they were safe, for it was well stored with food and watered by a stream to which a tunnel led. And these Toltiah compelling to promise aid in case of retreat, left in safety.

Past the cities of En-Ra, Sham, and strong Surapa, which were in Astra, they went with much misfortune to the inhabitants and detriment to the flocks and herds. And in those days Toltiah became enamoured of Marisa, who led the Amazons, notwithstanding that she would have none of him and sought to escape from his attentions. And Azta looked favorably on her child's desire, pleased that his masculine inclinations should prevail, admiring the Amazon and greatly esteeming her, for the strange romantic legends of her race caused the Tizin to wish to retain her among the people as an ally. Also her pride and love for Toltiah could not brook the thought of an alliance with an ordinary woman, or dreadful contingencies that her spirit revolted at; and her eyes, blinded with arrogance of his prowess, could not perceive his leaning to shameful pleasures that would supplant all other ambitions. Yet she besought him that he would tarry until such time as he was lord of Zul, telling him many things concerning the city; of its power and strength and greatness, the multitude of the buildings and the beauty of the courts and gardens; of the sea-moat surrounding it and the massy terror of the walls. A little he remembered the palace, especially as concerned the thronging stairways and the lions that guarded the Hall of the Throne. For Azta had oftentimes taken him thither and placed him upon the seat, bowing before him in adoration.

To all these things he listened, and was also greatly advised by Noah, who was as a father to him, and his sons as brothers. And he regarded them also the more because he had covert regards for Susi, the wife of Shem, whom in secret he importuned greatly; whereby he caused the fair woman much sorrow and shame, and myself also. For in him I perceived the consummation of my sin, and at times could I have slain him, yet I dared not.



QUEEN OF THE WAVES, THAT RAISED HER TEMPLES FROM THE DEEP WATERS.

One day a great cry ran through the army, as emerging from a forest they perceived very far off a vast white city. They ran to high places and climbed trees to gaze upon the beauty that crowned the wilderness, howling jubilantly and demanding if this were Zul. Most knew it well, the Queen of the Waves, that raised her beauteous temples of hidden vice from the deep waters; the savages gazed in fear, the half-wild hunters and plainsmen with remembrances of wild enjoyments on those terraced heights. All thirsted for her painted halls and open coffers, her splendour of treasures, and women whose wild legends and burning glances given amid scenes of furious excitement raised to the wonder of unearthly beings. The licentious soldiery dreamed of the charms of queens whose exaggerated glories filled them with ecstasy, loaded with jewellery; and they swung their great arms like birds soaring for flight as they looked on the walls that stood between them and their desires, nor saw in imagination those walls splashed horribly with blood—*their* blood—neither perceived *their* souls going up to the Sun in the smoke of Zul's diabolical flame.

Marisa and her warriors gazed with intense curiosity on those far walls, laughing with childish glee over the beauty of the towering architecture, beating their shields with spear and axe-head and smiting their bosoms with open palms in ferocious gladness.

But with what emotions Azta gazed, believing she could perceive the long red building that lay beneath the Temple and the gardens where the fountains played! Where were the old faces now? where old Na? When would it be that she should rule the land from that red palace? By her stood Toltiah and the family of Noah, Chanoc, Nezca, Nahuasco and many Tzantans, and to such as were ignorant of the walls she pointed out where the great ports lay, and where the larger buildings.

The stragglers were hastened up, and the haulers of the huge engines sweated at their task with a joyful knowledge that soon it would be over. Nearer and nearer they drew until at evening time the gods that sat in rows on the walls could be perceived where the Sun gilded them in the clear atmosphere, and the dark waving line of thousands of human beings; and

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the devout or superstitious bowed themselves, falling upon their knees before the sublime majesty of the Sacred City whose Divinity they came to take from the usurper and exalt in jubilant greatness.

And Shar-Jatal and the people, looking forth through the night, felt their hearts sink within them as their fears were realised, perceiving, as it were, a flaming sea encompassing them about, where a myriad twinkling fires showed the hosts of the enemy stretched in a vast semicircle from the eastern coast-line of Astra away westward and south until they shone again on the sea-shore eastward below the city; and fancied in their ears they perceived the shout of "Huitza! Huitza and Zul!" mingled with the screams of victims where the reed roofs of Lasan, Bab-Ala, Dar, Bari and Ko, and three score cities of the coast, fell in flaming ruins on ravished women and murdered warriors.

C A P. X.

THE NIGHT OF SPIRITS.

AND in the night Toltiah slept, and as he slept he dreamed. And ignorant of the storming of walls or the conduct of the long siege, save by the councils of others, his bold imagining perceived the legions climb upwards to victory, and himself the ruler of all the land.

In spirit he walked free of Earth, and reviewed the past and all the triumphs up to the present, where before him lay that which should be lost or won. Before his eyes a Shape weighed in balances the two events and bade him consider well as he watched. And coming in vivid reality, as a living thing through the mazes of a dream, an Elemental spirit approached from the walls, a grisly shape of majesty and fear.

“Go back,” it said, “go back: for thou art begotten of that which is hateful to Zul, and wilt thou arrogantly dare to present thyself antagonist to the Lord of Light?”

Toltiah, in dismayed argument, said: “But who art thou? and by what name art thou known?”

And the Elemental spirit answered: “I have no name, being but the wisdom of Pocatepa; and of that wisdom I say, go back, nor dare that which is more strong than thou.”

There came also another spirit of a bright and shining countenance, which said, “The city is thine, for in itself is it divided: in its heart have I sowed dissensions.”

Whereat Toltiah was amazed, looking now upon the walls, and now upon the camp; blown upon the winds of conflicting sayings that led his own self captive, yet rebelling in obstinate pride.

“And who art thou?” he asked.

“I am of Acoa and am even as thyself,” answered the bright

spirit: "that which gave me life has transmitted it to thee. But of greater earthly power, thou shalt greater prevail on Earth. The city is thine already, the seed of destruction is sown: sever the aqueduct and storm the walls."

But a voice said:

"Happy is the man who never reaches his highest ambition, for there is nought beyond; save those closed doors, the gift required to enter which is not thine to bestow."

Amazed at all these things the dreamer stood, nor answered a word. And voices contended in the air and all around him, as though Heaven warred in argument concerning a vexed question; and when it appeared at times that one would speak with him, a multitude of tongues drowned such speech.

Yet, compelled by some power, the Shades of Huitza and Ju demanded the vengeance of Atlantis upon Shar-Jatal; and opposing them fiercely, the Elemental spirits of Bel, the captain of Pocatepa's guards, and Arioch the archer dared the bold besieger to farther annoy the city where slept the dust of Tekthah, the chosen abode of Zul.

To him thus Nezca:

"Contend not in wanton argument of mind with such as these, child of Azta. To thee is the sceptre of Atlantis, and the opening gates of Zul shall hail thee conqueror crowned with wisdom and glory. In thy hands lie the powers of life—and death—and that which shall come of thee shall live for ever in song. Up, up, Atlantis! Nor craven fears shall stay thy march of glory and death when great Toltiah leads the legions to victory."

He ceased, and a great multitude of voices echoed:

"Up, up, Atlantis! up, for Toltiah and victory!"

And a throne grew up beneath him, reaching far above the Earth, so that its top touched Heaven. Whereon seated, half in fear, yet arrogant withal, the Chief surveyed the populous places. And certain balances were hung before him, wherein were weighed affairs of grave importance and momentous, yet with hardness of heart he perceived not the reason of such, daringly seeking other things in impatient longing. A desire for self-glorification entirely absorbed him, and he wished to

obtain the Word whereby all becomes subservient; so that, carried away irresistibly, his mind conceived the most outrageous powers whereby he became possessed of a fatal force of blasting and destructive magnitude. Transcending all capable power he entered the Infinite, and by potency of birth begot the memory of past and vaguely experienced things, increasing in bigness of perception until he confronted an intangible Veto. Appalling in its gloomy menace the shadowy barrier forbade all vision, and an impious fury arose in his heart as such hindrance.

The glorious throne sank in silence, folding up within itself and shrinking to small dimensions: and from the silence arose a sweet voice.

"Is there none to plead with this Soul?" it asked in thrilling mournfulness; "behold, it is a Soul that lives and will live for ever."

But a great voice answered the sweet pleader:

"The soul of Man on Earth belongs to Man, neither can aught direct it, save communion with God which is its Father and itself."

"May it not pray for guidance and be guided?"

"Too dear are the prayers of these my Self-children to pass unheeded, Beloved, yet is volition given with life."

"Can there not be instructors among them to lead the way to Heaven?"

"Not though Myself descended for their guidance would they follow. Man must lead Man, but God can lead the willing soul by love and sympathy."

"And this one will lead Mankind astray."

"There is a God, dear lover of Souls."

Then was placed within the dreamer's hand a balance. And on one side were many desirable things, yet of evil, and in the other were all wisdom and moderation. Nor stayed the level scales for an instant, but by virtue of the holder's bias the evil side weighed downward so that the other kicked the beam.

A cry of sorrow and dismay arose, and sounds as of mocking laughter; colossi, that appeared to support the might of tall pylons, leered horribly from the gloom and held forth repelling hands, waving backward. There lay a great serpent, fold on

fold of scintillating mystery, as of shapely clouds set with stars rolling backward in wondrous majesty, and rising high above its mystic front the towering head crowned with thunder, whose dire eyes swayed empires. Hovering in their fires of vibrating gold hung the glory of his dreadful pinions; and now his form was as that of a god enthroned upon a cloudy tower of horror, and now as of a glorious figure clothed with the sunset and the might of storms. Which one spake with the voice of Earth, saying:

“Who art thou to come up against me with men and with legions and with many weapons? what will avail thee thine arm of flesh when thou meetest my intangible power hereafter, in the midst of which thou wilt be engulfed and utterly lost? Go back, proud conqueror of earthly men, nor dare to impiously raise the anger of gods.”

The wings tremulated among the coils as swift lightning running behind clouds, and the high crest cast a baleful light around.

The dreamer groaned in dismay, yet, undaunted, gazed upon the cloudy Horror.

“What if I go not back?” he asked; “dost thou love me that thou wouldst save me from destruction? or fearest thou the reign of starvation that perchance may aid me in level war with thee?”

“O impious,” answered the coiled majesty, “dost vaunt thyself the equal of the gods! To save vexation to those high altars I command thee, go! Go with thy legions and possess the land, but touch not Zul nor the habitations of the gods which were of old times before thee.”

But as falling lightnings from Heaven that obliterate all view, came a figure of surpassing splendour, filling all space with glory; before whom the many-folded king was but as a dark mystery going forth into the night. In restrained awe bowed the worlds before his icy grandeur that exhaled an atmosphere of most chaste horror and fatal power. Upon his brows enthroned sat Cruelty and Death, and his eyes as purest crystal compelled all that was not of God. His feet rested on night, from his awful head rolled the great storms in the semblance of serpents.

ATLANTIS.

In a voice as of a silver trumpet he spoke:

“Arise, my son, nor heed such interested counsels. The fair mistress loves not a hesitant lover, and a hot wooing will cause a swift surrender.”

The vision faded. The majesty of fire and cloud sank into nebula and left a period of void and nonentity. The morning of Earth swept away the mysteries of the dark night with the life and bustle of the Present moment; yet in Toltiah's soul remained a saying and a dim remembrance that was the voice of Death.

C A P. X I.

THE HOUSE DIVIDED.

THE city was terrified now in earnest, as tentative gloom gave place to assured imminence of danger ; for instead of marching upon the enemy, he had come in legions and in rushing thousands to them. Yet against him burned also a great hatred for desolated provinces, and the daring insolence that would face the proud lords of Zul in such manner of war. They divined that the army of Izta had been overcome, nor were they the more dismayed when the standards of his legions were next morning waved in insult under their eyes. All night long the chiefs of both armies consulted, the one as to defence, the other concerning attack ; yet the former looked with dark suspicions, the one upon the other, for many had slain their friends' brothers to advance their own interests, and none owned a leader. The granaries were but half full, owing to treachery, and the owners of flocks and herds, perceiving them to be rudely seized, drove off the remainder and went afar. Only such as had cause to fear the dread wrath of Huitza worked heartily to defend the city, yet in so doing fearing secret death. But the citizens knew that for them was massacre if the walls were gained, and worked freely for their defence, fearing also the intrigues of the nobles. Upon the battlements were placed large vessels containing abominable stuffs to be hurled upon the attackers should they actually attempt an assault, and both sides prepared war-kites to carry up and drop other abominations. Vast offerings of slaves and valuables were placed upon the reeking altars of Zul, and as the blood-fed flame dropped an unctious black soot on the city it glowered fiery and terrible and appeared to take the form of a demon waving a sword over them. Not even in their wide moat did the citizens esteem

themselves safe from Huitza, and still more would they have feared had they seen where the workmen of godly Japheth collected materials for the building of catapults, and understood the omen.

The beleaguering thousands were eager for a storming attack, and by morning they were still nearer the walls, that they might look upon their prey and feast their eyes upon her fatness. The busy councils determined that the building of the far-spreading entrenchment might well be delayed until force of arms was powerless, when they could replenish their power while impoverishing the city. Within easy recognition from the walls were the standards of the cities of Atala, Chalac, Trocoatla, Axatlan and Astra; the dragon token of Talascan, the vulture of the Chalacian cities, the serpent of Lote and the towns of Trocoatla, of Karbandu, Bar-Asan, Muzran, and of Bitsar and certain nomad tribes; and the Fishes of Hanat, Surapa, Sagara and Mutasara, towns of the sea. Before the eyes of the anxious people in the walls stalked Toltiah in all his pride of great stature and beauty, amid frenzied shouts of "Huitza! Huitza!" His appearance filled them with horror and dismay as they believed themselves to be gazing in truth upon the Prince himself.

Lifting his great voice he invited them to surrender, pointing to the captured standards and to the encircling hosts; but though many craven ones would have done so, the braver and wiser knew it would be the beginning of a dire vengeance, for Huitza never brooked rebellion. Therefore they shouted to him to be gone and cast missiles upon him, so that he turned in enraged scorn upon his heel and left them.

There was a hill between the city and the far forest, and upon the summit was a vast skeleton of some unknown animal that lay half-embedded. On this hill, among all the impedimenta of the army, Azta encamped with the women and such as took no part in warfare, watching the preparing of engines of war and the placing of such as were ready. Machines for the scaling of walls were made, and the aqueduct which crossed the moat for the conveyance of fresh water to the city was broken down, large wooden causeways being made for crossing the moat. These would be conveyed across by levers thrust into the farther

side and pushed upward from the hither; yet could the enemy by vigilance prevent this, until such time as the catapults were ready to keep them afar.

The bestial gods upon the walls reeked with all manner of oblations, and steamed in the Sun that vaporised the wine poured over their soaking forms; those in the market-square holding in their deformed hands strings of rare gems, gold armlets and necklaces, tiaras, wrought hair-pins, coins of value, and heads of women with their long silky hair matted with blood and dust and flies. The hideous figure that represented the god of these unclean insects and whose open mouth was always filled by his priests with clotted blood to attract them, was importuned to conceive more, that they might cleanse the city with the vultures and the dogs.

A glimpse caught of Azta also greatly terrified the people, and Shar-Jatal was vastly dismayed. From walls, terraces and roofs the citizens gazed upon the countless hordes, noting all their movements with anxiety, cursing the Imperial Guards with frenzied oaths as they perceived them, and quaking at the uncouth savages and the tribes of nondescripts, albinos and pintos, and the echoing sounds of whistles, shells, drums and instruments of all kinds that came to their ears.

So eager were the besiegers for their prey that many could scarce be restrained from rushing upon the walls at once; and considering well the human heart, I perceived how one passion can reign supreme to the distaste of all others, as here I saw how the joy of the warrior spurned all conjugal bliss and only rejoiced in furious prowess of battle. They hurled missiles from their slings and bows and howled taunts and insults and threats; while Marisa begged a favour from Toltiah, which was, to be permitted to make a midnight raid on the walls; nor would the chieftainess be dissuaded by aught that could be put forward against it. Mindful of his dream, and enamoured the more of this woman by her splendid bravery, Toltiah consented on condition of a half-hearted promise to consider his suit, and Marisa went forth to prepare for her reckless venture.

The main port, opposite the market-place, deeply embayed amid its huge colossi, and with raised causeway within, was to

be the first-tryed place, and the Amazons would have to swim the moat. Then, if possible, they would open the ports and lower the causeway by its levers and vast ropes of hide, and the army which Toltiah promised to hold in readiness would follow up the confusion in its pouring myriads.

Thus all the trained legions were moved to the front, and Shem and Ham, Toltiah's instructors in many manly exercises, had also obtained the leader's promise to head storming-parties when the causeways were built upon the morrow. They rejoiced to think of the time that saw them the first to smite the evil-doers, nor dreamed of the preference being given to a woman in the field of arms.

A certain exultation entered the hearts also of the warriors of Zul at the prospect of imminent war, notwithstanding its peril and their horrid fate if vanquished. They drank deeply in watch-tower and battlement, heedless of the fact that the great machines and causeways of Toltiah were nearly ready; and all over the city lights shone out as the darkness dropped, the flames on the temples gleaming brightly, attended by the priests. The Amazons gathered opposite their point of attack, ready with scaling-ladders of rope attached to grapplers to gain the summit of the walls, and waiting with axe, spear and buckler slung on their backs, to glide into the moat and swim silently across.

The drunken sentinels did not perceive the coming foe. Swift shafts pierced them as the grapplers flew upward, and the attackers swarmed unresisted over the walls into the glare of the bonfire-lighted streets, laying low all who opposed them. Then indeed, aroused by long clear whoops to a sense of danger, both friend and foe gazed, startled, to where arose the sounds of conflict, and as dripping Amazons scaled the high walls lightly, the warriors of Zul poured upon them from all sides. In an instant, hemmed round and driven back by irresistible numbers, that being in readiness arrived swiftly, the reckless Amazons fought stoutly, swinging their great axes and warding off blows with their wolf-skin shields with valiant energy.

They looked for the port and the raised causeway, but a surging crowd of flashing helmets glimmered above the dense shadows of the legions that pressed them back thence.

Around lay many dead and dying, so furious was the conflict, and Marisa, perceiving how powerless she was to accomplish her errand, uttered the long-drawn whoop that commanded retreat. Before her, bounding through the ranks of her warriors, appeared a huge Tzantan wielding a spear, the blow of which she escaped but by an active leap, leaving her shield transfixed upon the ground. She swung her axe upon him and the weapon bit deeply, but as, carried from her balance by the fury of her attack, she fell, his buckler that would have crushed her beneath its vast weight, fell also with a hollow clang by her side, the warrior falling upon it and covering her with blood.

The legions of Toltiah, apprised by the leader of what was taking place, looked eagerly for an opportunity to attack the walls also, and could scarce be restrained from rushing into the moat to swim across. The Amazons, as they could, regained the summit of the wall, but some half-dozen, perceiving in the faint light the plight of their Queen, dashed upon the enemy with ready weapons, and clearing a space by the impetuosity of their attack, carried her off. The warriors of Zul made a rush to secure one whom they took to be a chief of note, possibly Huitza himself, but a tempest of spears and axes beat them back, and a tall Amazon, wrenching one of the hideous gods from its pedestal, hurled the uncouth mass towards them, as a missile from the twisted strings of a catapult. Running upon the walls they also poured upon the citizens their own preparations, a few keeping back the warriors until their comrades should have recrossed the moat, and then themselves crossing.

Thus bruised and bleeding they wrathfully retired, hurling insults upon the foe, and casting a certain discouragement upon the besiegers, of whom also the Tzantans were furious at preference being given to a woman, but Toltiah declared it to have been unknown to himself.

The high-spirited chieftainess replied haughtily to his enquiries as to how she had fared, nor would she hear of any things of soft meaning. Her people loved not to be repulsed, nor did they think of aught but blows when in war. Of intercourse with man they knew not save through the medium of axe and

shield, and Toltiah, enraged and mortified, was bidden to depart from her presence.

The people of the city were jubilant with their success, believing this to be an attack in force, and were greatly encouraged that the gods had not favoured Huitza—for no suspicion of Toltiah being other than the prince was dreamed of, the chiefs believing with Tekthah that the child of Azta had been killed on the night of the massacre. Now from both armies great kites soared up, skilfully directed, dropping combustibles and abominations upon those below, so that many were injured. Yet the citizens liked not the appearance of the camp fires, like a fallen heaven of stars surrounding them, the points of which environment resting on the shores and cliffs above and below the walls.

How greatly were they astonished when they discovered that their fierce assailants of the night were women! They were likewise enraged and ashamed, and two of the Amazons who had been taken alive were subjected to nameless indignities and were miserably butchered upon the altar of the temple of Neptsis, which was near the walls and within clear view of the enemy, who howled with impotent rage at beholding.

The great preparations continued, thousands of men in all directions working like ants in a hill, hauling beams and erecting great machines round the walls, while continuously the large kites soared up and spread their vile cargoes on those beneath.

The Tzantan Coyo-Lote advised a sallying forth from the city upon the forces of the enemy before they could gather in ready might, but Shar-Jatal, who was ever cautious, would not permit this, suspecting treachery. Also, if in good faith, he feared a repulse that would not only discourage all, but seriously hinder the defence, and agreed to wait until such time as a decisive blow could be struck. But the impetuous nobles, stirred up by the former success, would not hear of caution, and insisted upon an attack being made, urging their plan by the greatest show of reasonable arguments, and furious at being thus bearded even by Huitza's self.

Therefore it was planned that the main port should be opened, the causeway dropped, and an army pour forth upon the enemy

to do what mischief it might and return when ready. The warriors of Lasan and those other towns which had been overwhelmed and destroyed, cried aloud for vengeance, and formed the main part of the attacking force, while to Colosse and Toloc was entrusted the personal charge of capturing alive Toltiah, who, conspicuous, strode in plain view of all, his enormous shield hung behind his back as a gleaming Sun.

Thus these vengeful men were gathered by the port, and vast crowds stood upon the walls to watch the movements of the foe and their discomfiture by those legions. It seemed as though the enemy had also set himself upon action, for one of the prepared wooden bridges was thrust across the moat by the great gates through which the warriors of Zul were preparing to pour; which was also secured to the walls, despite a down-pour of blazing pitch and heavy missiles that stretched howling, mangled workers beneath the battlements.

Around a machine opposite to the port the frantic crowds observed numbers of warriors gather, and presently a great rock was placed upon a beam, while innumerable missiles darkened the air in protection of the causeway, rattling on wall and armour and dashing chips from the idols. Men with levers heaved downward the beam of the engine, which, suddenly rising with terrific violence, launched the rock towards them, flying in varying shapes and gyrations like an approaching thunderbolt.

Cries of terror arose, and a wild heedless stampede took place, the terrified people screaming with fright, striking with great blows and pushing underfoot all who barred their way. Women and children went down in that panic-stricken rush to escape an unknown danger; men stumbled and were pushed down to rise no more, some wriggling impaled on their own or others' weapons, some perfectly nude, others in flying rags. The legions were broken up and confused, and great blows were exchanged; while above shouts, shrieks and cries came an appalling sound as the great idol over the port, smashed into a myriad flying splinters by the missile from the catapult, flew into their midst, and the bounding rock cleared a bloody lane for itself until it fell against a wall.

C A P. XII.

THE WOOING OF ZUL.

WITH the shot from the catapult the besiegers started into motion. From the lines of their encampment issued a mob of rushing thousands, chiefs leading and standards waving. Two tall warriors led the rest, one waving the National Standard, and like a tidal wave stretching from horizon to horizon the multitudes moved over the intervening space. Waiting in front of the main port Toltiah held the trained legions in readiness to enter the opening valves, as, amid shouts of command, scores of bridges spanned the moat and catapults showered volleys of stones and single rocks upon the walls, smashing idols and overturning vessels of pitch. From the watch-towers issued darts and sling-shot, but, regardless, the attackers moved forward from their encampment, from which their dark legions appeared never to cease to pour; for as the van prepared to run across the causeways the rear still issued forth.

With the long springing step of panthers they advanced and hurled themselves with yells of menace upon the walls, swinging clubs armed with blades of obsidian, α and waving spears, swords and knives of long flakes of flint and chalcedony and copper, climbing upon each others' shoulders, up ladders of hide or pegged beams to reach the top; while from behind sped overhead the hail of missiles from their comrades. A sound high above caused an instant's cessation, as from Zul's fire-tower boomed the great drum, smitten by Shar-Jatal's hand, like a long roll of thunder, bidding the legions pour to the battlements, as a myriad heads crowned the walls; men helped up

α The description would make this weapon appear to be the prototype of the Mexican *Maquahuatl*.

on the shoulders of others, forming a living ladder for comrades to climb upwards.

The army inside the main port having recovered from the rush of the panic, spread along the battlements, sling-shot and arrows rattling upon the armour as the sound of a hail-storm; while, pushed across the prepared causeways by the besiegers, and presented to every gate along the walls, came a slung beam in an engine, tipped with a bronze beak, for battering down the opposing defences. The six remaining warships of the fleet lying by the entrance of the moat, fearful of the pouring masses of the foe, ran out to sea, nor attempted a fighting passage round the walls; watching the legions run across the causeways and leap upwards, despite furious resistance.

Savage howls of agony rose as the boiling pitch burned hollows in human flesh, or a sling-shot or slave-whip tipped with bronze claws wounded some sensitive part; but in spite of overturned masses and falling pitch the besiegers streamed upward. And, before God! it was a stirring and a brave sight to witness how those swarming thousands scaled the battlements, and to hear the thud—thud—thud of the battering-beams falling upon the mighty gates and picking them to pieces; whose grim colossi seemed to smile on their efforts.

Up they went, some over, some to fall back, dead or dying, into the moat, heaving red with blood. An idol, caught by a grappler, fell downwards with its load, clearing a dreadful path by the weight of falling men; and now in one or two red spots human men, mingled with beams and smashed fragments and the horror of broken causeways, filled up the moat and made a dreadful bridge. Mid veils of high-splashing waters the black legions covered the walls, and high waved the victorious Standard of Atlantis as tall Shem raised it to the skies and shouted a jubilant war-whoop. Ham's spear dripped with blood, and all along thy walls, fair Zul, rose near and far the long continuous roar of howls and shrieks of wounded men, the clash of metal and horrid thuds of huge tusk-studded clubs. With furious avenger the savage warriors of Bab-Ala, Ko and Lasan smote at the attackers with their clubs armed

with swinging balls of brass; the thrown sticks of Dar and Bari α flew like winged missiles into the thronging foemen and caused horrid wounds. Yet up come the enemies with dreadful bravery, undaunted, pyramids of men climbing upon one another.

There fought the swift Amazons with spear and reeking axe, yonder the terrific war-cries of Chalac and Trocoatla rose like the sounds of savage animals amidst the din, as, beaten back continuously, the assailants flew at the walls with desperate valour, opposed by glittering Adar, Izal and Coyo-Lote, and the legions of Hoetlan, Saman and Bel, Oris, Uta, Ataleel and Hammur.

Derion's archers pour over the walls their death-dealing shafts, the piercing cries of the spearmen of the Owl tribes sound like a wild song; Azta, like a goddess in her majestic fury, cheers them on, and Toltiah points to where the leaders, fighting upon the walls, stand within a bloody circle of foemen, red from crest to heel. Would that the gate would yield that he might lead the chafing thousands to victory! With mighty weapons the assailants fight with no advantage to either side, for if ever a valorous band enter the walls a rushing mass of defenders hurls them backward.

The battlements run red with blood that smokes where the sun can reach it, yet still the desperate foemen scale them, some to leap inside and fight until beaten down by numbers, others to fall back, pierced through and through by arrow, spear or sword, or with heads smashed by sling-shot, club, axe or shattering buckler.

And ever arose the sounds, rising, falling, of that long strife, from near and graduating afar, until there was no atom but vibrated with uproar where thousands fought and died. Some hurled down the hideous idols on their enemies, crushing many, and jumping down in the cleared space endeavoured to gain a footing and fight their way to the ports; but, charging furiously, the warriors of Zul ever beat them back. There died

α This would describe equally the Zulu *Knobkerrie* or the Australian boomerang, which latter weapon was at one time more universal than might be supposed, one form of it being found among the Hindoos and another among the ancient Egyptians. The throwing stick is also used by the Andaman Islanders and the Esquimaux.

of Toltiah's warriors the stout Ez-Ra, the only survivor before the prowess of Izta's troops, and smitten by Amal fell Mazapilli and the valorous Aramath, governor of Bitsar, and Abbas of Surapa in Astra.

There fought Colosse and Iztli amid Princes and Tzantans of Tekthah's Court, covered with horrid stains, with dented armour and battered crest; mighty Toloc hurls back the assailants with a giant's strength, and the enormous seven-toed Amal fights desperately on the walls with half a score of furious Amazons who tug and tear at him and endeavour to cast him down among their comrades.

Above the heads a rushing mass hurtles, and a serpent column of the temple of Neptsis, shattered by a bolt from one of the engines, falls in ruins and scatters death on the crowd around. Stones from the slings of both parties fly over the wall like a thick hail, humming, whistling, filling the air with hideous flying lumps of flesh and brains and long splashes of blood. Men pant in the stifling crush, and some, smitten dead, sway upright with protruding brains slipping down over their shoulders. Blood shows horribly on ashen faces, but now all is diabolical frenzy, and teeth are bared and eyes blaze like the fires of Hell. The sharp sounds that rose at the commencement have lulled to a long roaring growl and moan as the red weapons flash and circle and fall in deadly onslaught. Still up they go and now men fight on mounds of dead bodies, while choking dust rises thickly, and Shar-Jatal from the highest roof of Zul can scarce discern how the battle goes.

Another shot from a catapult splinters on the crest of the wall, smashing men like flies, and afar the engines hurl their masses pregnant with death, and the great beams fall upon the stubborn gates. Azta gazes with her yellow eyes ablaze, her fierce spirit deeply stirred by the brave sight.

The walls are all red now, the moat in places exposes the half-submerged heaps, and above the death-locked masses rush the bolts from the engines and the unceasing hail of smaller missiles. The palaces and all those buildings near the walls are chipped and redly spattered, and the streets and squares are full of mangled bodies and debris. From near roofs rains

down a storm of harmful things, rocks, stones, bricks, sling-shot and arrows, and wretched prisoners, captured at the walls, are hurried to the temples for sacrifice.

Those of Zul fight for their life and liberty, and high blood and superior arms begin to tell against the wearied attackers, mindful of the fate of the captured.

No good now for Shem to raise his war-cry; Ham's great spear lies shivered at his feet; the Standards waver. Marisa, wounded, falls back, fighting sullenly; the ostrich-plumes of Chalac roll backwards like a baffled cloud of thunder. No need for causeways now for the retreat, the path that they recross is the heaped-up path of the dead.

In their encampment Susi prays by the side of Noah, wildly and entreatingly; Asta passionately invokes her spirits, and all cry to their different divinities. Japheth at his artillery taps the humming cords and directs the aim, now of this one, now of that. They perceive the storming-parties, beaten back and repulsed, return discouraged, decimated, weary, and red from crest to heel, with trailing standards and dishonoured arms. Shem's head lowers with grief and shame despite his valorous deeds, and as they slowly stream lack, those myriad heroes who rushed onward so jubilantly at noon, the setting sun throws long mournful shadows afar. They bewail lost comrades, many whose relationship were very close and dear, and many a blood-mingled tear falls. There, behind them lie friends and foes, horribly mingled in their ensanguined grasps, on the walls or beneath the crimson waters of the moat. Azco lies there surrounded by dead foemen, and many a haughty chief with him now stiff and dead. Amal lies there, gashed and unrecognisable beneath a red pile of friends and foes that press over him his vast shield, gold and studded with gems of onyx. Hadalia, the Amazon, places his mighty armlet of bronze upon her black hair as a coronet, than which none more grand.

Shar-Jatal did not pursue; the fight had been too severe and exhausting to all, and he perceived still the swarming hordes who covered the land to the rear and were unfatigued. Rest was necessary for the wearied ones, and the women tenderly bathed and nursed the wounds of their warriors, resting their

weary heads on their bosoms and ministering to all their needs.

Toltiah consulted with the Tzantans as to what they should do, this one proposing to batter down the walls with the beams and catapults, that advising to starve the city into submission. Yet this last would not do, because of the like danger to their own immense armament. Azta, like a goddess of battles, urged passionately another assault, Nezca likewise advising this thing. Surely must some be able to open the ports! So also advised Noah and Chanoc and Nahuasco, nor were wanting the voices of Japheth and Marisa.

Thus it was resolved, and messengers were sent to bring up the rearmost troops and to hasten the savages and hunters and such to the front, for it was thought that these less valuable warriors could exhaust the enemy and prepare the way thus for a most formidable onslaught of the more trained legions. And from the dark encampment there sailed up over the city a great kite which rained fire and poisons above the houses. And others sailed high in the air, until it seemed as though the Heavens rained horror upon the doomed city, scattering fiery death and pestilential atmosphere all around. Many were transfixed by arrows and brought down, yet the sending them back over the besiegers was of small avail, (which had no houses to fire). In fainting horror people died, racked with the deadly poisons, while the city was lighted by flaming roofs that blazed in all directions and fell in upon the people. Yet Tunipa, a mighty archer, caused the downfall of many of the fatal destroyers by rending them with arrows, while upon their arms the foemen slept, exhausted, save those who had taken no part in the fight, which ones kept watch to preserve the camp from an attack.

CAP. XIII.

THE HILL OF THE TALCOATLA.

THE fires flared redly in Zul all night, and on top of the great temple the horrified watchers could perceive a ghastly holocaust being proceeded with, in fancy hearing the screams of agony of tortured wretches suffering horribly. The topmost flame spluttered and burned redly, flaring with the oil of consuming hearts torn wholesale from breasts throbbing with hideous tortures, and the odour of burning flesh reached even to the camp of the besiegers, and sent the blood in curdling streams to the hearts of the watchers, who deemed that such might be their fate on the morrow.

All through the night that bloody work went on, regardless of the flying terror of the kites, and Noah cursed the evil-doers, and particularly Shar-Jatal and Acoa, by Heaven and Hell and all that was upon the Earth, but Azta, with a little bitter laugh, threatened them with like treatment when she should hold them in her power. Toltiah answered her laugh with one as menacing, for the teachings of Noah affected him not.

The morning came and those who slept awoke. And coming from a far hiding-place, where he had fled from the cruel wrath of Tekthah, great Mehir joined Toltiah, eager for the fray. Both sides beheld the rising of the Lord of Light with forebodings; and as Toltiah perceived the flashing tower of Zul leap into a blaze of gold through the veil of smoke that hung above the half-burnt city, he wondered, perchance, what that tower would witness. And being—despite, as I have said, all teachings—an idolater, deeply he bowed in reverence towards it and on his knee made obeisance, and all the army did likewise.

How many fed their last that morning round thy camp-fires, O fields of horror! And after the commands were given, the

trumpets and drums and shells raised their voices of death, and the anxious watchers of Zul perceived that they were to encounter another furious attack, as band on band and army on army moved slowly towards them and the engines were manned.

There were no shoutings and insults this day, only a grim, horrid silence seemed to brood with bated breath over all. Shar-Jatal cried to the gods to aid the city; Pocatepa consulted her oracles, crying to the Shades to help in the defence of the Sacred Shrines and imploring the Spirits of all who had worshipped Zul to aid now in her sore need. But Acoa cried to the Sun by virtue of the pleasant offerings to aid Toltiah.

Now commenced again the hissing hail of flying oddments and the thudding blows of the battering-beams worked by their long array of hauling artillerymen. A horrid stench filled the air, arising from the moat, and, as the shots flew, a buzzing veil of flies hid the view of the walls for some while.

Like black clouds, thousands of hunters and savages leaped towards the walls. All the women gathered round Azta and Noah, with their hands raised in supplication to the Heavens. They watched the multitudes dash at the walls, scrambling and slipping, while high in air the missiles from the engines flew in volleys and by single masses, bearing crashing doom and destruction. Hunters and slingers, heaving stones and sharp pebbles, streamed across the horrid moat, while swarms of savages raced before them, and upon the other side of the city the hordes of nondescripts were driven upon the walls.

A wild prolonged medley of shouts, shrieks and whistles rent the air as the masses splashed and plunged through the red horrors, many with feet entangled in protruding ribs falling to their doom. Showers of boiling metal flew among them, causing ghastly wounds, but the booming thunder of drums drowned for a while their shrieks of agony. Yet greatly defended by their rearward artillerymen until they gained the crest of the walls, they there encountered the full fury of the flying atoms and fell back in numbers, pierced and dying. Beneath them, on the awful mound of human bodies, men wriggled, impaled on bones of corpses or writhing with dreadful wounds inflicted

by the molten metal that bit deep into their flesh. Yet in reckless madness the attackers struggled up, inflamed by the shouts of those behind and in the encampment, who harassed the city with noxious kites.

Again was that echoing horror of shouts, groans and shrieks. Men, pierced through the head, cried shrilly and fell on their faces, and many who were wounded whooped to encourage their comrades. Ah, those ghastly wounds! Ears were smitten off and eyeballs burst by the sling-shot that smashed skulls and scattered brains. Some, struck in the throat, grunted hideously, and from crushed limbs the purple blood oozed in great gout, dropping like a heavy rain.

“Now up, ye braves of Toltiah! Forward for Zul and Atlantis! Huitza! Huitza and Victory!”

O Azta, that sweet love of a mother that shone so brightly for an instant! Would that ambition had not held thee so greatly! For a space, oppressed by nameless forebodings, she clung to her warrior; how could she let him go? what should aught befall him! The sacred instinct rose superior to considerations of glory; and yet he must go, and she, his mother, must not be the one to hinder his triumph, though her heart break and her spirit faint in worse than death.

“Go and conquer, son of Asia!” she cried, “and the Spirits who love thee watch and protect thee. Zul awaits her lord and Victory crowns thy standard. Yet kiss me once more, O my child, for thine own sake and for his whose likeness is stamped upon thy brow. Go, my brave; I shall not survive thee!”

“Fear not, Lady,” said the gentle voice of Susi at her elbow, as she stood like a statue of marble, gazing after her retreating warrior; “the God of battles is upon our side and the doom of Zul is spoken. For last night a fearful Vision hovered over her towers—a great angel with streaming mane of fire and waving a sword of flame. From Mount Axatlan he came, and from his hand fell a bolt; before him went the lightnings. Didst thou not also see it, my Empress?”

Azta, still gazing, shook her head. The dark clouds of the legions were in motion! A great cry of despair came from the city, thrilling and prolonged.

Right and left, far stretching and tremendous, move forward the masses of men. There glitters the splendid armour of Tekthah's guards, and beside them the ostrich plumes of Talascan and Chalac roll like storm-waves in terrific motion; the fierce legions of the Amazons leap forward swiftly, and Trocoatla pours forward her fiery bands longing to scale the red walls and claim their prey. Swiftly advance the standards; the vermilion plumes of the flamingo flare like splashes of blood upon the moving carpet of crested heads, begemmed with flashing gold and gleaming weapon-points; the horned and antlered helmets of Axatlan and the cities of the frontiers sway like a field of plants under the breath of a hurricane.

Marisa's warrior-women rush forward impetuously, and as they surmount the walls and pour like an avalanche upon the weary defenders, all down the long line surges the charging shouts of the vast array, that, fresh and irresistible, leaps to the attack. The Amazon Queen falls with an arrow through her arm, and a streaming wound on her head where a war-club has carried away her helmet and laid bare the scalp. But two vast missiles drop in swift succession into the enemy's masses, crushing and maiming and compelling a retreat.

Up the walls and over! "Huitza and Zul!" rises the frenzied shout, as blades rise and fall and bucklers are beaten down. The noise of the battle doubles—the City is in its death-throes!

Toltiah, with the guards before the main port, watches keenly. But for Nezca he would have rushed forward to the walls, but from this the Tzantan begged him desist, pointing to where his legions victoriously fight and bidding him mark the sounds of mortal strife all around the walls, where all had now gathered from roof and street to aid in their defence. Yet more also than defence, for the great cry of the city's despair was not from fear of the enemy, but the news that there was no water in the reservoirs and that the aqueduct was cut. Therefore it was resolved that day to crush the army of Huitza or perish by a kindlier fate than want of water.

By reason of this resolve, suddenly the great valves of the main port slowly opened, turning upon their stony pivots, and streams of warriors issued forth, valorous with wine which had

been supplied to them to increase their rage. Yet in a great measure the furious rivalry of their leaders greatly hindered them, and many even withheld from joining in the sally; which hesitance was of grave importance. Believing these to be his own victorious warriors who had broken through the port, Toltiah with a shout of triumph swung up his vast shield and dashed forward, but halted in astonishment as he perceived these to be of Zul and not his own troops.

Running swiftly into a fan-shaped formation these rushed upon the legions of the guards, and their great spears clanged upon the advanced bucklers, impaling many. A furious fight commenced as their impetuous charge, ever increased by out-pouring numbers, drove back the assailants; and the rearmost fell upon the flanks of the storming-parties, carrying death and destruction. In a dense crowd thousands fought hand to hand where Zul at bay struggled for life, watched anxiously by those in the camp, whose jubilation stopped in anxiety. Sword to sword and spear to spear, with clanging bucklers fought the trained legions, the guards of Nezca, with Chanoc, Nahuasco, Mehira and many more great and valorous, pressed back by the desperate and overwhelming rush with the rest of the legions of Toltiah.

Shar-Jatal watched from the great temple, pleading the loss of a hand as an excuse for not joining the fray. He saw where, towering above the crush, swayed the golden helm of Toltiah, and marked with dismay the sweeping death that laid men low before his mighty sword. He believed he perceived many of his own chiefs, and sought for where gray Colosse advanced his shield against the obsidian-headed spears of the guards and smote with his flashing sword the ostrich-plumed crests; where great Toloc charged with gory spear, and where, appalling sight, dark Mehira stalks before his eyes, crowned with vengeance and death. The vermilion plumes of officers showed like flames, and bossy bucklers, heaved upwards by some smitten to death, gleamed brightly for an instant and then fell. Clubs flourished and crashed, slinging clots of flesh and blood, swords swung in fatal circles and the long stabbing spears quivered up and down like the tongues of serpents; high sounded the crash of

meeting shields amid the shrieks of horribly wounded men and the awful roaring moan of the crowd. Ill fate to him who fell! For now scarce was there room to fight, and men of mighty brawn thrust savagely with destroying elbows, strangling each other with bare hands and butting with their heads. Dented helms and blood-spattered visages rose and fell like visions of a dream, armour was torn off and quivering hands thrust themselves up as from a suffocating sea in which dead men hung by the shoulders, kept up by the crush, to presently fall and cause a stumbling mass for others. Heavy sandalled feet crashed through ribs and stuck in the corpses, and some men, mounting upon the shoulders of others, smashed at the heads beneath until they were killed by a spear-thrust in the abdomen. Here, save but for my intervention, would have fallen Lotis, the youthful chief of Katalaria, whom his mother loved, and for whose sad grief at his parting I vowed to cherish; there fought the furious refugees from Izta's desolating march and such few as had escaped the massacres of Tek-Ra; the Chalacian chiefs Astrobal of Sular and Azebe of Bitala contest the ground with the men of Arioch and Zebra, jealous chiefs whose rivalry hinders their prowess. Before Sidi-Assur, friend of Chanoc, falls Ombar and the men of Lasan, and endeavouring to stem the rush of those of Zul, fight with giants' prowess Eru, Nezca, and Nahuasco, Rhea of Muzran, Arvath of Anduqu, glorious Toltiah and many of the Amazons. The slingers of Bitaranu leap upon the glittering warriors of Zul, and Hano's Astran warriors fall fighting before the unconquered might of Colosse, Toloc, and Eto-masse, and the furious legions of Adar, Oris and Hammur.

Slowly backward swayed the troops of Toltiah, the leader fighting desperately and shouting to encourage his men. If but the thousands round the walls would but perceive his plight and hasten to aid, then would the desperate attackers be smitten in the rear and overpowered; yet so furiously were they engaged in their scaling of the walls and conquering the battlements that no warning moved them. Side by side Shem and Ham swing their heavy swords and shout for aid to them as step by step they are forced back with the struggling mass.

Now they were among the baggage and the women, and these, retreating in weeping terror as the frenzied multitude approached ever nearer, gather round Azta and Noah; the patriarch exhorting them to prayer, Azta commanding them to arm themselves with whatsoever they might and aid their warriors, who, heavily pressed by the Imperial troops, gather round the hill.

Yet even now she gazed curiously around, as here they stood by the white skeleton that stretched right and left, the bones of a Talcoatla, an animal of long past ages unknown save in legend. Behind, an untrodden land; in front, civilization—and death. To her mind there arose a vision of a new world, a land whose birth she could not fathom, a realm of the years to come, vague and mysterious. Standing upon the bounds of the Past and of the far, far Future, the roar of the conflict fell upon her ears with a sense of incongruity.

Yet now was the Present and the voice of Death, and she looked for Toltiah with a terrible yearning love. Half-way up the slope he stood, surrounded by his chiefs and warriors, exhausted but unvanquished; while urged on by their leaders and the possession of victory the Imperial troops press them hard. A grim carpet of dead bodies stretches backwards from them to the sally-port; gray-haired Colosse has fallen back there under the walls, and Zebra, Uruk, Saman, Ataleel, Arvath and Astrobal, foes united in death, bear him brave company. Coyo-Lote falls wounded, and Toloc leans heavily on his sword in the rear. Shem's left arm hangs within his failing buckler, smashed by a war-club, and his head is wounded; Ham is covered with blood and dust, and Toltiah's helmet has gone, his ruddy mane flying loosely. Nezca alone appears unharmed.

Sullenly and vengefully they grapple with their foes, but a great rush drives them yet farther up the slope. They fight now in fierce despair and the women cry miserably.

In agony I called upon Heaven, descending with a fiery rush of flame to fight by the side of Toltiah and to protect my Love. Toloc with two giant chiefs, Oris and Bel, rushes up the slope, impatient of victory. Azta with deadly terror in her heart advances towards her son, and the battle closes furi-

ously as the red swords clash and splinter and the battering bucklers meet. Toloc, smitten by my will, falls like a blasted tower with clanging arms, and Coyo-Lote, rushing upon Nezca, receives a great blow upon his crest and falls dead. But in a pool of blood Toltiah slipped and Bel's great sword had then and there ended his career and perchance have saved Atlantis; but smiting up the blade with his own, Alam leaped upon him, bearing him to the earth beneath his buckler, (which warrior was that son of Pharno whom I had seen aforetimes).

Now from the city a great roar proclaims the victory of the attacking legions of Toltiah, and now from every port their blood-stained columns race through lanes of death to the perceived imminence, and, rushing back from the walls, the fiery Amazons leap upon the enemy's rear and with their axes drive them into a dense crowd.

Downward the blood flows in long streams, but the high, clear whoop of the rescuers is as a voice from Heaven rising above the horrid uproar; and, closing in from both flanks, the vulture of Chalac flies above its crested bearers upon Zul, with the serpents of Trocoatla and Lote and the fish-tailed gods of Astra, as streaming hosts pour upon the remainder of Shar-Jatal's legions.

"Go, my child," I cried to Toltiah, "thine is the victory!" and the mighty youth rushed upon the foe, cutting down all before him, while Nezca's battle cry called the legions to the charge. Shem, lying prone in Susi's arms among the riot, shouts jubilantly as the enemies melt away before the rushing legions and men haul the remnant back as prisoners.

The battle was over. The sun had nearly set, but still his bright beams lighted upon the Hill of the Talcoatla and shone on pools of coagulating blood. Bodies of men, not all still, lay in masses along that terrible path leading from the gate of Zul, and cumber the slope of the hill on whose summit the women weep for joy and Noah and his family pray over Shem and bathe the wounds of the others, praising Heaven for the victory. The Amazons stand in groups, dark against the sky, here bending over a dead or dying comrade, there

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cruelly murdering a fallen foe; and Toltiah, exhausted and wounded, rests on Azta's proud bosom, assured that Zul is in his hands.

Fubilate deorum!

This successful storming of so strong a fortified city is, I suppose, the quickest event of the sort on record, but carrying by storm was not often attempted on such a scale.

The siege of Jerusalem occupied about four months altogether, various positions being carried by assault, and finally the central citadel. The siege of Troy is stated to have lasted ten years, but this long time is eclipsed by the siege of Ashdod by Psammetichus, who, according to Herodotus, invested it for twenty-nine years. Tyre resisted Nebuchadnezzar for thirteen years (587—574 B.C.), and then presumably capitulated on favorable terms; but was again besieged by Alexander and taken by storm after seven months, in July 332 B.C.

CAP. XIV.

THE SHAME OF THE STRONG.

THERE was blood in the city; in the streets, on the walls, on columns and steps it lay in pools and splashes. The vultures that sat on the roofs of the Bazaar, scared off by the battle, returned with added numbers and gathered together to the feast of death, fighting dogs and rats that crept forth from holes and corners where they sheltered during the terrors of the siege. Flies rose in black clouds from swollen hideous corpses on the approach of any intruder, the incessant sound of their buzzing being audible all day long; and hanging dead by the heels from beams upon the walls, and drying upon the torture-stakes, were scores of victims to Toltiah's vengeance.

Large ocelots, brought in by the hunters, yelled and snarled savagely, terrifying the smaller scavengers, as they lay flat on their white bellies and drew out the entrails from the corpses. Under huge rocks lay crushed and mangled wretches in pools of purple blood, stripped and denuded of all ornaments; many of high rank who little dreamed of such an end.

The bolts from the catapults had wrought dire havoc, scarce any of the nearer buildings on the lowest terrace having escaped defacement. In the Market-place they had fallen, and the great square was littered with the debris of a late encampment and the smashed wreckage of sundry of the abominable idols, together with shattered rocks and stones and arrows.

The temple of Neptsis had suffered, but the Circus, higher up, had escaped. The Museum was damaged, and the Bazaar which was by the walls was full of horrible debris of rocks, splintered columns and idols, bodies of men with bones and crushed armour bedded in their flesh, entrails hanging like dishevelled rigging of a ship over the mounds of horror and disgust. The

palace of Izta had been struck, and the flying splinters had strewn dead bodies thickly there. But the walls! The high battlements had been swept clear of all projections, and the rows of idols were lying in fragments on both sides amid piles of rotting bodies.

Partly within and partly without the city the victorious army was encamped. In the red palace were now Toltiah and Azta, some of the great Tzantans, and Noah, whose family were given palaces of nobles to live in. In one of the apartments Marisa lay, recovering from severe wounds, whom Azta spent long times with; and now the former occupants, Shar-Jatal and Pocatepa, taken alive in each other's arms in the violated sanctuary of Neptsis which they had not respected aforesimes, were in the Circus with many other prisoners, each chained to a negro guard. And fain would Azta have seen Acoa there, but he had gone, nor was he to be found; but there were other priests there among captured chieftains and warriors, of whom the more important were secured as Shar-Jatal and his mistress, but the rest were herded together in the apartments of the beasts, and most of the great ones which were of Tekthah's court were spared all indignities, among whom the queens Axazaya, Sada, Sumar, Tua and others were well entreated, yet some feared for the triumph of Azta, having cause by reason of jealousy and aforesimes annoyance.

And Azta was minded now to slay Mah, whom she feared, yet also had he disappeared, which was aforesimes; and learning of Pocatepa's treatment of Na, and the death of her old nurse, she caused the metal incubus which had been riveted upon her head to be placed upon Pocatepa's. The large ape was speared by a Captain of the guards that none might be enspelled by it, for Azta feared the magic of its mistress somewhat, knowing how Mah held her in his power.

Many of the Amazons were taken by the Tizin for her especial guard and were greatly favoured, being quartered in the palace, and great spoil was granted to all the army, which occasioned many quarrels among them; also their women who had followed them from Talascan were bitterly jealous of the captured beauties of the capital, upbraiding their fickle warriors for deserting theirs for new charms, and smiting them with weapons.

Each day disbanded troops which were from all the cities of the territories marched back with songs and rejoicings, pleased with the liberality of the Tzan and glad to return to their families; yet there were many who preferred to remain in Zul, having with them their mistresses. And also such of Shar-Jatal's army as preferred to swear allegiance to Toltiah were permitted so to do, and among these the greatest was Iztli, who in the days of Tekthah had conquered Trocoatla.

And swift runners went afar to Akin, who held the fleet before Talascan, that he should chase and capture those six vessels which had fled from Zul; and while the aqueduct was being mended to supply the city with water, it was discussed among the chiefs as to disbandment, and also the restoration of buildings.

Now there was much discussion concerning that army which was of the savages and the wretched peoples from afar, because so great a host, notwithstanding that many had been driven to a death within the moat and their murdered bodies lay in hundreds piled against the walls, caused a scarcity of food, and it was wished to send them away: yet was this also a danger, for so great multitudes would eat up all as they went. Nevertheless it was requested of them.

They refused instantly, clamouring aloud and with menace for gifts, and threatening to drive all the food-animals afar and lay waste the fields; and certain of their leaders prevailed upon the nondescript hordes to revolt, these wretched creatures, eaters of dirt and roots and offal, clamouring and shrieking with the unreasoning and bestial rage of brute beasts, falling upon each other in their blind fury and tearing one another.

Again there was uneasiness, for all these multitudes far outnumbered the Adamites, who feared not their prowess, but the scarcity of food; neither could any support longer the masses of putrefying bodies of men that caused much illness as in gardens and amid ruins they lay, mounds of horrid vermin, filling the atmosphere with pestilence and disease and causing to breed and congregate swarms of flies that polluted everything.

It was agreed to treat comfortably with the savage chiefs of such tribes whose prowess might be feared, and these were

convened in the Throne Hall of the Imperial palace. Awe-struck by the huge buildings of the city, by the temples, palaces and streets, and particularly the colossi, these great uncouth people were conducted onwards to the vast red pile and up the sweeping flights of steps flanked by the man-faced lions. Thence they entered the grand Hall where upon the throne sat Toltiah, and upon his right hand Azta sat upon another throne. Between the great beasts that guarded the entrance they passed, stepping carefully to find themselves in such awe-inspiring precincts and terrified by the enclosed space and the gleam of armour all around the hall, from which, but for the strenuous exhortations of Noah and Nezca, they had never emerged alive. For Chanoc and Iru counselled their destruction in savage phrase.

Azta glowered upon them like a Queen of the lower regions, but Toltiah addressed them graciously and allayed those fears that began to manifest themselves on perceiving the glittering guards standing like statues behind the thrones and lining the spaces behind the columns and braziers. He called them friends, praising their fidelity and declaring his wish to show his gratitude, nor said aught about their murmurings.

Presents were brought forward and promises were made to liberally reward their followers, who were to depart back to their own country immediately they received their dowers. To each of the chiefs was given a beautiful maiden, weeping and terrified, and they departed with vows of compliance to the demands asked.

Loads of presents were sent out to their encampment, and any rebellious signs were quelled by the chiefs, who recounted the awful grandeur of the city and the fear they themselves had passed through in the interview with the Tzan. Contented with the presents, they departed with shouts and yells, leaving the hordes of their more wretched compatriots to treat for themselves.

These miserable people caused no fear, and but for the fact of their destructive numbers laying waste the land, would have been forcibly dispersed. Half-witted, deformed, undersized and loathsome, they were merely formidable by the movement of their numbers, gaping foolishly at the multitudes on the walls

before them who shook their fists and cursed them. Hungry and helpless, they committed cannibalism in its worst forms, and in a day all the albinos disappeared. They devoured their new-born children and all the young ones, for now, under orders, the warriors of Zul penned them in and prevented their hunting for food, enraged at the extortion inflicted by their powerful and departed allies. There was no gratitude felt for their help and no pity for their wretchedness, and it was resolved that they should render another service and then die. Toltiah manifested yet another characteristic, for as the tiger that has tasted blood, he longed to see more flow, with a terrible and evil appetite.

The manner of their riddance being decided upon, their thousands were first compelled at the point of cruel weapons, and instructed by hunters who comprehended their manners, to clear the long moat of its foul contents and cast all such into the sea; and then, driven within the city through every gate, the ports closed upon their doomed multitude.

The unhappy beings stared at the masses of architecture around them, gazing in fear upon all, as they had need to; and inside, they were forced to remove the rotting corpses and things too foul for name, and cast them over the low cliffs into the waters at the foot of the palace gardens, carrying up dreadful loads on litters borne by many from the uttermost parts of the city. Those who, starved and emaciated, dropped at their fearful task, were killed and cast upon the load, and their women and children were compelled to aid also in the carriage.

Gradually as the troops surrounded them and penned them up, following in the cleared tracks, they became herded into a dense crowd on the low cliffs and shore around and above the waterway and harbour, surrounded by the dark lines of murderous warriors who pushed them up to the higher ground rising from deep water. Their last work accomplished, they stood looking out over the sea, feeling in their poor degraded breasts a sense of fear at the quiet that hovered over them, expectant, as the warning silence of a great storm. Before them was the cliff-edge and the deep waters; around, the

gleaming crests and arms of tall legionaries formed a menacing wall that struck an icy chill of apprehension to their hearts.

The sound of a drum broke the stillness of apprehension and waiting, and from the miserable beings, naked and hideous, broke forth a thrilling wail of terror as the instinctive fear of an unknown danger swept over them.

Advancing their shields, the legions made a great rush that sent hundreds of suddenly overbalanced wretches into the waves, where they swam about violently and a few managed to land below the city, being good swimmers. Fearful cries arose, gibberings and squeaks, screams, howls and hisses, and, mad with terror, the victims threw themselves down and bit at their murderers. Ah, the horrible work that followed! Justice of God, that such should be! and I, chained and speechless, was compelled to witness what I had ventured through my sin. The bloodthirsty warriors jumped upon them, smashing their helpless bodies; kicking and clubbing, impaling and strangling, heaving up the writhing bodies in their great muscular arms and dashing them down on others; swinging them into space by their matted hair like sling-shot, crushing them with furious leaps and hurling them into the waves. Bronze knives crashed through their ribs, the smaller ones wriggled like eels on cruel spears from which they were cast into the waters.

The sea was red, that farther off became a light crimson tinged with dark purple streaks and masses, trailing entrails and splashing ripples. Bodies plunged in the water, writhing in crimson foam, and long dark hair floated like weed.

Many swiftly-moving triangular objects darted hither and thither, as the sharks, attracted first by the dead bodies being cast into the water, dashed among the living prey, their dark fins cutting the waves, and at times a long shining object rose above the horror, to vanish instantly. Slimy arms threshed the air in search of victims and dragged them under the waves, yet still they poured over the fatal shore, gashed and mutilated, moaning and shuddering, amid the brutal jests and laughter of their butchers.

Toltiah watched the hideous scene from an arbour on the cliffs; and Azta, from a part of the palace roof that commanded

the scene, watched calmly. I perceived that her susceptibilities were steeled by all the scenes through which she had passed, both in the palace where, Tizin in name, she grew accustomed to all manner of confusion, and in the sanguinary siege that had filled her fierce soul with a certain joy. Her name, with Toltiah's, was now supreme in Zul, yet there was a void, goading and tormenting.

She murmured my name with a sigh; and then rehearsed to herself those words I had told her: "Ambition is a cruel mistress, a siren that oft lures to destruction." And thus she mused, and then again she spoke: "What is this joy of murder and killing? The sublimity of destruction that comes nigh to that of creation; the wonder of the sunset and the sunrise?"

Her reverie was interrupted by observing the figures of a woman followed by an aged man hastening toward the cruel scene and to where Toltiah stood. The woman cast herself down before the towering chief, gesticulating wildly, and by her actions seemingly imploring him to bid the carnage cease, while the hoary patriarch lifted his withered arms in furious denunciation.

She perceived them to be Susi and Noah, and a gleam of haughty anger swept over her heart at such interference, the anger of the evil-doer whose fault is discovered, and an impetuous resentment of restraint. Noah pointed to the far horizon where the sky darkened, and the woman appeared to wildly implore mercy, her arms embracing the warrior's knees.

He thrust them from him impatiently as the carnage continued without cessation, the tall warriors, red with the helpless blood of victims, hewing and slashing in a frenzy of slaughter and hurling their wretched prey headlong to destruction. There might be seen a furious spearman in swift pursuit of two or three miserable little savages, whom he mercilessly swept down by a terrific swing of his weapon, and then bounded after others vainly endeavouring to escape by flight. Nor did attempts to elude destruction by means of hiding under piles of corpses avail, all the bodies being cast into the waters; and when from under a heap of removed victims an undersized figure leaped up to make a desperate rush for life, some mangled body would

be flung after the fugitive, the dead limbs flying in circles as the ghastly missile sped, and the poor wretch would be felled with violence to the earth. And another splash upon the waters spoke of yet another entry through those awful gates of Death.

In vain the two mediators pleaded, in vain the lowering sky and setting sun commanded cessation of the awful carnage. A dark mist covered the ocean and a muttering roll of thunder echoed through the Heavens.

The darkness increased; the last body was thrown over, and now above the place of violence hung a red mist, so that each man, looking uneasily upon the other, could not see where his feet stood.

A flash of lightning leaped from the dark sky towards the palace. Azta saw where it struck upon the highest pylon roof, and there in its place stood a majestic figure. Two bright wings wavered swiftly as though it prepared for instant flight, and its strangely animated countenance surveyed all the scene at a glance. Its hand rested on a sword-hilt, its vividly brilliant eyes that flamed tremulously with a wondrous light encountered hers. Entranced, she was powerless, and gazed with wonder on the animated, beautiful being, clad in scintillating atoms, that quivered with the subtle life of a tongue of flame, the wings moving with a bird-like eagerness, and the bright Thing appearing as an illusion of air, transparent and endued with intense life. Thus it stood for an instant that seemed a long period, and then a heavy roll of thunder vibrated the stifling atmosphere. As though in obedience to a command the wings flashed out and the Accuser was gone.

C A P. XV.

THE JUBILEE OF ZUL.

UNDER the shadows of every grove arose the songs of birds and every breeze bore afar the joyous strains of music. It was the morning of thy bright day, fair Zul, thou who, foredoomed by Man to destruction, went down into the depths and darkness with great horror at the setting of thy Sun. The mourning for the dead was over, yet in unforgetting sorrow went many for loved ones gone; where Edna mourned her lord Colosse, and deer-eyed Tamar sorrowed disconsolate for dead Izal. Yet long would live those great deeds of might, when thou, Astrobal, sought, yet unavailing, to stem the rush of Zul, with Uruk and Arvath; and how Dakka of Bitaranu fought hard against the might of Toloc. The youths of Bitala will look in vain for thee, Azebe; nor more will Napal, Roga, Nit, and Derion clasp their fond mistresses to their breasts; yet rejoice to-day, mortals, for now is the time of Earth's gladness; but, alas! that it should have been so foolish.

In the waters by the city lay the Tacoatlanta, and behind her the Mexteo, Tzan and Tizin, gaily decked out with yellow, but not one of those other ships, which indeed were heard of no more. In the cleared Market-place the idols had been reset up by their various worshippers, whom Azta supported, for Toltiah owned no restraining superstition of any sort at all, worshipping Zul alone to the oblivion of all Noah's teachings.

Azta had instituted new priests and had piously restored the pyramid wherein rested Atlace, the mother of Huitza. For this, being before the temple of Neptsis, had suffered somewhat in the siege. All buildings that had been damaged were renewed, and from arches that spanned streets hung masses of flowers in the midst of which concealed birds sang merrily. All the



THE GREAT FISH-GOD WAS DECKED WITH ORNAMENTS.

stems of elegant palm-trees were decorated, and now, the aqueduct being restored and the great reservoirs upon the highest point full, the ripple of a myriad fountains made sweetest music as they cast up their diamond jets among the gardens.

The great Fish-god at the entrance to the harbour, which held the model of the Tacoatlanta in its hands, was enthusiastically decked with ornaments, and the restored gods upon the walls reeked again with oblations. Yet there was certain sorrow in the city for the loss of friends and relations; and also many of the warriors who had taken part in the cruel massacre of the savages died of wounds inflicted by the poisoned hands of their victims. And in the Circus were many wretched captives who cried and bemoaned their fate, whose number was now increased by several chiefs of the departed savages and many of their followers overtaken by the vengeance of the city and brought back to cruel deaths. For all of these were being saved to administer sport to their masters at the great feast to be held in the evening at the palace and in the gardens, and jeering crowds mocked their sufferings with insolent speeches.

Among the idols on the walls the great catapults were placed, and on the flowing moat were cast baskets full of flowers and leaves and bushes of pomegranate, roses, and sartreel, so that the sweet smell rose up to Heaven. A great feeling of security reigned, and luxurious wantonness took the place of all the hard life of the long time past; Toltiah, and all at the palace, glutting their souls and bodies with grandeur, power and pleasure. Companies of beautiful girls, flower encrowned, danced hand-in-hand along the streets, breaking up the mirthful crowds gathered around jugglers, musicians and astrologers and captivating the spectators with daring exhibitions of sensuous charms.

The drum of the temple of Zul called to worship and ceremony, and with fervour the multitudes repaired to the roofs, and the Court and notables to the temple. Amaziel was the High Priest, who had come from the Sun in a miracle of splendour, in place of Acoa who had vanished, not being appointed by any of Earth; yet I perceived much evil in his shining countenance and a certain fear which I could not express. His mantle was most curiously brilliant as though indeed it were

in verity of the Sun, and with a great love he looked upon Toltiah and also in a measure upon Azta.

The service was consummated in its usual horrid fashion, and the far crowds shouted joyfully as they returned downwards with hearts full of gratitude to the Lord of Light, (for being joyful they were devout,) pleased to return to their merry games and enjoy the bounty of their rulers, while gathering to witness the consecration of the Tzan. For earlier in the palace Toltiah had received the orbed sceptre from the Keeper of the Throne, which was the lord Lamech, the son of Jaal of the family of Enoch the righteous, and upon his head Amaziel had placed the Solar crown of Atlantis, upon the head of Azta placing the crown which held the crystal symbol of the Moon; and now, upon the highest platform of Zul before countless multitudes gathered in dense array, the Lord of Light was petitioned to consecrate the saviour of the people, the man esteemed before Tekthah.

And to add to the awed enthusiasm of the nation, it was known to every one after what fashion Toltiah was carnally endowed, as a very offspring of Zul in actual manifestation; so that there were continual great movements to get near enough to be able to see him, and very many people were trampled under foot and were killed. Nor less was Azta fearfully regarded, as being concerned in his appearance before them, all believing him to have been incarnated through her by the god Zul.

All the great ones of the land were there, either upon the same platform or in the forefront of the multitudes; and many who were pardoned when the city was taken, being among them all of Tekthah's household, who joyfully welcomed him whom they believed to be Huitza and sickening of the upstart Shar-Jatal.

There were men, women and youths, noble and great, children of Tzantans and Chiefs, Queens and Princes; old men who had grown gray in Tekthah's wars, venerable tribe-leaders who had followed the four-armed Cross of Atlantis from the north-east to the hill of southern Zul and beyond. With tears of emotion they witnessed the consecration of their Emperor, and when all was over a vast shout arose: "The Tzan, the Tzan! Huitza

and Zul!" and as Azta stepped forward and saluted him with a kiss, yet wilder rushed the swelling roar to Heaven, as victoriously they shouted her name, calling her Tizin and goddess.

How wonderful she looked, raised above human passions and vibrating with a new life as she stood with head thrown back, her swelling throat alone showing the emotion that nigh overcame her! Entranced by her beauty and unearthly majesty the noble crowd upon the high platform thundered applause, and Nezca bowed the knee low before her. Toltiah gazed upon her very curiously and I perceived he liked not Nezca's act, yet he said nought, smiling haughtily around.

Heralds dispersed the crowds and After-worship was partaken of riotously; in bowls of hot wine the souls soared to the skies. The strains of music redoubled and whirling dances engrossed the joyous throngs, who cast masses of sweet flowers about and sprinkled one another with liquid perfumes. But their gambols were licentious, and many a wanton shriek arose above the roars of merriment, and not a few cruelties took place; for the people were very like to tigers at play, yet without the natural restraints of such forbidding unseasonable coarseness.

In the palace matters of state progressed. Toltiah, upon the throne of marble and ivory, supported by the princes, councillors, captains, astrologers and such as knew every detail of every thing for settlement, the geographers, judges, and rulers of tribes and cities, divided the lands and appointed to coveted posts, distributed taxes and regulated laws. Only to such as formerly owned allegiance to Shar-Jatal were no rewards given, but to all that besieged the city was granted something. This one was appointed governor of this city, another of that: Chanoc was appointed Lord of Astra, (Raim, a favourite chief of the Talascans, being appointed governor of Atala in his place); Iru, Lord of Tek-Ra; and Nahuasco, of Trocoatla. Atala, neighbouring to Axatlan, was given to Nezca, Lord of Axatlan, who was much beloved by Toltiah for his beauty and loyalty, Alam being made the governor of Talascan for saving the life of Toltiah; and Chalac was restored to Mehír. Marisa, who had risen from her couch, was offered a high appointment if she would swear to remain an ally of Zul; but she refused, to

Azta's sorrow and Toltiah's chagrin, and it was given to Resaula, a son of Sifu, concubine of Tekthah whom Toltiah loved. And to such who, being already governors of certain cities, were to return to that city, power of concessions was granted; and particularly was leave of greater concessions given to all of Atala.

The sons of Noah felt no little annoyance that no province had been given to them or their sire, but Toltiah smiled upon them, saying that his love for them was such that he wished them to remain always by his side. But they knew he feared their teachings and loved not their straightness of living and had forgotten his indebtedness to them for all that he was. Yet nevertheless, embracing Noah, he conferred upon him the governorship of the city of Zul and gave him a palace and estates; and likewise embracing his mortified foster-brothers, to Shem he gave control over all the economy of the Empire, to Japheth the post of Chief of Armies, and to Ham the management of all walls and public buildings; likewise giving to each a mansion, and certain apartments in the Imperial palace. The chief Akin was made Tzantan of the Sea, with control of the warships and fisheries; and many more posts were given to sundry. The taxes were arranged and the code of laws revised, and at evening all was completed and the drums and trumpets gave the signal for the feast.

The palace had been renovated and the dining hall restored, the old marks of violence cleared away and the frescoes touched in with fresh colours, between which the polished mirrors reflected everything with wondrous brilliance. All the notables of the land were to come as guests, and every citizen of Zul, with the Amazons and all the armies and the crews of the warships; and the gardens of the palace were prepared for the reception of the guests, many trees being cut down to leave open spaces, in which the carpenters made platforms of wood to form level surfaces for the viands and bowls of wine, which were in great abundance.

And how stared those warriors who were from the borders at all that they perceived, at the delicious fare so different from their rude victuals, and the manner of the serving. Mingled with the sweet odours of dying flowers were the odours

of the feast, for among piles of fruits of every sort were steaming joints of meat and whole animals roasted; panthers, bears, horses, aurochs, antelopes, all yielded up their delicacies to fill the hungry stomachs; of fishes there were sorts without number, some great sturgeons and the turtles much sought after. White swans and gorgeous peacocks, prepared in their plumage, ornamented the board above mounds of grapes, melons, nuts, bananas and oranges, heaps of small birds reeked in pungent sauces, and baskets full of locusts, ants and such, soaked in the juice of lemons, filling the air with scent. Pine-apples lay in their red lusciousness side by side with the vast feet of mammoths, which were esteemed a great delicacy, and venison tempted the appetite with its steaming odour. There were piles of bread and cake and rich sweetmeats, and baskets full of Atalan land-crabs, and among all of these were placed strong scents of animal, flower and pungent wood, hidden beneath the enormous bowls of wine.

Upon these good things the eyes of the guests fixed themselves gluttonously. There were warriors young and old, merchants with their wives and mistresses, jovial seamen and dark tribe-leaders. Some of the warriors wore their harness, but most had cast it off and were as the citizens, for all carried arms; and thus on skins of lion, bear and all manner of animals the crowds reclined, and upon them from all around the light from torches and bonfires cast a red glow, while in front of the Hall of Feasting all shuddered pleasantly to observe the multiplied array of crosses and stakes filling the broad platform above the sweeping steps.

In the great hall, torch-lighted and brilliant with garlands of flaming sartreel flowers, Toltiah, with Azta on his right hand, reclined upon that daïs unoccupied since the murder of the nobles, above the gay throng, cooled by the waving of a thousand scented fans. Below were Nezca and the Tzantans of the palace, Marisa, Amaziel, Iztli and the family of Noah, and all around I perceived many great men, among them reclining ladies of high rank, haughty queens and elegant. Behind the daïs were detachments of guards and Amazons, and either side lay Toltiah's mistresses, their masses of hair flashing with precious gems and ornaments.

Tua was there, coquettishly veiling her soft blue eyes with their long lashes whenever they encountered the admiring gaze of some chief, which was not a little often; Sumar was there, and southern Emarna, with her red complexion and large bold eyes, was among them also, gazing with love upon Ham, notwithstanding that his espoused wife Ru reclined by him; and upon these soft, luxurious beauties the Amazons looked scornfully and jeered, noting the powder upon their faces and the flaming jewels in their teeth, while with no less curiosity did the queens note where Marisa reclined, and mark her masculine beauty.

Large black slaves assisted the menials in handing the great joints of meat and other things, and walking freely among the viands poured forth the wine from the amphoras into drinking horns and cups of shells of turtles and vegetables, particularly of certain sorts of large nuts. They handed round the scented smoking-herbs, while the music of a hundred instruments swelled high and drowned for a time all other sounds, the multitudes listening in admiration to the strains.

But before the eating and wine-bibbing started, and when all were seated, Nezca arose with a huge horn of wine, crying to them to pledge the Tzan, and like the rush of an army the warriors leaped up, shouting: "The Tzan! The Tzan! Huitza and Zul!"—pledging the gratified ruler in great draughts of wine, those without taking up the cry until it spread over the multitudes. Whereon Marisa, standing, cried also upon them to pledge Azta, and opening a vein in her arm so that the red blood fell into a bowl, she drank it to the Tizin. And as she bound up the flowing wound, the crowd, rendered mad by such manner of pledging and the enthusiasm of the toast, shouted with mighty noise and emptied deep horns of wine to the majesty of the Tizin; while a tempest of glittering weapons hissed in flashing salutation. Nahuasco raised one of the immense amphoras and drank to her with a vast enthusiasm, and many others followed his example; while, catching the madness, the great crowds without shouted Azta's name, coupling it with that of Neptsis. And at all this applause Toltiah's features expressed a diabolical jealousy, and the beauty of his countenance was as that of a smitten and fallen demon, sublime but terrible.

And then the feast began and the people did nought but eat and drink and smoke continuously, ravening like animals that were starving. Lying flat on their bellies they gorged themselves, and Noah and Shem, with their women, went out to their apartments, not liking the licentious doings of many.

Such as had never before seen the interior of the palace stared at the wonders around, drinking in the pictured conceptions with joy and awe, the Amazons gazing coldly upon the portrayals of huge and unrestrained imaginations. The wavy lights danced brightly on weapons and gemmy tiaras, helmets and armlets, and turned the great amphoras of wine into craters of blood as the viands disappeared. Full stomachs began to crave less haste in satisfaction, and, adding to the minstrelsy, snatches of songs arose, ribald and coarse, as the wine bred bravado and merriment. The women sang also, and bright eyes grew brighter and glances more daring as here and there one danced among the viands with tossing hair and wanton gestures.

Tairu, sweetest of musicians, declaimed in a clear space in the midst of the tables, singing the glories of Atlantis and of her present Ruler. He narrated from the beginning the history of the Earth, from when the huge egg formed in the surrounding dark waters, impregnated by demons and monsters, product of Neptsis. α He sang of the beauty of Azta and the ladies of the Court, the prowess of the Tzantans and warriors, while strains of sympathetic minstrelsy added an undertone to his

α This doctrine of the Mundane egg indicates what, for want of a better word, I must call Turanian ideas, and belongs to the most archaic cosmogonies. The egg is a common mythical element, found in Egypt, Phœnicia, India, China, Fiuland, and Polynesia, but wherever such is found it may be traced to that old "Turanian" cosmogony which makes the world resemble an egg, formed in the water. To our day the old veneration lingers in the Easter egg, symbolical of the Resurrection.

The idea of an aqueous origin of everything is also very old. Lenormant tells us that the Akkads, whose mythology passed into that of the Semitic Babylonians, "considered the humid element as the vehicle of all life, the source of all generation;" and several myths, of which the sea-birth of Venus is the best known, testify to the prevalence of the idea. The Frog symbol and the creative Frog Ptah of Egypt undoubtedly indicate the same.

For later science of the subject see Appendix § 23.

song. Likewise accompanying himself upon a one-stringed instrument of music, he stirred up the easy enthusiasm of the audience with songs of loves and battles, the mythical amours of Neptsis and Æther, and the warlike procession of the Last-Created.

He gave place to jugglers who played with balls and knives, blowing long tongues of flame through their nostrils the while, and dancing girls who kept step with weird music, and whose graceful movements and significant gestures won the riotous applause of the drunken throngs, lying forgetful even of eating in the joy of watching. And while this progressed, one was sent to the Circus to bid the jailors bring along the oil-fed captives for the horrid amusement of the mob.

C A P. X V I.

“O TERQUE QUATERQUE BEATI—!”

FROM under the cold star-light, driven in chains, they came; scores of wretched captives, into the menacing red glow of the fires and the merciless presence of those whose positions would have been reversed with reversed Fate. One who fainted was cast upon a bonfire, and with their devilish appetites aroused the crowds bared their teeth and waited in anticipation for what was to come.

And what followed I scarce can write, for so much the more as I partook of the nature of man so also greater did the tortures of the Clay affect my soul, and yet on such occasions was I unable to do aught but watch and suffer. O accursed man who can so rejoice over the pain inflicted joyfully on another, who will dare the curse of the injured for the devil's satisfaction of witnessing suffering! Would that I could have stopped that horror; yet I knew it was part of the damnation that man should work to his own undoing and of his own Heaven-free volition.

And so I watched, sick at heart with what I scarce knew was coming; and while shuddering wretches were being bound to the crosses and saturated with fat and oil, a captive, chained to a negro guard, was led into the clear space among the viands before the daïs.

Tall and of an ashen pallor, this was Shar-Jatal, whom Toltiah did not know, but to Azta he brought back vividly the last time that she had eaten in that hall. Again she appeared to feel the curious sensation of impending catastrophe, and looked around as she had done then to see if anyone else shared her fear.

It was the same scene! There were the gaudy frescoes, the

bright reflecting mirrors, the wreck of viands and the great vessels, the slaves, the flashing arms and jewels, the wanton indolence of the sprawling drunkards. But where now was mighty Tekthah? where Huitza and Rhadaman? where Colosse, Teta, Semaia, Amal and many others?

A sudden flash of a jade spear-head aroused her, and she looked to where the captive stood with his mutilated limb hanging to his side. At his feet the jailor lay in his death-struggles, for it was deemed too great a hindrance to release the fetters, and also that a slave should not live to boast of such a connection.

The chief's eyes sought Azta's with an agonized entreaty, but cries and jeers drowned his wild appeal for mercy. The jewels in his teeth were brutally jeered at as the ornaments of female vanity, and a woman threw a small bone at his face, which hung entangled in his beard; whereupon another plucked it forth with a handful of hair, saying that it was a pity to waste good food on so craven a warrior; and Marisa, whose rage flared up at remembrance of the deadly repulse of her attack, struck him in the foot with her spear, crying out that she would that he were able to face her with arms and buckler.

Then Azta spoke, her fury rising as she recited his deeds of insolence to herself and of cruelty to others, his imprisonment of her and daring pressure of an abhorred suit, his ready aid in the massacre, and in the murder of his lord, the Tzan Tekthah. His upstart seizure of the sacred Throne and audacity in resisting the risen Huitza and slaying his loyal warriors deserved more punishment than they could inflict upon him. He should be sent to wander far from Zul to meet the full award of a coward and a murderer, despatched thither by such poor means as could be devised.

Abuse and insults were heaped upon the trembling wretch, the women goading themselves into an access of frenzy by crying out the names of warriors slain upon the walls, and a drunken Tzantan applied a torch to his long matted beard. The scorching flames rose swiftly, enveloping his head and burning his eyes out, and roaring with the agony, he plunged as far as his fetters would permit, falling with a crash

Marisa laughed a bitter scornful laugh, echoed by her followers and all the crowd, the silvery mocking merriment of the women rising above the rest. And what followed I cannot say, for it is not well to consider too fully the cramping horror of maltreated muscles; but with consumed entrails, lying prone between strong fastenings, he died; and the panting butchers returned to their couches to watch the burning of the victims upon the crosses, and those which writhed upon the stakes.

The lions roared deeply, scenting blood, but unheeding, the revellers plunged their heads into the wine-vessels, swilling with deep, stupefying draughts. Many lay helpless, and others, unaware of their surroundings, shouted atrocious songs, brandishing their weapons dangerously.

The remains of Shar-Jatal were carried out to be cast upon a furnace, a warrior hacking a portion of flesh from a limb as the body passed, and devouring it with a ferocious jest. The Amazons chanted a weird song as tremulous lights shot up from the crucified victims without, fired at the feet by long torches, reminding each other of the torture of their comrades.

In front of this array of victims and facing towards the hall, Pocatepa hung, the heavy bronze cage enclosing her head tied by a rope to the top of the cross, so that she could see all in front of her; and, stripped of the mystic insignia of priestess of Neptsis, various degradations were put upon her, because that, being a married woman, she had defiled the shrine of the goddess. By her sides were Bel and Arioeh, and these were to be left to the last, with the golden skewers of slaves thrust through their nostrils, their eyes rolling awfully as the storm of horrid shrieks arose all round them, and the flare of the leaping flames cast wavering cross-bars of light on the terrace, flung lightning-like by the writhings and confined plungings of the living torches. Choking sounds were uttered, sharp shrieks and growling yells of the most intense torture, the uncontrollable cries of staked and burning wretches. The large-bodied warriors shook the crosses with their frantic struggles, and sometimes a half-consumed limb would be torn off in the death-throes, the awful writhings of the semi-released and fiercely burning creature adding horror to the awful scene.

The spectators watched silently in a dense crowd, the trees being swarmed with them, shuddering occasionally, and with nerves at a high tension, crying out with terror when any burning clot of oil was flung near them. Azta's yellow eyes flared like a tiger's, Toltiah, nigh overcome with wine, watched with expanded nostrils, and Ham and Japheth murmured the disapproval they dared not utter.

One of the feasters crashed his head open by falling drunk on the edge of an amphora, and a tall Amazon, terribly excited by the scene, cleft a slave to the jaws for an insulting remark. Yet these things passed unnoticed in the face of that flaming Horror, and even two men fought one another to the death over the possession of a woman and none scarce perceived it.

Now a body fell, hanging by one arm, and swung in gyrating movements; another dropped, half-consumed, amid a puff of flame and sooty smoke. Blood burst from attenuated cuticles, and the sputter and hiss sounded amid the roar of the flames. From burst skulls jets of smoke rose in spiral columns, bones cracked and more bodies fell, some with the consumed crosses. The shrieks had fallen to a few shuddering moans, and the dreadful people began to cry for the bodies to be added to the bonfires and more living ones put up.

Many drunken wretches fell from the trees and were killed, and there were not a few fights, while such as were on the outskirts of the crowd committed violent deeds. The stench of burning hair and flesh was fearful, and the eyes smarted with the pungent smoke. The executioners bound fresh victims to the smoking poles, oil was poured over them and fired; the impaled victims were lifted and placed upon crosses, others being raised upon the bloody stakes; and again arose the horrid cries, a tempest of awful sound that drowned and quenched all else. One or two stout men plunged like impaled porpoises, so that their vessels burst and let fall a hail of splashing blood. Consumed abdomens permitted the long entrails to gush forth, while from the shivering bodies the burning oil was shaken as a rain of liquid fire.

A large drop flew upon Arioch, and instantly he was alight, plunging and tearing furiously and roaring like an impaled lion

in the intensity of his sufferings, as his long beard and massy mane shrivelled in a breath, the smoke enveloping his head as with a cloud. The burning splashes of oil fell upon Pocatepa and wreathing flames sprang about her, enwrapping her rounded figure in their embrace; while Bel similarly leaped into the similitude of a genius of fire, and shrieked horribly until he died. Yet Pocatepa moved not nor uttered a sound, and those nearest her perceived her to be already dead. On her arm the coiled snake wriggled in the flames with jaws widely distended and forked tongue tremulating, but its hisses were unheard in the inferno of sound. All there, knowing her repute as a sorceress, expected to witness something extraordinary, and a cry of terror arose when the bronze cage, breaking from its calcined lashings, fell forward, and tearing the half-consumed limbs from the arms of the cross caused the body to hang suspended by the legs; when the head, with its lava-like mass of burnt hair, torn from the body and drowned in a rushing cascade of blood, fell from the burning mass.

A cry burst from all who witnessed the sight, and the crowd began to tire of its awful sport as the calcined crosses fell, carrying others with them. Yet in that horror one dared to obtain possession of the head of Pocatepa that the emeralds in the teeth be obtained. Captives, chained together, were fired in groups, the drunken murderers yelling with mirth to see their opposing struggles; but suddenly three mangled wretches broke away, and maddened by their fiery torments, ran like demons among their tormentors, catching up weapons and slaying incapable wretches right and left; nor were they killed until over fifty people had fallen before their justly avenging fury.

Enraged, the mob fell upon the rest, and most of them died a merciful death beneath knives, spears and swords. Inside, Azta arose and drank a full horn to “the warriors of Atlantis,” such as were able to move staggering to their feet with a shout of salute, Toltiah among the rest. Amphoras were drained, and some of the more sober went outside and returned hauling survivors of the prisoners by their chains, whose throats they cut over large vessels and savagely drank hot blood. They broke open

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the skulls to devour the brains, and tearing out the quivering hearts, raised them upon their spear-points in derision and then devoured them likewise. Their eyes swam with maddest excesses, and their mighty limbs were almost beyond control.

The work of slaughter continued until not one of the hapless prisoners remained alive, and well might those tortured wretches envy the fate of those who fell on the walls and in the fierce battles before Zul, and cry aloud with great Æneas yet long unborn: "O thrice and four times happy, whose fate it was to fall before your fathers' eyes by those high walls!"

O terque quaterque beati!

CAP. XVII.

THE INFERNAL COUNCIL.

IT was when everyone lay prone upon the ground and no sound save of prowling beasts broke the silence, that Amaziel, sitting upright where he was, spake unto Nezca:

“Hail, Hesorio! Look thou and say, have not we done well?”

And Nezca (whom aforesometimes I knew to be of no earthly mould) answered him:

“Great Leira, have we not ever done well?”

Hesorio was that sarcastic Spirit that ridiculed all, who after invented the prayer-wheel and the rosary; one of those which fell by a dire ambition that threatened to wreck Heaven, among whom also was Leira. Which one had I not foreseen in the person of Amaziel, but now, perceiving, feared. Also I now understood Mah to be one of the fallen, like unto Leira, yet of a grosser nature; and was greatly distressed to think upon the latter's words and of how the powers of Heaven fought against the Earth for to destroy it. And this one strove hard to recover from the blasting oblivion into which he had been plunged, and had in a great measure recovered some of the past glory by which he could farther work the will of the master-mind of great Satan in the undermining of Heaven.

For although I will not, nor indeed could I, tell of the stupendous economy of God, yet there is the perfection of tiniest atoms that which builds up the grand whole, and who may tell how far a canker will spread? And in this dire plot to wreck Earth was a danger, menacing indeed, that could not be supported, and my thoughts sped out with eager wings to find the reasons of why such could be permitted and why sin could be allowed, and returned trembling to see the certain end of it all.

What was Man that he should endanger Heaven, and the lust of man that could shake universes unimagined? The un-governed passion that longed for union with any strange thing, and devised all manner of confusion to gratify its furious ends, gave to the sons of Heaven the means that they desired by which they might regain that which none but God could hold or wield. And to man was it granted a power to mould his own destiny! And now, his evil increased by the perceptions of Archangels, what sweeping calamity must fall upon him. O Azta!

Among the dark forms and the wreckage of the meal which a few touches lighted, the two fiends sat with crossed knees in the shadows of the vast gloomy hall. Their sinister orbs were bent upon the debauched figures lying with far-extended limbs, and they sighed while yet they triumphed, silently regarding those whom they made the vessels of their designs.

"Now does our great work begin to gather force," said Leira; "and yet I fear the Wrath that may again descend upon us and sweep us still farther from our end. Hast marked Asia, which was sent to mitigate the evil of this race beloved of the Angels? I'truth, none served me better than yon fair Azta, in that she hath led the would-be captor captive!"

"Thou sayest well, as ever, great Leira. We have revenged ourselves upon this Creation preferred before us and have made of it a stepping-stone to our desire. The leavening Adam, which was to have led all the nations to a glorious height, with reversed steps leads them down to Hell; and in place of a wisdom that would grow with immortality and reach the skies, has forsaken it in our favour and welcomed Death, preferring the fevered joys of Earth to the calmer ecstasy of Heaven. O generous Man, that we should treat him so!"

Leira frowned darkly. "It is not all to us that he is evil and possessed of such libidinous fury," he said sullenly.

"Our measures greatly coincide with his," said Hesorio, with a bitter sneer. "And yet are we also bitten by him in that we love. And by reason of our own confusion by accursed forgetfulness of sovereign power our sweet Loves die and go from us, and their enlightened Spirits loathe us which drag them from the light."

Leira sighed, and a tear fell from his eyes. "Thy words are bitter," he said, "yet to our great end nought could have worked better than that Azta had been born to me, for I fear the might of Asia. And had not that accursed Shar-Jatal, whom I have undone, slain my son Huitza by his foul designing, he would have overcome the Earth by force of bloody arms, and falling into some fair devil's power have spread a veil of ruin over all."

"Yet Azta loved him well and would have taken him to herself?"

"Truth! and in good time they twain would have wrought a mighty evil when the arms of Atlantis were carried in red victory to the ends of the Earth, and the race of Adam, weakened by wars and intermarriage, should no longer be of use for a leaven of holiness and wisdom. But then came Asia, and for him I reserved Azta, to hold him in chains lest he wreck our plans."

They sat and gazed, the one upon the other, and in the great shadows I perceived many forms that lowered above the unconscious multitude. Couldst thou have seen thy doom, O Man! And, my Love, didst thou know thy dread descent and of what awful sin came this offspring of ours?

I had wrought confusion with the daughter of a devil, and upon my soul the accursed knowledge fell as a thunderbolt.

"And where hast hidden Mah?" asked Hesorio.

"Pholia rests in Zul. Too ambitious ever is he for Earthly glory; yet he serves."

"And thus we work! and in my friendly care Toltiah rests in careless trust, subservient to my secret councils which have caused my mortal guards to fall from the high path that they would wish to tread."

They both laughed scornfully, their merriment echoing in the spaces of the vaulted roofs and around the walls.

"This great child of Asia's will aid us bravely," said Leira, glancing to where Toltiah lay on Emarna's breast, breathing with an unseemly noise in his heavy sleep, "with his own soul and body of man and woman shall he enslave the high lords and ladies, holding them in restraint, while Azta shall reign in deed and in truth, and by her womanly weakness countenance

all confusion, afraid of rousing the nation against her cherished supremacy. Rulers with alien blood in their veins shall rule over cities and states, and the nation shall fall beneath our arts."

"Such shall be, and more," said Hesorio; and together they discussed such things as I may not tell of, whereat my wrath arose greatly. Yet was not I as bad, though not wishing to be? I dared not disclose myself when under my eyes lay the sin that I myself had wrought, wringing my heart with its unkind witness. In the silence where sat those two awful figures I watched, horrified, self-reproachful and despairing, and heard there the plans for the destruction of a world of Souls in which I, not all unwilling, aided. Oh the terror of weakness that fell upon me, the horrid rebellion of feelings! I could not forego my love; with a despairing insistence it clung to me and did but raise a storm of furious emotions that cried to me to do anything to uphold it and strive to attain my end at the same time. In a terrible chaos of wrecked emotions I stood, for I could not give up my Love, whom, nevertheless, I knew loved me not, and yet how would she act as Ruler of the land?

Between me and Paradise she stood, holding in her hand the sword of the Vengeance of Jehovah. In a vision I saw it, where a great black cloud slowly parted in the middle before the mystic Gates that no mortal comprehends, before which stood Azta chained by the lightning so that I might not pass. The atoms of Earth, pregnant with awful lust, dared impiously to mingle with the terrors of Heaven, dared because not comprehended; vaunting their power before the inviolable purity of God; and blinded by these I stumbled from the light, repulsed by a power that charmed while it resisted. Around me stretched unknown expanses of gray shadows, and in my bursting heart was a great feeling of reproach and a knowledge that although I suffered so by my own volition, yet it was also through someone else. Before me was the pure beauty of Heaven, closed against me by the dark barrier of Forgetfulness, intangible yet insurmountable; I knew I had become imbued with Earth, whose greater discoveries open up greater fields of marvel which, reached, disclose immeasurably greater, to which is no end. I saw and knew the wonders of unending

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mystery, limitless, boundless, awful! And then I marvelled if those two fiends yet realized the wonder of it all and dreamed of the ruinous horror that they strove to drag down upon themselves.

And then before my eyes entered a vast beautiful presence, refulgent in flaming light, and I perceived the dread glory of Satan, the potential Power-of-Evil in manifested form. A horrid beauty enwrapped the godless Angel, and upon his broad forehead shone redly the scar where the lightning-sword of Michael had smitten him with disaster, closing upon him the gates of further knowledge through which he had dared to steal. Tremendous in infernal power he strode, the acknowledged Lord of Hell and Father of Confusion, reckless in war and fertile yet of dread councils, awful in power of evil and corruption.

Prostrate before him fell the inferior fiends, yet growing in fiery volume under the eyes of their great master.

"Arise," he spoke, "ye have done well;" and his eyes floated upon them with the fire of bright stars, cold as the glittering ice, while his arms, like two columns of marble, overspread the sleeping crowds in malediction. Upon them he cast a light of such brightness that all appeared as spirits gazing upon him with terrified fascination and trembling before his countenance, which, serene and majestic, was turned upon them. Before the awful Angel in transparent nakedness they lay, tiny and insignificant before that great Evil, the embodied wisdom of countless ages that had dared to compete with God; and I marvelled how Man could possess such self-esteem, save but that he believed his tiny horizon to hold all things.

"Who made Earth?" asked the Wonder of Sin in a voice that touched the Infinite, and a myriad voices answered him:

"Partly we made it!"

"It is well spoken; and but for lack of constant faith had we accomplished more," said the great Spirit. "Remember, ever remember for your strengthening, that it was by hesitance we lost, by doubt our backsliding gathered force until in hideous rout we fell. Remember our former power and unshaken strength of will, and how shook the Heavens before our great imagining! Then had we won, but suddenly a doubt of our

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powers seized us—it grew, resistless, numbing our faculties, intruding beyond hindrance and increasing with its first knowledge—and power slipped from our command. Our noble efforts to recover our proud confidence nigh succeeded—wavered—hesitated



IN BAFFLED FURY RETIRED.

—gave way with one fell rush of deadly fright and terror—and in tremendous amaze cast headlong, we were reduced to this. Stand firmly and trust in me, and step by step we will regain our heights!”

And the voices answered: “We trust! Our power is upon the Earth!”

A dreadful smile hovered like a shadow on those dire lips;

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“Our leaven overcomes,” he said; and from far distances, rolling as muffled thunder, came the triumphant shout :

“It is ours! Man is our tool and Earth is ours!”

In the infernal brightness those dread hands were over-stretched upon Azta and Toltiah and the demon voices cried: “Strike!” But with great emotions that drove my spirit as one before the rush of a mighty wave I stood forth, crying: “Strike not, dark angel, or dread the wrath of Jehovah!”

Amazed, the shining triad stood, quailing before the brightness that even now overcame theirs, and powerless before the sword of celestial fire. In baffled fury they retired; while, awaking as from a horror of the night, men rose up trembling, nor deemed that they had slumbered beneath the wings of Doom.

CAP. XVIII.

THE VISION OF THE EARTH.

SOME time rolled on and I began to be possessed of new ideas as I looked upon Azta and considered her. An enthusiastic fury seized upon me. I would take this one, daughter of a fiend, Love of an Archangel, and raise her in all her splendid majesty and beauty to a height of glory and of mighty knowledge, so that she should perceive all, and, perceiving, act justly.

For as the days sped, so much the more the throne of Atlantis leaned to Azta. The people rebelled in their hearts, against their new Ruler, for under his government the lands were taxed heavily, regardless of all statutes, and the Lords of territories followed the example and became greatly oppressive.

The promised aid of the capital was withheld from the rebuilders of those towns of Hava and of Tek-Ra, which had been destroyed, to the great discontent of such as were interested in it; and Iru, the Lord of Tek-Ra, scarce restrained his annoyance and rebellion. The grossest superstitions fell on all, and abominations were set up to be worshipped; for, while Man never gives up religion of some sort by reason of his frailty, yet in a degraded state of existence the symbols become likewise degraded. How sad is the lot of that land whose appointed king is weak and indolent, and evil men wax fat on its unhappy people!

Such now was becoming Atlantis, the people solacing themselves unchecked by unequalled excesses, while the savage tribes around raided their lands, destroying villages and outlying cities and carrying off the women, untroubled by the plumed legions who quartered themselves on the inhabitants of large cities and spent their time in violence and lust.

The nation fell into despair. No other Huitza would arise to free them from an increased yoke, and as what they sowed to-day would be reaped by a tyrant's hand to-morrow, they ceased to give thought to the future and revelled in evils that were forcibly obtained.

Noah and his family were looked upon with disfavour in Zul because that they held themselves apart from evil. The patriarch did not hesitate to boldly rebuke Toltiah, who would have stood such from none other, yet his words were of no effect. Surrounded by concubines and favorites the young chief led a voluptuous existence, and Azta, cold, continent and masterful, was the real leader in Zul; for although at every festival Toltiah occupied the chief place, yet everyone recognised with reverence the Ruler in the majestic woman with the eyes of fire who was so terrible and unearthly, and every one of the arrogant chiefs and superb queens, believing they perceived a being of supernatural endowments, feared her.

The throne of Atlantis was hers! As the Lady of Zul her name was powerful in the land, and filled with the triumph of it, she was happy for awhile. And then the old nature came forth, the ambition, the craving for something more, the wish to fill the chaotic sphere in which she moved surrounded by gorgeous works of art and magnificence of luxury, of vast dormant powers uncomprehended and possibilities that made her brain reel to contemplate. Also I knew that although Toltiah's lethargy permitted her to rule, yet was her Ideal fallen and degraded, and it caused her to become very hasty of speech and of a biting tongue. Alone, she would have ruled bravely, but the knowledge that her supremacy was but through the degradation of one she loved so strangely, caused her to waver and to wish at times that he would assert his own supreme power.

In such humour I found her, and, full of my thought, hastened to approach her.

"Now art thou in very truth Queen of Atlantis," I said; "yet art satisfied?"

"Nay, my Asia," she replied; "but can there not be satisfaction save under such conditions?"

"There is never full happiness, it bethinks me, Love. Either is there remorse for what thou hast done to obtain the coveted prize, or disappointment that such, reached, is but the end of all the hopes that kept joy alive. Only is there satisfaction in Knowledge and in obtaining it; for it causes no envy to give thee pain, thou dost not wound thy friends in its possessing, the more thou hast the greater the horizons open around thee, and what is thine none can rob thee of."

"How great a thing, then, is Knowledge!"

"Great indeed, Beloved. In its pursuit is no sleep-destroying scheme, in its possession no armed guard is needed to protect thee, for it commands high reverence and no envy. Knowledge is the steps of the Throne of God which few mortals climb to do Him obeisance. Mystery is its pleasing spouse, never forsaken nor tired of, for as a good wife she has ever fresh charms to display."

"By Zul, my lord, thou art in truth a philosopher!"

"It is the philosophy of Experience, fair lady; besides which nought permits us to act with that moderation befitting one who would rule men."

She sat and thought for a while and then turned swiftly to me, laying her hand on mine with a bright smile on her face.

"Show me what is Knowledge," she said, "and tell me of Mystery, for I love such. And much have I thought upon it and regarded the life of mortals and the wonder of Earth."

"Dear Love," I said, embracing her, "I could tell thee of Worlds more wondrous than this, and of greater mysteries that walk as unconcerned as thou, not comprehending the awful marvel that makes them mysterious. Thou canst not tell of what or whence thou art or whither thou goest, yet to thee is given a power to raise or wreck many souls. Come thou with me, my Love, and see thy heart quail not!"

She clung to me, and raising her up I kissed her on the lips, and again my whole soul went out to her. Once more she gave me that questioning glance that she had bestowed upon me when we first met, an agonized searching for something that should fill a great void.

"Were but thy name Huitza!" she said, with an intense passion.

"My name is what thou choosest," I answered.

"But, O my Beloved, what is that which fascinates before speech in the outer person, the entering fire of the eye that we have never seen before, that binds the soul to itself?"

"It is the love of Earth, perchance unknown and unacknowledged, that strangely binds the mortal eye by its revelation of the life of Heaven. But, as all of Earth, it lessens; or is only given by one of the two who loves with a better love. Seldom indeed, two mortals love equally."

"My Ideal, then, was a reflection of something far away; methinks thou thyself, for strangely at times my soul mingles with thine in more perfect happiness than words can tell. Say, art thou my Love?"

I folded her to my breast. "How can I answer thee?" I cried.

"Show me thy wisdom," she implored, looking into my eyes. I kissed her lips. "What shall I show thee?" I asked.

"Show me the Earth," she said.

For awhile I pondered. Not for me was it to show those mysteries which have never been spoken, nor to say under what form this thing moves, or that. Nevertheless I consented, and in visions taking her hand we moved from where we stood, going from the busy sounds of life to a place where a great silence reigned: a place of awful silence, where the soul feared to move. From very far seemed to come the sounds of roaring tempests as together we swept through unlimited space. Yet now was a horror of sadness within me and a fear that my Love would not fulfil that which should save us both.

I showed her the far places of the stars, and where spirits of fire lived in a heaven of dew where wondrous opals formed, and upon whose boundaries hovered arcs of very bright coloured light, of which long tongues ran in corruscating splendour through the flashing spaces: a moist life more congenial to atoms of Earth than those limitless depths of outer darkness where the cold is terrible and no atom moves to generate light and warmth.

In a marvel of concentration she looked upon the Earth, suspended in middle void, and knew and understood all that

she saw. In unfathomable emptiness her spirit hovered as upon her pressed the sensation of unknown æons of Time past and swiftly passing, while in the midst the World of Earth rotated in a sea of fire. Eruptions, that filled the depths with sound, convulsed it, whirling as a bright star in the night, for it was dark all around; and in a long, slow circle, yet moving with terrific speed, it travelled with the noise of a great storm. Far, very far, moved other starry points of light, and in the movement of the Earth a wind sprang up to cool the burning mass. ^z The encircling fire died and a steamy vapour, born of moisture surrounding, rolled in vapoury clouds and hid the wonder, as the revolving periods gave the Sun and the Moon their form and mission, the Sun a centre of wondrous attraction for other spheres rolling in their appointed paths. Ever and ever onwards rolled the swift wheels of Time as vast worlds of celestial magnitude revolved, system within system, without knowledge of limit; and in the ages passing a dazzling Moon lighted the terrestrial vapours with a blaze of glory, itself to die in the wonder of the centuries and reflect the light from the appointed Sun.

And ever His works praised the Creator, and living angels praised the mighty Father, nor impiously considered the Source of Life.

The crust of Earth hardened, the surrounding vapours cooled, condensed themselves and fell, forming one vast sea of warm water, boiling upon the burning Earth with great tossing waves. By reason of the living fire within, earthquakes convulsed the sphere and mountains of lava rushed forth; the rocks formed and evolved; this fell in the periods that remained; and as the Earth grew cooler and cooler, seas and oceans formed in the hollows made by the rising of the dry land.

The Creator breathed upon it and the atoms of Life leaped forth at his bidding, and a carpet of verdure covered the uncomely nakedness of the rocks.

Strange indeed appeared the planet! In the silent emptiness it rolled its mass, as yet not fully lighted by the nebulous Sun,

^z The Firmament;

and in the vast solitudes, undisturbed by aught of life, save that of the herbage and the great warm oceans, it lay in a twilight of a monotonous sombre hue, pregnant with embryo life of huge uncouth dimensions, as of the rough-hewn stone that will become a beauteous statue. Terrific shocks and cataclysms modelled the new Sphere; palms and ferns grew, nourished by the unceasing downfall of waters from above, whose atoms, mingling with those of Earth, filled her with teeming embryo particles awaiting the Word of Life. From the strand of the continents a warm silent sea stretched to the dark horizon without a movement, and the still atmosphere hung like a pall over everything.

Evolution on evolution; change on change; and after a twilight of untroubled ages the great Sun's appointed task began and the world became light by turn, and dark, with the Moon to shine upon her. The planet, as yet not in her ordered path, rotated slowly, and the long bright periods of sunlight of increasing life and warmth coloured the pale Earth and filled her with growing beauty. Long days were those, and there were long nights when the Moon cast back the reflected light into an untroubled world, and the young life slept. And then came the winds, rushing to fill the airy vacuums, roaring with the voices of storms that rolled the ocean billows upon the coasts of rock. The atmosphere was charged and the inner places received the grateful air, the herbage was shaken and its seeds scattered. Tides began in seas and rivers, that, attracted by the near mass of the Moon, arose and heaped up their waters until the central attraction of their own sphere arrested them; cascades fell over rocks, and the Sun lifted the waters in vapour to cast them back in rain that the solid portions of the earth might be moistened; forests sank and others grew above them, the buried growths forming new strata—reservoirs for needs in the far, far future.

Then appeared living things that moved apart from the earth, and the life grew stronger and more distinct. The deep seas produced living things in countless numbers, and marine animals of huge bulk and fearful aspect disported themselves in the waters. Great insects crawled and flew, and birds traversed the

skies; weird creatures flew in the heavens and all life was strange and vast, the half-formed progenitors of more shapely forms to come, living on one another and on the vegetable life around, increasing and multiplying in the quiet ages and forming earth-structures with their bodies. Their mother Earth was changing likewise, and in her various strata preserving the remains of uncouth early forms—a museum for the instruction of future students, an unwritten record of those old days when Man calls the earth young.

Mammalian life appeared in forms that rivalled the marine monsters. Mastodons and mammoths,^z shaking the ground beneath them, devoured the forests and slaked their thirst in the rivers, companions of uncouth hairy monsters hideous of shape, and gigantic reptiles, amphibious and terrestrial.

Evolving more perfect forms or suffered to discontinue, the terrific creatures disappeared, and a Thing, unrecognisable save but by the knowledge of it, appeared. This was man, last-created of living beings, huge and terrible, with uncurbed lusts, driven by primitive ideas and vague desires. This one was cruel by the instinctive knowledge of mysterious and wonderful life and the pleasing horror of extinguishing it, violent by the realization of breathing and living power, evil for the gratification of defiance and challenge and sovereignty; developing and evolving newer and more perfect forms of both sexes; perishing in violent cataclysms and earthquakes as the Earth changed her surface together with the dependant creatures. He was made weaker and of limited powers, to check the working of confusion by the exercise of lusts too powerful to be controlled, lusts formed of vague desires that never formed themselves into conductors for organised effort, being too visionary and immense. And then the Word spake: "Let us make man in Our image;" and there came the first man of a new and godlike race, great Adam, last and most perfect being of Earth, pure and moderate in his desires which were less of Earth than of Heaven. To him was given thought and immortality and the gift of perfect speech and power that he might go among all the races of

^z Read for these, "huge pachyderms," of the earlier species.

Man and civilize them, teaching them of God and many arts.

And now Azta perceived the mission of the Last-created race and of the fall thereof, and I said to her: "Behold, the desire of knowing and attempting more than was good came unto this one also, as unto thy people, and the order to Cease was spoken, for where Progression stops, Decay begins."

And I showed her where righteous Abel lay dead beneath his brother's hand, the first of his race to die: "And thus in death shall all of Earth depart," I said, "and when the appointed time comes nought can save him, nor aught, save the decree of One, can remove the curse that One has spoken. Nor tears shall avail, nor anguish of spirit, nor crying of the heart; the Word of God endureth for ever inviolable, unswerving and unheeding, and the abominable thing shall be blotted out from before His face. Anguish comes and is gone, but Progress moves on for ever, and in the tears of millions the Empire rises; for as gold grows bright and hard and beautiful in the furnace and under the hammer, so in the furnace of suffering and under the pitiless blows of affliction grow the Souls, polished and rounded by friction in the sea of Time like pebbles of the ocean. And look not on thy high towers and walls and boast thyself safe, for it shall come to thee as the reality of a dream that nought shall stand of Earth before the Word."

And I showed her where Cain went forth and taught the nations eastward of Eden the arts of many things, yet not of God; and where the sons of Adam increased and multiplied, what time the angels ministered to Man in form of winged bull or brazen seraph. *α*

α The meaning of this sentence appears obscure. Winged bulls, sculptured in stone, and other creatures at the gate of an Assyrian temple or palace were called Kirubu, (whence the Hebrew *Kerubim*, English "Cherubim"), and represented guardian spirits.

In Numbers XXI 6, the word "Seraphim" is used of a kind of serpent, not "fiery", but burning, meaning poisonous. In Isa. XIV. 29 and XXX. 6 the singular *seraph* occurs with the epithet "flying". Arabian legend speaks of white flying serpents (Agh., XX. 135, 30) Ency. Brit.

A long treatise might be written as to the connection between the serpent and the Seraphim, as to whether there may have been spiritual manifestations in ser-

“And why,” she asked, “was all this life that died and was tormented in the living? Tell me, what is Life?”

“Life is Love, the Being of God; the power of creation that ever lives and begets more life, wherein Evil wars with Good, causing suffering and some joy. The finer the Soul, the more capable of feeling and of more fiery life. There is nought around thee but lives; and see, from the dead comes life, for there is no death, it is but a transposition of atoms to increase yet the more.”

“Why need there be what Man calls death?”

“It is the disintegration of the atoms when he has accomplished his allotted time, wherein he has enough knowledge of that which is permitted, (in the overstepping of which bounds has this race sinned so grievously), to farther the march of Progress. For all of Earth, clever but by hereditary perception, and not by any means continuing their fathers' wisdom from that point at which they themselves emerged into the life of Earth, have to learn of their suffering the experiences that render their hoary sires so terrible and mighty, looking down from their high seats of knowledge. Neither could they indeed

perpetrate such a crime. Like we are told of Satan when he tempted Eve, to account for the strange hold which the reptile obtained over the minds of men. (see footnote, cap. 1). The serpent was the emblem of Christ as well as of Satan, of Esculapius as of the Gorgon.

Of Cherubim, Dr. J. Kelly Cheyne, Oriel Prof. of Interpretation of Scripture, tells us:

“The Psalmist gives a version that the Cherub was either an eagle or a quadruped with eagle's wings: (Ps. XVIII. 10 and precisely the same 2 Sam. XXII. 11). This would seem to justify connecting the word with the Assyrian *Kurubu*, a synonym of *Kurukku* or *Karakku*, the “circling” bird, *i.e.*, according to Friedrich Delitzsch, the vulture. But elsewhere the Cherub is described more as the attendant and guard than as the bearer of duty (Gen. III. 24).

“*Kirubu* is a synonym for the Steer-god, the winged bull. We should therefore connect the word Cherub primarily with the Assyrian *Kirubu*, but also with *Kurubu*.”

So much for Dr. Cheyne. The vulture, as we have seen in Cap. ii. lib 1, was regarded as sacred, whether in connection with Cherubim or not I cannot say. It is very curious that the names of two of the orders of angels should be given to two animals of earth—or rather, should be connected with them—especially if the footnote of Cap. i. lib 1, is correct in the statement that these two orders are not only the highest, but have no communication with the earth. But the statement of the text is very significant.

learn of another's teaching, for the elder cannot tell the younger every little thing that has built the sure foundations of his power by careful trial and collecting from all places; and if he could, mere words, untried and untested by the pupil, would be forgotten or found of no account by lack of practice. Thus each one starts anew, nor will profit by aforesaid experience, for such is spoken, seeing that there is otherwise no limit to Man's rebellious arrogance. Nay, ask me no more, curious Spirit! I know not why Man was made, save but as another step in the progression; but hereafter a yet more glorious being shall be created until sin shall cease through him and Jehovah behold there the Triumph of Holiness incarnate, the power of Good that shall conquer all. But it is not yet, for the lust of Evil is too strong in this Last-created, and the Consummation is far off. Poor Man! Poor, poor experimental creature! For it was known in Heaven that sin must be, yet woe to the sinner!"

"Alas, poor sinner!"

"Yet can the pure in spirit live, for he hath fulfilled his part well and aided a tittle in the forwarding: Yet also is a circle not complete until the ends meet. These are hard things to understand."

"But where is the justice of God that such can be?"

"The justice of God is too instantaneously comprehensive to be at all thought of by Man, who, indeed, cannot be just because his nature is bent to a strong line of action. I will show thee things among thine own people concerning this."

Now there was a governor named Sapalel, which one was also a judge over the people, and to him was offered certain desirable things to tempt him to do that which was unjust. The which he would have refused save but for the sake of his wife and children, (he not being a rich man). But in the sight of Man there was nought to mitigate so great a crime, they saying he sold his conscience: which perchance he did. Yet who could judge him but God, who weighs the littlest thought?

And I showed her in spirit where Myra wept for the love of Alam, the governor of Talascan, who once loved her with so great a love, yet she not knowing aught of such feeling

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until he went to join Toltiah before Zul. And now he had grown cold towards her by force of training to despise her. Because this human heart could never, by force of reason, punish justly, being hardened in the punishing and never relapsing from that added harshness that permitted such punishment, in the span of short life. So that, although when this one loved him, after long indifference, she received from his hardened hands the punishment she gave in the period of that indifference, yet he never at all returned that love; which caused that punishment to be very great because of remorse on her part, and too late perception of what might have been.

CAP. XIX.

THE HEART OF THE WORLD.

VERILY was Toltiah a curse unto me by reason of his evil, and his restraint over Azta! For she, loving him, but yearned to see him rule, yet would not influence him to her own detriment. Towards me, his father, he manifested a great impatience, gazing upon me with a sinister expression that spoke of repulsion, questioning and fear, at such times that we were together; as a very Spirit of evil that upbraided and scorned, the while challenging and forbidding. And towards him my mind ever appeared as though separated by a great gulf that no thought nor speech could bridge over, neither was I able to attempt to lead him from the evil which I was ever compelled to helplessly witness. And at times this strange being, as an angel taking his pleasures equally with man or woman, born in the carnal manifestation of an hermaphrodite and discharging the functions of both earthly sexes, I say this strange being affrighted me. And gleefully aiding him in frowardness, the great lords committed all manner of wantonness, while to secure them to her support Azta permitted their allegiances, so that there were many jealous quarrels. The Court became one wild whirl of devilry and the whole city followed suit, an example that farther corrupted all the land; so that all day the people slept, and all night they danced in fevered vice, abandoning the temple services save when a hecatomb of victims brought the crowds to witness it. They believed large offerings were as acceptable to the gods as their presences, and indeed it mattered nought if they worshipped such or refrained.

The more degraded had scarcely the energy to eat or drink, and lay about in the streets in obscenity and drunkenness, worried by dogs and vultures and robbed by the legionaries,

who left their posts and women at the battlements to promenade the city for drunken people. Any resistance was followed by murder, and corpses lay in many of the streets until eaten by the brutes. Alas, that I could not tear myself from thee, O Azta, and fly afar in hiding and repentance! For nought could save this people from the sink of iniquity into which they had fallen but the most rigorous measures; and if I could not bring thee under my entire sway, what would befall? Eheu! that I should have imposed so weighty and profitless a task upon myself, and taken a pillar of clay to work the redemption of Man! I, which was of Heaven.

Yet ah! the fevered grandeur of that strange time of Earth, when Man at the zenith of his youth, with the great, vague, untried ideas of youngness, strove mightily to compass works of wonder and awe, excited by competition and success. Companion of devils, with the fearful experiences of long perverted life, how wast thou suffered at all before Heaven? O vision of shadowy cyclopean halls rising in their painted arrogance from pavements of crushed and dead flowers, echoing the crashing minstrelsy that roared in blasphemy to the skies! O splendid mortals whose dishonoured clay was all too beauteous and worthy for such dreadful spirits, congregating in such bravery of magnificence round thy fatal Chief, with attendant trains and armed guards gorgeously apparelled! O splendour of combination of subtle imagery and vast effect, where straining thoughts of ages sought to burst from all restraint and, disappointed, rolled in monstrous sins!

Yet could I not go from my Love. Her eyes commanded my soul, every action but drew me closer to her: her form entranced me with the subtle beauty of its swelling curves and the poetry of its every move, and the perception of her softness and loveliness enwrapped me in a charming fire from which there was no escape. By her side I felt the sensation of a vast emptiness that might be filled with marvels could I but remove the awful incubus that held us back, which I know was Sin.

I took her afar to where mountains rose in grandeur to the skies, and bade her consider the work of the Creator in the

yet untainted wilderness, where the golden sunlight bathed the Earth in warm beauty, and butterflies flitted about, large with their flashing wings. A wild dove flew into a vine overhead, beneath which lay an ocelot, delicately licking its velvet paws and washing its round face.

"It is beautiful, my lord," she said, with a sigh; but I reproved her.

"Call me not thy lord, Beloved; he is but thy lord who can command thy heart. It is not I."

She looked quickly upon me. I laid my hand very gently upon her head, and she caught it and clung to it.

"O pity me that I love another," she wept, "for of a truth I love thee well, also. Thou knowest I love thee!"

"Love that will not give up all is not love; and, alas! that I love thee, for because that thou hast been preferred before Heaven am I accursed; and I, who love with the passion of souls, cannot be satisfied, and burn in the fire that I have lighted."

For a space she was silent, then she said very softly: "What is love?"

"Thou askest 'What is love?'" I said; "love is an instinct, which is to say a sensation of the spirit, my Beloved, not only an enthusiasm of the mind born of contiguity. Love dreams ever of its object, nor absence can dull it; because the spirit is there. It is the mystery of amalgamation, the union that begets life, and everything must love, for without it comes lust and disorder. Hadst thou loved as I, perchance would it have been well, but thou, not loving, shouldst not have suffered me; for also I have sinned in this thing, my Azta, and punishment is upon us. Yet canst thou save thyself and me perchance, and to this end I am minded to show thee what manner of love thou bearest for another."

Her eyes blazed and her face lighted up—with what emotions I knew not. "Show me more of thy great wisdom," she cried, "and fill me with power that I may rule the land in wisdom and raise it from its sin."

"Sweet Spirit," I cried with joy, "I would take thee to where from the centre of the Thought of God spring in un-

ending legions the sons of Life, running in ceaseless evolutions, form within form, circle within circle, until the wheels of creation whirl in stupendous wonder, perfect in infinite detail, marvellous in awful immensity; in perfect order tending to their great sire, simplicity of simplicity, complication of undreamed-of complication, springing still from an atom until their innumerable legions people empyrean depths beyond thought to conceive in magnificence of splendid immensity formed of perfection of detail. I would take thee to where burning worlds revolve in seas of molten gold, as much greater to thine Earth as itself is to the tiniest grain of sand upon it; to where Suns roll in splendours of heavenly light unseen but of God and of the Archangels, and where, in awful space, the thoughts lose themselves and the spirit faints in terror. I would take thee from North to South and East to West, farther than thy dreams could whisper to thee, and show thee therein things that have never been thought of by man, nor ever could be."

Thus spoke I, vaunting; yet in my heart I feared to look upon these and dared not participate in their love, for vanished was the intensity of vision and the power of wing, and methinks did I but encounter the glance of the Almighty I should fall, blinded and helpless, being evil.

"O mighty!" cried Azta, "my soul yearns to know what thou knowest and to see these wonders."

"O curious and desperate! and O wonder that thou wouldst make such demand of a lover to do that which would cause direst misgivings should an offspring attempt! Verily, Love is the child of admiration!"

"Wilt thou say me nay, my Love?" she asked, with such pretty pleading as held me her slave.

"Come; thou shalt again see the Earth and know its mysteries which have never yet been known of Man, yet of the love I bear thee it shall be revealed."

Now there was a vast gorge of black dread and unknown depth which divided two mountains, and in which the winds ever heaved as a stormy sea of air, with a great draught and turbulence. Which same we traversed, and the Spirit of my Love reeled in the embrace of a wild fervour of horror and

delight, a dream of another life, a fearful wish to look on forbidden things though worlds should fall before the sin of it.

The shade of Eve stood with hand outstretched against her in warning, and bright things flashed across the path in bewildering convolutions, mysterious and terrifying. An exalted fear possessed her, an impious arrogance that rejoiced in its own evil and raised her to the level of an Angel, exulting and defiant.

Light and darkness and twilight covered the path, fearful sensations of changing shadows. There was a cavernous place, black and terrible, where the winds swept in roaring gusts that now drew and now repelled, moaning and shrieking and eddying. Nebulous wan bodies appeared and passed like phantasms of a dream, dark streams as of lightning traversed the black amorphous place; and then came flashes of light, reflected glimmers that tremulated awfully, while a draught of increasing potency drew all towards it. The fitful lights grew stronger and more vivid, and leaping from their striking-points seemed to ride down the gusts of furious wind that sped like armies of shrieking larvæ from all directions, breaking in multicoloured blazes of glory where the shattering echoes met.

Now there was a splendour of glowing light, and life leaped with an almost overpowering intensity. Azta breathed not, yet air pervaded her as though she were air itself. There opened out a cavy chamber of colossal wonder and mystery, filled with an intense glow that seemed to breathe and live. Blood-red rivers flowed, bearing living things in their rushing currents, vomiting subtle flames, and among which the winds mingled: falling, returning, circling with a giddy rush and casting a refulgent glow. A sound as of crashing wheels rolled in the wake of fiery serpents, as though Seraphim rode in chariots of thunder through the grandeur of the liquid furnace that lifted its waves of horror in mountainous storms. Pulsating with awful regularity, the circles of Life revolved and mingled with the sound of a mighty tempest, dazzling and ineffably sublime in majesty.

In the midst of the Wonder stood a Being, terrible beyond all that Azta had seen, winged with falling cascades of quiver-

ing and expanding fire. Like to the bright Vision she had seen on the palace roof that had flashed from Heaven on the swift lightning, this had the same animated features and superabundant life, and the glowing eyes burned with a wonder of perception that was terrible to encounter. The nostrils, expanded, exhaled pure flame, and around the whole figure was a light of most subtle and most wondrous splendour. Never still for an instant, the form undulated and swayed, clothed in that transcendent light that enwrapped it as with a mantle, and about its feet the swift lightnings flashed incessantly as the rosy waves encircled it.

"Is it well, Asia?" thundered a voice. I answered not. Azta gazed, terrified and exalted, yet feeling tiny beyond all description and frightened at her own temerity, scarce daring to lift her eyes. Hosts of flies assailed her, passing on in swarms to the glory of light and perishing in the fiery Wonder in a breath. She slapped at them, but if she hit one it vanished, and a new terror paralyzed her spirit, a horror of mystery.

"Whence come these swarming Spirits?" enquired the awful voice, so stern and terrible that in my soul I trembled, and in fright Azta shuddered as the buzzing legions passed. A mighty gust of wind appeared to seize her and sweep her towards the glory, a nearly irresistible draught of living air, enveloping her with a potential embrace. Voices roared and shrieked, and terrible shapes rolled from the brightness and vanished around her in giddy evolutions, as she struggled, incapable of speech. Again came the fearful draught of air, a mighty inrush that absorbed her in itself, and in an agony of terror she fought against it, the bright terrible waves rolling in their endless pulsations at her very feet. In the intensity of her horror she shrieked, echo on echo mocking her from whirlpool and wave and whirling grandeur, and seized as by a strong arm she was drawn backwards and away from the rolling thunder-wheels of Life.

The glorious light waned and vanished and before her stretched a black immensity. Beneath yawned unknown depths peopled by horrible forms that were swayed like clouds by the roaring winds, torn, shattered, swirling and eddying; a vast



MULTICOLOURED BLAZES OF GLORY WHERE THE SHATTERING ECHOES MET.

and sudden change from the grandeur of light to a fearful world of gray shadows rolling in sickening coils as serpents of huge size, or displayed as appearing and vanishing larvæ. Nameless Things of horror gazed upon us, and there were dreadful sounds as of one who would speak yet is not able to; and ever the wild winds moaned and swept past in their rushing courses.

There appeared a little baby, soft and beautiful, that gazed with its fearless eyes upon the Horror, and Azta would fain have gathered it to her bosom; but a loathly form enveloped it and it was no more; but in its place was a great skull, and in and out of the hollow eyes crawled a worm of fire with a devil's head. From all the great spaces, borne on the winds, came the sound of a weird laugh, that echoed and reëchoed in a myriad mocking cries from where the seas of air dashed in resounding billows upon unknown boundaries. Lighter grew the waves of shadow, as, rising in adamantine splendour from darkness to darkness, appeared columns and vaulted roofs stretching in gloomy awe beyond perception. Azta cried out as she perceived these to be formed of the bones and skulls of men, cemented with blood, in vast number, building a palace of heroic size. In the midst rose a throne of dark adamant and upon it rested a cloud, and I may not tell the horror of perception that swept over us twain as, unaware, we stood within the columned hall of darkness athrob with a dire, intangible life emanating from every atom.

Upon my thigh hung a sword, yet it was as weighty lead, and my thoughts and wishes were as the gauzy meshes of an Earth-Spirit's wing soaked and weighted with mire in the presence of that Evil that was yet pure, and not beastly as of Earth. But indignation raised me, and scorn that I might perchance have sunk unknowingly to such depths where Lust dared not face Evil, and turning, I took my Love and we went forth through passage, hall and columned terrace overlooking places of fire.

"Now behold," I said, "my dear Love, after what fashion thou lovest, for here will I show thee one who will enlighten thee."

And a small cloud arose from the place of fire, floating slowly upward and growing darker, shaped like an egg. Azta watched

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with parted lips and white face, her glorious beauty more ethereal than aught of wholly mortal could be, as the vapoury wonder rose and grew large in the lurid atmosphere. It burst and there stood revealed a beautiful woman of majesty nigh unto herself, and very wondrous as she stood in quivering light before us. It was that Atlace, bride of Tekthah, who, in evil compliance to Leira, had cheated her lord and wrought confusion. Of a truth, beautiful she was, a very Queen of Hell; and small wonder that Angels should stoop to crave the regards of such!

“Behold the mother of Huitza!” I cried, “and thy mother!”

“My mother!”

“The same!”

Azta reeled for a moment and placed her hands to her heart. Then she laughed, a little mocking laugh with a note of triumph and challenge in it, and in despair and rage I cast the flashing lightning upon the Shade and by a whirlwind conveyed my abandoned Love from the place.

C A P. XX.

THE THRONE OF ATLANTIS.

WOMAN, how unfitted art thou for government! Either too severe or too melting tender, never consistent or inflexible, ever biassed or impulsive. And thou, Azta, for whom I gave up all, thou woman of women, hast dragged down the Heavens in judgment upon thee and upon me. Wonder of Love, that can work such evil! And for my love to thee and thine to another hath it come that Sin is enthroned greater than all the times before; and woe is me!

What madness caused the both of us to love one who regarded us not in full measure, nor striving after an impossible goal could see the dire results of force? Can one kindle flame from iron, or will it do aught but glow with heat in the furnace itself? Would one strive to cause the leaping flames to burst in splendour from such until it were consumed? Nathless we strive to breed a love where no love is, and groan in pain and astonishment that we never succeed; and, mystery of God! I who knew this yet strove!

And Azta now, unrestrained by awe or reverence, took on a great arrogance and dismayed all by her supernatural bearing and the wonder of her surroundings. To me she manifested a wild, clinging passion, appearing as though she would kill the old love by her violent will; and I, disappointed and dismayed, yet loving her for her protestations of love to me, waited in uneasy horror and indolent dalliance, compelled to remain as a ship that has lost its rudder and all guidance, lying helpless and water-logged. All day long in those wicked halls, and indeed, most of the night, arose the sounds of music and revelling, where fair wantons danced to the sound of drum and whistle for the amusement of their licentious masters, whom they were

interested in serving for hope of advancements. The queen Ievie had been taken from among such by reason of her beauty; and as dancing-girls were always greatly sought after, many pretty children were stolen to be early instructed, and girls of more mature age also.

It became a part of every-day life and none gave any thought to such acts; and Azta, like a being of two worlds, lived in an exalted atmosphere and was ministered to by many dreadful rites that pertained not to Earth. She greatly favoured the magicians, showing them out of arrogance many new things; so that a very daring knowledge sprang up among the people, who were overwhelmed by the glory and wonder of the Capital.

She caused the pyramid which was the tomb of Atlace to be wondrously converted into a temple, maintaining a retinue of priestesses and surpassing Zul in mystery and grandeur, being surrounded by a colonnade at the corners of which four tall pylons sent the smoke of their fires to Heaven, while a four-sided symbol of the love of Night and Neptsis crowned the pyramid itself. And ever went on the reeking sins of Zul where dark Amaziel offered human victims to the elements in dread insolence, where human hearts smoked on the abominable altars and the anguished groans of victims rose to the observant Heaven in the column of undying flame. And less guilty was the idolatrous worship of the lower peoples than the worship of untold things in the red palace, where Heaven-born Toltiah lay in wantonness and infamous adultery and corrupted still more the nobles and wealthy citizens, from whose luxurious mansions arose the wail of many an abducted maiden or the swiftly-silenced shriek of a mistress whose wantonness was suddenly cut short by a sudden death.

All in vain were the exhortations and rebukes of Noah, who perceived his charge, from whom he had hoped so much, leading the nation still farther astray. Also was his heart fearful for his own sons, who lived in their palaces and attended at court, lest they might fall before the many temptations by which they were surrounded. Angry and dismayed, he spake boldly, threatening the judgment of Heaven upon the palace and upon the

accursed pile whose fire blazed to the glorification of Sin and whose priests encouraged the people in their evil. The brazen challenge of this den of corruption would reach the Throne of God—from the midnight Market-place, where nude debauchees whirled in drunken dances round the bonfire-illuminated idols that shamed them by at least their silence—from the Circus, where holocausts and obscene plays held weary audiences enwrapped for awhile and lent fresh ideas—from the temples, where awful mysteries were unfolded to the lewd minds of blasphemous schemers who dared to mingle them with rites of Earth—from the battlements, where innocent blood removed traces of a night's revels and would-be avengers dared utter no complaint—from the Imperial palace, where kidnapped girls were forced to minister to the lusts of a ruler whose sin was increased by the splendour of his birth, and whose dire example, untempered by any interference, dragged the fallen to deeper depths—from the whole land where Sin bowed its scarlet head in undreamed-of oceans of drunkenness and scarce had strength to wish for more.

Scarce with his life had the patriarch escaped his temerity save but for the helplessness of his audience; but he was laughed to scorn, and Toltiah, in merry mood, laughed loudest of all, shouting that the old man was becoming a child, and hurling all manner of insults upon him. And I feared for the gray-beard, for I knew Nezca was scheming against him, and only for that he was loved of Heaven had he escaped thus far.

For myself, my revelation of Atlace to Azta, which had not checked her love, but made of it a sin by knowledge, recoiled upon myself; for half she believed myself to be her father; as, loving her, I should also have loved Atlace for such great resemblance. And, Huitza being my son, I should seek to perpetuate him in such manner, which was confusion and abomination and brought such punishment.

Thus she verily believed Toltiah to be Huitza, and in apathetic misery I had to endure the judgment of Heaven upon my choice and weakness, which caused as much awful sin. For Azta, unabashed, looked upon him as a lover and at times wished to rid him of his brutal indifference and roughness, grieving that he loved her not nor was in a trifle tender; and, wielding

the supreme power, and that power being as wrongfully applied, could wonder be that the land sank into a horror of sin! None dared cross her path, for her guards were ever with her, the tall women-warriors who could fight on equal terms with men. For now it was with respect that the people watched them as they stalked proudly through the city with their great axes beneath the wolf-skin shields, splendid Marisa not deigning to notice the populace, despising their manners and softness of living.

With unavailing passion Toltiah pressed his suit to her, yet now to Azta's jealousy. The Amazon, beyond her personal attractions, however, gave her no cause for complaint, but became restless; for, as most of her warriors, tiring of a life that had no attractions, she wished to depart. Soon they would set forth, when certain schemes for passing without hindrance should be ready, and the city could revel and dance as it pleased and sigh to its mistresses in cushioned halls and on the floating gardens swinging at anchor upon their huge rafts, by which also lay the useless warships, turned into floating palaces.

Yet to the people those days of pleasant, unchecked evil were not without cares, for rumours of frontier raids and massacres reached as far as the capital, and a startling appearance of a new and terrible people aroused the languid interest for a while. These raiders were described as a combination of horse and man, fearful to look upon, swift and reckless, and, it seemed to the people, a living prototype of the stone and wooden mockeries that their debased minds had created. But so far from dealing leniently with those who might be supposed to worship them, these equine beings carried deadly warfare into their midst, murdering men and children and taking away the women with the same desires as any of themselves, and it was this touch of human nature that alleviated the first superstitious fear that the report of their appearance caused. The only places that they respected were the cities, for they feared the high walls, and fortified places were believed to be safe from their attacks; yet the people were terrified by them, not comprehending them nor agreeing as to their appearance, but it was said that they

were dreadful to look upon as they sped like a storm across the plains, enveloped in rolling smoke that hung on their demon squadrons in clouds. From the dark womb of Mount Axatlan they came to carry desolation over the land, while in sympathy with this myriad-membered birth the great cone became more violent, and the reports of the dull fury of the fires rolling in a dark red column of dread in the night aroused uneasiness. All over the land the debauched people would be terrified into sobriety by a movement of the earth, that heaved with a sickening movement as though a monster wave ran beneath it. These movements increased, and one night in Zul the idols were shaken down and the people cried out with terror; yet there were never wanting many who feared neither god nor man, to jest at the fallen state of the carven abortions, and, plucking them by the limbs, raise them in their great arms in mockery to the sky; so that the people, perceiving no sudden death to fall upon these sacrilegious ones, gathered heart and continued as wickedly as before. And there were some among the merchants who bred degraded people for the sacrifices, herding them with the lower animals; others who reared large-bodied slaves for the Circus, and hybrid creatures of great size and strength.

To attract the nobles Azta held many brilliant gatherings in the Hall of the Throne, compelling homage to be rendered to herself and Toltiah from the wish of perceiving a vast concourse to bow the knee; and her proud bosom heaved with joy as mighty chieftains and princes and superb ladies swept in between the huge lions and bent low in reverence upon the golden step of the first terrace. Between the dark columns and braziers the minstrelsy crashed, as right and left the crowds spread from the throne, blazing in armour of jewels and flashing weapons, their brilliant galaxies crowned by tiaras and helmets, nodding plumes of ostrich and flamingo, and the gorgeous feathers of the peacock. Which last, although aforesometimes counted of ill-omen, was now greatly prized in daring challenge to evil powers, notwithstanding its significance.

Toltiah, giving full sway to every lust, and full of arrogance, caused blue stones to be set in his teeth and wore huge gems

and gold dust in his hair, sitting like a dark king of the lower world above the awed crowds, upon which he gazed with a dreadful sarcasm, jealous at any preference being granted to Azta. Furious at any restraint, vain and debased, he always held the orbed sceptre; but Azta was the one who commanded real obeisance. From her yellow flamy hair a halo of light appeared to scintillate, pale and mysterious, while ever in her stormy eyes the sombre lightnings lay, as her gaze wandered indolently over the splendid throngs, awed to a certain extent, yet encouraged by their mighty rulers. But towards Toltiah there spread a feeling of disgust save when his splendid presence compelled respect and admiration; for his godlike stature was in truth beautiful with its vast proportions as softly rounded as a woman's. Yet not alone was he a thing of awe, for there were also many among the nobles of Celestial descent, which ones did not scruple to commit the most terrible excesses and were the most fertile in magic, teaching arts to their mistresses and showing the meaning of the watery larvæ which came from the Sun and Moon—misty embryos of fertilizing potency which dwelt in moisture. Also conjunctures of animals and plants, whereby galls were formed; of the pregnancy of clouds and the mystery of Amalgamation; of the power of Heavenly bodies upon rocky parts of Earth from which were born precious metals and gemmy bodies and fœtal Things that sprang forth from the womb of Earth in the dark upward flashes of lightning. And the Demons which dwelt among them for the satisfaction of their earthly lusts excited perfumes which encouraged madness in their mistresses and the propagation of strange memories and clear vision, using also to the same end very subtle chords of mystic music; so that there was no end to their wickedness or to the increasing sin of Man, whom the most extraordinary ideas possessed, (having all he could wish for).

The people esteemed themselves gods, believing themselves to be invincible, and greatly encouraged by their rulers. This Huitza had returned from the regions of Death, and Amaziel preached that none could die but for a space, while he brought forth Mah in the person of a slave-dealer whose mistresses spread knowledge of confusion far and wide. A wild idea

ATLANTIS.

occurred to many that they should turn and reënter that land of Eden z whence their race had been expelled; the couch of the bright Sun, from which he arose each day to smile upon them, and to which he would surely welcome Azta, his beloved.

z According to a plausible theory put forward by a distinguished Egyptologist some years ago, the territory of Eden, of which the "garden" formed but a portion, is identified with the great watershed of Central Africa; where the immense plateau of a most remarkable river system, quadruple in form by the Zambesi, Niger, Bahr-el-Ghazal, and Congo, has its parallel in no other portion of the globe. Three of the greatest naturalists of our time, Darwin, Wallace and Broca, have all suggested Africa as the probable birthplace of the human race. It is indeed a wonderful land: there was the great empire of Egypt, there the longest river of the world, there the largest examples of life. The elephant, the giraffe, rhinoceros, gorilla, chimpanzee, lion, leopard, camel, buffalo, ostrich, antelope, all are the largest of their species; and there are also the ordinary examples in the zebra and all kinds of birds, as well as some to be found nowhere else, as the gnu.

C A P. X X I.

THE DEAFNESS OF THE NATION.

STILL afar Axatlan belched flames and equine devils, and rivers of boiling pitch and flying hordes of supernatural raiders terrified the people; yet heedless of the woes of their countrymen, those of Zul ate, drank and blasphemed, licentious and unbridled in their madness, toasting their mistresses on the altars of the temples and worshipping images of them with obscene rites.

The sons of Noah looked with a mixture of feelings on the conduct of Toltiah, who had ever been as a younger brother to them, instructed by them in everything from the time he was a small child; and now they had to bow before him and suffer condescension and hard words and sneers, which became unendurable. Shem was the most moderate in his ideas, but Ham beat upon his deep chest with his fists and murmured rebelliously, and Japheth dreamed in like wise.

The people hated these in their hearts, yet, because of their power, bowed before their nodding plumes as they stalked through them in their unimpaired manhood. Tall and goodly men were they, with bold bright eyes that never dropped for shame of aught they had committed, the only sober ones in a foul nest of revelry upon which they looked with disfavour, never having soiled their souls with its awful wickedness.

Now Ham had designed a great bath to be built in the city, upon the hill near by the palace, which would be filled from the reservoirs of water near the temple of Zul that supplied the smaller reservoirs on the terraces; and for this work numbers of slaves were employed, huge blocks of stones being piled up for the building. And the deep excavations revealed a mass of curious skulls and bones, that Ham delivered up to

Shem, which one, studious and thoughtful, bent long over with Noah, scrutinising and hazarding guesses as to their origin. No such remains could belong to any peoples they knew of, and the mode of sepulture was executed in deep and careful style; while, most interesting of all, were curiously graven stones laid there.

For long they observed them, asking themselves were they Divine histories of the past ages or individual biographies. Not yet could they understand the stories, believing them to be of the first man of their race, or even of the progress of Celestial beings, the birth of Heaven and of the worlds, the first inspiration of the creation of the Earth.

Susi, lost in dreams, clasped her hands in visionary contemplation. To her pure mind arose the figures of angels working with care the pictured records of a young world that her imagination presented to her as very bright and fair. She of all her family loved best the contemplation of that God to whom the sire directed their minds, and it was with the most disinterested sorrow that she perceived her Imperial foster-brother's manner of ruling the people over whom he was set as king, and was secretly terrified by his increasing regards for herself. For, satisfied, and desirous of something new, the unnatural libertine oft looked lustfully upon her, enraged that she should scorn his embraces. Nor would he have hesitated to gratify his passion but for the fear of the patriarch, whom also to an extent the people revered.

Yet perhaps more than for this one Susi grieved for Azta, the Queen-mother, the wonderful woman who could influence for so much good and who appeared to her to be so desperately wicked; and as she sat and looked upon the palmy gardens, drinking with her eyes the sun-lights in the atmosphere, a shy thought arose in her mind of making an appeal to her and striving to influence her towards reformation before the vengeance of Heaven should sweep the nation from the Earth and only their records should be found, telling, like those early gravings perchance, of creation, rebellion and its punishment—death.

The project of returning to Eden began to take root in the

minds of all, terrified by the burning mountain and of other hills that arose and vomited flames. Toltiah gave much thought to it, his temper becoming morose and savage as gleamings of something terrible about to happen made him plunge yet more desperately into evil instead of curbing him; for with intuitions hereditary he dimly perceived the intoxicating inwardness of things. Urged on by pride and fear he listened to mad schemes propounded by Nezca, and oft consulted Amaziel; having his ideas greatly strengthened thereby, as also by the magician Gorgia.

The schemes grew, as imaginations, more and more inflamed by the wildest stories and conjectures, pictured its fulfilment. Toltiah, flushed with wine and excesses, dreamed with visions of a greater grandeur and vaster enjoyment than Atlantis could give, newer and more glorious; and inflamed by Gorgia he perceived the Tree of Life whose fruit is Immortality.

Reclining in all the bravery of gold and gems, dreadful by reason of his appearance and the blue stones in his teeth, at the evening meal, in the midst of his favorites and voluptuous queens with their heavy hips and great eyes like antelopes', he bethought him of Noah and of the wisdom that he had, and sent him an urgent message to appear before him. And when the patriarch came, grand in his rugged godliness, (yet not being great of stature), the young man insolently demanded of him as to what he knew of such country, and concerning how they might obtain possession of it, being terrified by the earthquakes and rumours of the wrath of the volcanoes.

And looking around upon the wanton assembly and the obscene imageries upon the walls, the patriarch was vexed.

"I know not of such place," he said, "neither would it become Man to strive to force that which God hath closed against him,"

Toltiah laughed scornfully, handing his pipe to the bearer, that he might the better converse. "Old father," quoth he, "thy gray hairs cover a cautious brain. Do not the wise ones tell of a Tree of Life, which, being possessed of, how can aught hurt us? There is our birthright, old one, and who more fit to lead the warriors of Atlantis than I! What when I reign thence—thou shalt see!"

A great shouting answered him, and loud laughter. And the spirit of a great wrath shook the patriarch, so that he raised his voice boldly.

“O inexperienced!” he cried, “darest thou disregard the doom of banishment which was pronounced by God for the disobedience of His Word? A greater vengeance shall befall for a worse continuation of the same sin; and perchance wouldst thou find that Eden to be of Heaven and not of the Earth, and the revolving sword of fire to be the Gate of Memory through which none may enter, being banished. Enough there is for thee to perform as leader of the God-created race, to direct them back into the path from which they have wickedly strayed. And look thou well into thyself, Ruler of Atlantis, for thou hast sinned in that, having the chief power, thou hast raised the rebellious head to Heaven and would presume to strive with the Almighty, which is the Creator of all. Worst of all hast thou sinned, seeing that not only hast thou committed evil in thyself, but hast caused a nation to err; and as fungus spreads upon a tree so has deadly sin spread upon the land and soon will there be nought but weeping and death!”

The words caused a great commotion among all, yet before a hand could be raised against him the patriarch turned with a commanding gesture to the company.

“Ye lords and ladies,” he cried in a thrilling voice, “now shall your blindness recoil in confusion upon your heads because of your readiness to follow Evil under a disguise. For behold, this one, your ruler, is not Huitza, but a monster, which is neither a man nor a woman, whom therefore ye ignorantly declare a god, yet born of woman even as all of you are born, who hath conspired to lead you astray, too willing to follow. For Huitza is dead and shall so remain, and this Toltiah is born of Azta, in manner common to all mankind, and wickedly imposes upon your too compliant minds. To me he came, helpless and a fugitive, upon the day when Tekthah died, and had I known what devil’s spawn lay beneath my hand, that day had he died also!”

A gasp of astonishment passed round the crowd, lying as petrified. The fan-bearers moved backward the heavy windy

fans as Toltiah, rousing as a tiger, cried to the guards to seize the daring man; and then had it fared ill for the patriarch but that by his side suddenly appeared a shining figure of dreadful majesty, having within his hand a drawn sword of fire. And the Name by which he appeared was Arsayalalyur, Angel of the Wrath of God. A sudden great gloom fell over all, and when it had passed Noah had gone, and likewise his sons with him; neither could they be found by the swift ones sent after them, nor was any vestige of them to be found.

And a wonderment sat upon the hearts of the people because of this and of his words, yet so abandoned were they and so shameless that it passed and nought remained of it in remembrance.

And Azta lay by me in her arbour, dreaming wild dreams and smiling with satisfied desire as I caressed her in my arms.

"Thou dost not look so like Heaven as when we first met, my Asia," she said, with a little sorrow in her voice; and with a sad reproach I kissed her lips, yet feeling in my heart that I sinned, she loving another. And such another!

"Methinks thy love is waning," she murmured, her hot breath intoxicating my senses, subdued by the restful sighing of the waves and the tinkle of the nightingale-wooded fountains.

"Ah, say not so!" I cried in passion, "never did I love thee more, my dearest Love!" For very dear to all hearts is that which causes pain and sorrow in the sweet nurture, and greater joy is there in Heaven over a sinner forgiven than over the just, for he hath caused much sorrow.

"Beloved, I doubt thee not," she whispered, seeing my passion; "beautiful that thou art, how could I? Yet is a woman's heart ever anxious, my Asia, and love is as water to a flower."

Sighing softly, she lay in my arms, looking forth over the sea that lay calm and motionless as a lake of silver under the full moon. So bright it was that every ripple could be seen, and afar it stretched to where the dark veily sky met the line of the horizon, clear and lovely. Full of the soft beauty of the scene we gazed, full of the mystery of the quietness that seemed to hang above the Earth, pregnant with a great significance. A voice was in the silence, and an accumulating soft thrill of electricity; and slowly, far out at sea, a vast body rose where

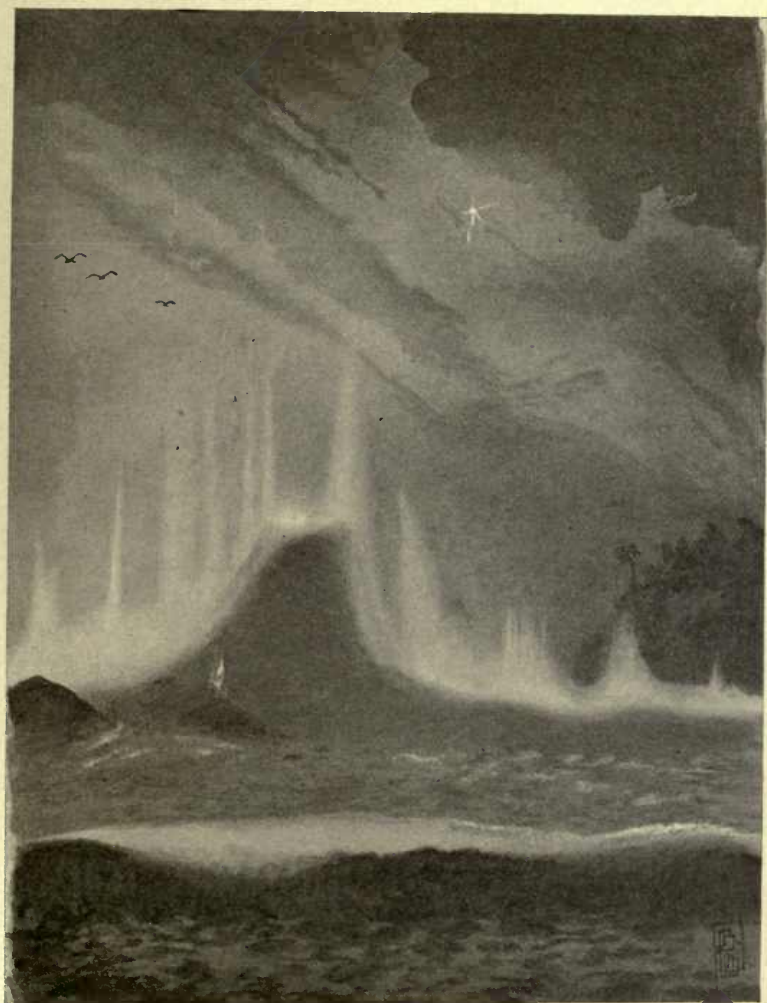
a monster of the great deeps protruded his length above the wave and rolled over, the water swirling and sucking down the immense thing as it wallowed, and spreading over the calm expanse in glittering wavelets and hoops of light. Over on the horizon a rolling sound was audible, echoing from north to south, and the placid water tremulated as though the earth beneath it had shivered. It was an awful phenomenon; the deep rumbling, faint but vast, appearing to shake the sea to its lowest depths; and suddenly a long low wave broke on the shore in a rush of creamy foam.

Shouts arose, and the masts of shipping rolled in circles against the sky, while a storm of flapping wings told of seabirds disturbed from their rocks and bolders amid the refuse of the harbour.

Azta nestled closely to me, and I felt her gracious form tremble in my embrace. I also trembled, for I perceived in the dark Heavens that which she could not see; yet I felt the thrill of the fair woman's glorious beauty, more lovely in her abandonment because so unconscious. Mine was the joy of the splendidly rounded limbs, the beauty of the full round breasts that heaved so tumultuously upon her swelling bosom, spreading in its white glory to the throbbing ivory-tinted neck, as a column rising from a garden of lotus-flowers; and in the midst of that mystic fear I was nigh absorbed in delighted contemplation of her plump beauty, my eyes feasting themselves on the perfection of the luxuriously rounded curves, in all the beauty of defined outline, on the tinted pallor of her cheeks surrounded by the flamy masses of hair, with the bewitchment of the shaded little soft lines and dimples; and the thrilling pressure of her soft moist palm appealing to my power filled my soul with ecstasy. I, pressed her closely to my bosom in a warm tender embrace but a terrible fear lay like a pall over my heart at what I saw and knew. Azta hid her head on my breast; did she, too, perceive?

Above waved the flame on Zul, yet it burned lower than was its wont, and the other fires flickered all over the city. A noise was abroad, an uneasy sound of moving crowds in commotion, above which arose an occasional whoop or shout.

"What means this?" whispered my Love, fearfully, turning her dilating eyes upon me, luminous in the twilight of the night.



SUDDENLY A LONG, LOW WAVE BROKE ON THE SHORE.

"I know not, Beloved," I answered; "yet suffer me to take from thine hair the moulded pin, for it is wrongful in the sight of Heaven."

She suffered me meekly. It was but an emblem of what she worshipped without being greatly moved, and I cast it afar so that it dropped into the sea.

There were sounds of conflict at the main port of the city, but they ceased as the first dawn of day began to appear; and as the fire-tower of Zul flashed into light the drum rolled its reverberating echoes like thunder from the skies, reassuring and emboldening. Reëchoed from the other temples, from Neptsis, the Moon, and a score of others, the sounds aroused the whole city, awakening such as slept.

But few attended the services, for on all hearts the feeling of superstitious dread mocked the futility of hypocritical ceremonies. Unrest was in the atmosphere, and all believed the demons from Axatlan to be the spell-workers; the fear of their rumour now increased by another, concerning a vast lurid cloud that hung above the burning mountain.

In the palace Toltiah lay bound and ashamed, a hindered interloper, in Marisa's apartments. The Queen had gone with her warriors, passing through the city and away by force of arms. Her armlet glittered on Toltiah's wrist, a token and a keepsake, and her mighty axe had lain by his head all night, significant of what could have been done.

By the waterway the shipping was in confusion, the warships, with dragged anchors, grinding their sides in the midst of skiffs and ruined raft-gardens. The beach was strewn with a ghastly line of skeletons and bones, among which two or three large sharks, not yet dead, lay grounded and monstrous; while above the waves the Fish-god was leaning dangerously, with the arm that held the model of the Tacoatlanta lying, with its burden, in pieces at its feet.

Later, an overpowering stench drew crowds to witness a marine mass that lay among some half-submerged rocks. It was a poulp of enormous size, the grisly tentacles waving in the water as it heaved, scaring the birds that had settled on it to eat out its great saucer-like eyes with their oblong pupils.

THE DEAFNESS OF THE NATION.

Eels and serpents ravened the musky flesh, leaping to reach to where, from the gaping mandibles, hung the body of a woman with lank trailing hair, and features on which a dreadful doom had placed its mark, having been cast to the sea after some brutal festival, as useless, or that no after vengeance should befall through her. It was a sickening sight where the writhing creatures fought, giant congers barking as they plunged their thick bodies up through the tangle to tear at that white flesh, pressing back the elegant serpents that sculled with flattened tails and wriggled in the mass where the limp figure lay on that dread couch in all the beauty of its lissom curves; mute witness of Earth's violence, an unheeded warning of the vengeance of Heaven.

C A P. XXII.

SUSI.

YET Susi, the wife of Shem, coming as a last warning from Heaven, returned to the Imperial palace to obtain an audience of Azta.

Unopposed she climbed the flights of red steps guarded by the andro-sphinxes, and beneath the shadow of one she turned and gazed slowly around over the pleasant gardens, perceiving with fear a subterranean conflict shake the sartreels. Led by her righteous instinct the fair woman entered the portals of the first pylon, nor heeded the colossi that appeared to gaze intently upon her, nor the gaudy frescoes. Through courts and galleries, columned, vaulted and of stupendous gorgeousness, the soft footfall echoed, not causing to cease the songs of caged birds, nor disturbing gentle domestic animals. Up flights of steps flanked by flowery colonnades and shadowed by beautiful arches echoing the ripple of fountains, she went with a sweet gravity, her face, as that of an angel, full of an inspired loveliness.

As I reclined by Azta, striving to subdue her heart that it might be impressionable, the woman entered without hindrance, and as I gazed upon her beautiful features a great wave of holy enthusiasm swept over me.

Yet her regards went out to Azta, tall, serene and glorious, reclining on a couch of ostrich-feathers, who turned her mystic eyes and pale, immovable features upon the sweet, shy woman so suddenly and unwarned confronting her in all her fresh young loveliness, looking, with her pure countenance, of a most ethereal beauty. It was not the first time Azta had seen her closely, yet she started faintly as she observed the expression in her face, while Susi's blue eyes looked as though fascinated into her yellow orbs, and dilated largely.

Azta suffered her long lashes to fall slowly, willing to exercise her charms and desirous of admiration with a longing that was the passion of her soul, although perchance she knew it not. Even from this one she desired homage, and indeed, obtained it. To Susi she appeared the most wonderful being that she had ever seen, and beautiful beyond all that report had said of her; nor less the apartment, with its mirrors and furniture, heightened her majestic personality and spread a sublime spell about her.

Dropping her blue eyes, thereby causing it to appear as though the sunlight had gone from two bright lakes, Susi made obeisance; and by her lissom grace created a more tender feeling, removing the sensation of hauteur to one whose family held so aloof from royal and popular failings and thereby conveying a reproach (to Azta).

"And who is this that would seek an audience in such sudden wise?" asked the Empress, with so gracious an intonation and yet with some astonished arrogance in it that the young woman looked up swiftly, feeling the temper of her mistress with sensitive intuition.

"I am Susi, the wife of Shem," she said modestly, in a voice so sweet and musical that, with the memories of past indebtedness, Azta's heart went out to her with a great friendship, so that her manner was singularly tender as she hastened to convey her feelings to the shy petitioner and set her at ease.

"Sit on my footstool," she said, smiling upon her with the flash of red rubies; "in my apartments thou mayest suffer all restraint to vanish; for see, I am a woman also as thyself; fear not to speak that which is in thy heart, sweetest of our subjects."

"Mighty Azta," Susi answered, "gracious is thy speech, for who could help but fear thee! and of a truth, I fear greatly. Yet suffer me to kneel at thy feet; and be kind to me, for it is a great matter of which I would speak; neither am I as thou art, nor is my woman's heart braver than belongs to our sex in this thing."

Now Azta was disturbed, believing it had something to do with Toltiah in some fashion, and restless until she should know what it was.

“Nay, nay, child!” she said swiftly. “I have told thee that I am a woman too, with a woman’s heart, and I will help thee. Is it of some false beloved that thou wouldst speak? Confide in me, sweet one, I will help thee.”

Susi’s face flushed a rosy red of embarrassment and annoyance.

“Ah nay!” she said, “I love but one man and have never suffered any but my lord!” At which words Azta loved her yet the more, looking upon her very softly and wistfully in silence for a short space.

“Speak on, fair one, after what fashion thou wilt,” she said; and then, happening to cast her eyes upon me and observing with how much attention I gazed on Susi, a petulance fell upon her and a hardening of the heart.

Susi cast her eyes around, now upon the walls, now upon the ceiling. Half she started, then halted, and, blushing deeply, fell into tears. The feeling that it was presumptuous for her to correct so great a one, her superior in age and estate, nearly overcame her. But before Azta, sullen and jealous, could offer her tardy encouragement, a song-bird of surpassing beauty flew into the room and warbled wondrously.

Looking steadfastly upon it, the rosy woman seemed to gather within herself inspiration and courage, and a majesty that was impressive gathered about her as, raising her starry eyes to Heaven, she drew herself up like a prophetess, her sweet young face setting solemnly and firmly and her body tense and straight.

One glance she gave to me, so full of sad reproach and admonition that my soul melted within me; and then in a voice measured and beautiful she spoke as though rehearsing from a document; and although at first her dark fringy lashes quivered, soon even this sign of weakness passed, and she spoke as an Angel.

“O Queen,” she said, “when the first forefathers of our race were created, the Lord Jehovah gave to them the gift of Life immortal, placing them higher in rank than the bright sons of Heaven; and unto them was created Woman, which being of more spiritual mould might lead the soul of Man without straying. And, as the teachers know, this one disobeyed the command of the Creator and did that which was unseemly in the sight

of Heaven, in that she came to know more than was ordained for her to know, not possessing government to withstand such knowledge. The which, with an immortal existence, would have wrought confusion; and for this prevention the gift of Life was greatly decreased; and while forgetfulness was bestowed upon each one, that experience would have to be begun afresh, punishment fell also upon the evil doers, of such sort as to hinder too great sin and render painful that which was necessary. Desire supplanted Love, and, as the rose, tore the hand that plucked it; yet man preferred the pleasures of Earth to those of Heaven, nor did woman aid his soul longer; for, falling, and of more spiritual mould, she fell deeper than he, for the greater the height the greater also the fall. And it is told of sin increasing and growing more abominable and evil, for to aid the forbidden knowledge of Earth does Woman suffer the sons of Heaven to approach her, pulling the ruin of Evil still deeper over herself, and them also."

Azta's bosom heaved and an angry light gathered in her eyes; but she was silent, not knowing by what power Susi spoke, and being greatly impressed by her utterance.

"And these were souls with which she played," continued the inspired voice, "and with the same fatal spirit that caused the first sin, she cast them aside for others, that she might know them also. And moral Man was as wax in her hands, and physical Man in poor avenged enslaved her body by force to compel her to his will in this. And she bore offspring to celestial lovers, which by reason of sin and being of finer mould sinned yet more deeply, until Mankind becomes an eyesore and a menace to Heaven."

"Stop!" cried Azta in a terrible voice, not being able to support such things being put before her in set speech. "To what end is this?" she said in an insufferable voice; yet Susi quailed not.

"Thou askest, To what end?" she cried, with splendid fire, her brave blue eyes meeting Azta's unflinchingly now, and the high beauty of an Angel in her face. "Hearken! Thou art the ruler of Atlantis, strong in thy power and the wonder of thy presence; thou, O Queen, canst cause the sin of the land to

cease. By a woman came death; by a woman can come redemption. Ay," she cried, in a thrilling voice, "by a woman redemption *will* come! To Woman shall it be to conceive the loveliest Thing of Earth, to know it and believe in it so strongly that it shall come forth, Love Undying, in the time appointed; pregnant with the renewed gift of Life immortal to conquer Sin and Death and lead back Man to the old worship. Mediator between God and Man shall Woman be, Medium of Heaven and Earth, body of Man and soul of Angel!"

Her arms were raised, and her eyes, marvellously beautiful, seemed to pierce the sky. She appeared not to breathe, and a subtle light surrounded her and kissed her red lips into a divine smile of rapture and prophecy, as she stood scarce resting upon her feet.

Azta gazed half in fear, yet the poison of jealousy of her fair teacher cooled any enthusiasm, and she but felt angered that such should reproach her who had seen the hidden things and was so great and powerful. Therefore she said coldly, "Thou art presumptuous."

"Forgive me, my Queen," said Susi, with majestic dignity, "if my words are unpalatable; I do but speak with the voice of the Spirit within me, and willingly would I lay down my life for thine honorable promise of reformation."

"Child!" cried the lady, leaning forward, impatient and annoyed, "thou hast said enough. Now go!"

Susi looked at her with her beautiful eyes full of sorrow, and with a bitter cry of grief slowly sank down, embracing her knees.

"My sweet lady, harden not thy heart to me," she sobbed; "didst thou but know how I regard thee and the faith I have in thy power and influence, thou wouldst not spurn me. For the souls of thy people, hear me! For thine own soul, hear!"

"I will consider," said Azta softly. "Go!"

Susi arose slowly, and never can I forget the look of those heavenly eyes that besought, adjured, warned. One long gaze she cast on all around, one last long look on Azta, and then she was gone,

The Empress shook herself as one who would cast off a gar-

ment, and laughed. "Little fool!" she said; yet the words found no echo in her heart.

Susi retraced her silent steps through hall and corridor, accompanied by the bright bird that had sung so wondrously, which left her as she passed through into the outer court. Standing in the midst of the great terraces of steps, she gazed upon the inscrutable face of one of the andro-sphinxes that looked so impassively into space.

"What dost thou see?" she whispered.

A great voice at her elbow startled her, saying, "And so my shy sweetheart has come to visit me?"

She looked round quickly, and perceived Toltiah, beautiful in his vast symmetry and majestic in his godlike carriage and presence, as an Infernal god in might; and behind him came his pipe-bearer. The startled woman gazed long, unable to remove her eyes from the great ruddy mane and turquoise-studded teeth and the orbs that were so like Azta's.

The remembrance of former persecutions and knowledge of his terrible character filled her with dread, even as a small antelope quails before the swift ocelot, and her eyes sought the terraces and colonnades for aid. The giant, perceiving her terror, smiled, a drear grin of horror, waving away the slave.

"Art afraid of thine old playmate?" he said in jest, albeit his voice was very rich and strong, yet falling as a note of doom.

"I am going to my husband," answered Susi, with a desperate fear in her eyes, seeking vainly for help, while her tongue clave unto her throat.

"Sweet Susi, thou wert ever wayward! Why fear me? Behold, I will give thee gifts suitable for a queen, and load thee with gems," he said; yet perceiving how her frightened eyes roamed, he became angry.

"Fool that thou art to spurn my love!" he cried. "By Zul, thou shalt repent it, and now!"

"Toltiah, remember that thou art a man and I but a weak woman. Force me not against my will, for no good will come of it; for I have a husband, and there are others far more suited to thee than I."

"Sweet fool, what are others to me?" he cried, his passion

but aroused by dalliance. "I love thee, Susi, and sure 'twere not to be despised what I offer."

With the words he laid his hand on her soft round arm, and shook it angrily as he felt her tremble.

"Think, think!" she cried piteously. "I have a husband



THE GIANT, PERCEIVING HER TERROR, SMILED.

and love none but him. Shame not thyself and me, ruler of Atlantis! What am I for such as thee?"

"I love thee!" he cried in a fury; "it is enough; I honour whom I choose."

Drawing her to him rudely, he imprinted an unchaste kiss on her lips. She shrieked and gasped, and, fainting, would have fallen, but the chief boisterously lifted her up into his

great arms, gloating over her charms and his mastery over her.

He kissed her again and again ferociously, crushing her soft body against his and still willing to play more with the lovely victim.

A stifled sob burst from her, and a terrified wail of anguish, as she cried to Heaven to save her, struggling desperately in the brutal arms of her captor. Toltiah but laughed grimly and scanned her lissom form with delight, baring his teeth and smacking his lips in lewd enjoyment.

A dull rumbling sound shook the atmosphere and caused a sickening sensation of dread and premonition of coming peril. The earth rolled, and a noise, increasing to the appalling roar of heaviest thunder, swayed it with a heaving movement. The terrified chieftain dropped his victim, as a dreadful convulsion rent the terraces in sunder; there puffing up from the dread chasm a cloud of dust that darkened the air. As the heaving waves of the sea the ground rocked, and distant confused sounds of panic and uproar arose, with crashing sounds of falling masses. Then a flash of dark lightning leaped upwards from the cavernous gulf and all was still.

The dust settled and the sky was clear but for a small heavy cloud that rose up and up swiftly. Toltiah lay prone and terrified upon an edge of the dark pit, on the opposite side of which stood Susi.

"Farewell," she said, with a world of sadness in her voice as she slowly departed; and, without a single backward glance, disappeared,

LIBER · III

**THE · END · OF · ALL · FLESH
IS · COME · BEFORE · ME · FOR
THE · EARTH · IS · FILLED
WITH · VIOLENCE · THROUGH
THEM · AND · BEHOLD · I · WILL
DESTROY · THEM · WITH · THE
EARTH ·**

GEN · VI · 13

C A P. I.

THE CLOUD ON THE
EDGE OF THE
STORM.



SYMBOLS of the Wrath of God! Bottomless vessels of His will! Is it that vengeance shall never be appeased, and that for the offender is no forgiveness? Look, Elohi, upon the Earth, lying upon the fleecy clouds, bride of the Elements, and say why is sin within her, O Sinless Creator! Look where the breezes kiss her

cheeks like velvet on which the beautiful dimples spread, and the light of the Sun discovers her watery girdle as spread with flashing gems. Prostitute is she, yet fair indeed; but what is beauty before Thee, who searchest hearts, nor sufferest Thy gifts to be used unpunished for evil ends?

O God! O God! Why is denied the eloquence that could tell the deep, deep feelings and knowledge of the heart, the knowledge of Heaven and of hidden things, that sees so awfully clearly, but that cannot speak in tongues of man, and is speech-

ATLANTIS.

less before its own depths of sight! That sees, but cannot, cannot describe!

Because, even as the visions pass the power of remembrance



O DEPTHS OF HORROR OF SILENT KNOWLEDGE!

and of descriptive speech fades away, nor tongue can ever tell the spiritual inwardness of it.

O horror of incapacity of expression! *O depths of horror of silent knowledge that could wreck universes!*

But Man must choose by his own volition; and again, O God! that that volition should be so subservient to varying moods and spiritual sight! For at times Man sees clearly, and again, his mind is dull and empty. And no inspired speech can move the soul that Earth has laid a touch upon, that, anon, would weep at aught, yet transiently. *Here* in all its burning horror, and *now* gone! Gone! and Joy reigns where Sorrow stood triumphant, and the impression of Now lies over and obliterates utterly the impression of Then.

So and forever. And even now speech fails me that might warn a world that may receive no lasting warning; for each atom must work its own end, which is the curse.

Now it came that because of the fulness of time and of the sin of Man that certain revolutions were accomplished, and the Heavens, moving under the Word, caused signs to be seen of Earth and great perturbation thereby. And a mighty Comet α , exercising certain power, moved in the Heavens to the upsetting of just balances, and sickness befel, and a great part of all flesh died.

And how can I tell the fears that assailed me, Father of mercy! my love tore my bosom and rendered me suffering beyond all speech, mingled with the awful knowledge that for no recompense had I sinned more damnably than any of the evil ones. The great love that should have exalted Heaven and saved Earth fell in its unconquerable might into evil paths, begetting sin and more great confusion; and now I looked upon the beginning of Judgment with a heart burning with reproachful

α This statement perhaps elucidates a vexed question as to the cause of the Flood, and would explain it even without the coöperation of other forces if Lalande's calculation may be taken as correct—that the approach of a Comet of the same size as the Earth within 13,290 miles would raise the ocean 2000 fathoms and thereby produce a deluge.

It is probable that some great disturbance took place by which the balance of the earth was upset, for as we hear of the Rainbow being manifested for the first time at the period of the Flood, we may imagine that the Sun was brought into a position to cause the rays to refract upon falling drops of water, visible at an angle hitherto unattained, and cause the wonderful coloured circles, which phenomenon disappears when the luminary is more than 40° above the horizon.

The question as to the dependence of heavenly bodies upon one another is of the greatest interest, and some brief information as to the electrical communion between the Earth and Sun will be found in note α , p. 355.

agony of rebellion and sorrow, and, wandering up and down in all places, pondered upon many things, considering ways by which haply I might save my Love. Now, securely hidden near Axatlan, among the mountains, was a small village of huts where abode the patriarch Noah and his three sons with their wives and families and servants, apart from all human intercourse. A few leagues to the north arose the mighty cone of the volcano; around them rugged peaks lifted their heads to the clouds, above forests of tall trees that sheltered the wild doves and myriads of apes and large bats, and among which ran the tusked boar and the lithe and beautiful ocelot, while by cool lakes and rivulets the anaconda coiled in deadly length its folds of yellow body, disputing its prey with great animals that had hard spikes upon their scaly harness, and huge teeth, akin to the monsters of the Hilen. In caves lived fierce bears, and soaring eagles built on the higher peaks, swooping upon rabbits and small animals below for their sustenance.

In the more southern forests lived baboons and enormous apes, and serpents as large as trees; flocks of brilliant macaws rivalled the flowers in colour, and pelicans, flamingoes and swans lived in the pools. Myriads of scorpions, spiders, humming birds and fire-flies haunted the groves, food for hideous tortoises and uncouth animals, unwotting of the sin of Man in a great measure.

Fields of wild maize stretched in golden glory afar, shaded by stately palms and great forest trees, where chamelions ran on the borders of deserts. Pine-apples and melons grew in their varying localities, oranges hung their golden globes among the green leaves, and bunches of the wholesome banana hung, food for the mammoth and many other animals. Sugar-canes yielded their luscious sap, tempting huge ants and bees; from every woodland temple rose the songs of birds to Heaven, and insects, that of a night rivalled the light of stars, flitted in countless legions of brightness around.

In this quiet spot where lay the village, all was peaceful, yet the wondrous Heavenly appearances began to affray the inhabitants in their solitudes, and the gentle women trembled at the shock of the earthquake and the lurid coronet of Axatlan

THE CLOUD ON THE EDGE OF THE STORM.

quivering in the night in rolling awfulness and lighting the clouds that gathered above it. The growing youths with delight kept the larder supplied with fresh fruits, pleased to live untrammelled in such a place, where forests full of animals stretched afar and fish leaped in every stream, and the younger children gambolled among the rocks and ran over the plateaux with shouts of baby mirth.

Fair little beings they, in all the beauteous unconsciousness of displayed loveliness and charming innocence, on whom Earth had not as yet laid a taint, whose arts wooed Love for Love's own sake; exulting in the indescribable joy of Heaven from which their spirits had but newly come and whom Angels delighted to watch and guard. Dear little souls with their sinless eyes that looked so fearlessly upon everything, nor dropped for shame of aught, unknowing of such! Ah, could they but remain in their baby loveliness, purifying instead of defiling, with their pure innocence reminding Man of the state from which he came! And beyond, in the great world, were sins they dreamed not of; awful confusion, wrought by Man in defiance of high Heaven, that left nought uncontaminated, spreading and increasing and heaping up a mass of ruin that would fall and crush him.

That son of Ham, which was named Mizraim, wished to build there a city in place of their small huts, wherefrom to sally forth and establish a kingdom; yet now over all was a tentative feeling of waiting and a wonderment at the tarrying there and the signs in the Heavens. Near the village, in a natural basin, lay a huge structure of wood, of appearance like to a great dwelling, and every day the inhabitants of the huts crowded about it, and, although engaged on raising it, not comprehending its meaning or use. The young ones ran gleefully over the long baulks of timber while the women stood pensively watching, with wonder in their big soft eyes, the men wielding heavy mallets and adzes and sweating at the mighty beams to push them into position. Strange it was to perceive there in the wilderness, and living in huts, beings clothed in the beautiful stuffs of an advanced civilization, dwelling in comeliness, with hair meetly attended to and secured with gold pins;

C A P. II.

THE ICY WARNING OF DOOM.

DAY by day the structure grew. Solid and vast, careful in every detail and little part, it progressed slowly but surely, surrounded by splinters and fragments and exhaling a fresh resinous odour. Three hundred cubits in length it stretched, and the proudest giants of the western forests made that length. Right and left it lay for fifty cubits, a mammoth house, towering thirty cubits high from the earth α , the joints secured by wooden pins and sturdy thongs of leather, whose responsibilities were lightened by nice balance of straining angles. The form took that of a boat, slanting upwards from its base and overhanging at the ends and sides, (as a vessel is built to lessen the submersion caused by a roll or pitch). Rough ladders gave access to the topmost timbers secured from side to side by great beams, knees and staunchions holding the ribs to the bottom, and as long tendrils the pulley-ropes hung about the skeleton, like the coloured festoons of climbing plants in the valleys and groves of trees.

Long timbers, fitted with care, began to cover up the interlacing view of crossed beams with smooth white walls of wood, on one side a square door being left, near the top, and the long windows for permission of air, through which, when the Sun

α The measure I call a cubit, remembering the Mosaic description, with which it would tally. This, taken at eighteen inches, would make the ark of Noah four hundred and fifty feet long by seventy-five broad and forty-five feet high.

Dr. J. Muehleisen Arnold in "Genesis and Science" says:—Lest it should be deemed that those divinely-given proportions were offensive to the eye it may be added that all the normal proportions of the human body can be traced in it. The length is to the breadth as six to one, and the breadth to the height as five to three, so that the ark afloat upon the waters represented the form and dimensions of the human body in a lying position.

had set and the flame of Axatlan became visible, the children would peep, shrinking with pleasant fear as they perceived the dark vault within, where they dared not venture save in the brightness of the day.

Inside the large structure foundations were laid for two floors, huge solid columns of wood forming the strong supports being wedged up and fixed securely under the unhesitating directions of the two advisers, whose mandates were implicitly obeyed.

And, although hidden within their modest bosoms, the curiosity of the women was intense concerning this thing, nor was it by any means lessened by their husbands' protestations that they were equally ignorant as to its ultimate end. It appeared to be a large ship; yet they deemed a ship as of no conceivable use amidst the mountains, and but marvelled so much the more. Ham, jeering and insolent, suggested that perchance it was granted to them to be the forerunners of their nation and sail through the sky to Eden, but the sire sternly reproved his levity.

The wonder of it was upon all, pleasing and terrifying by turns, and imparting a tentative feeling of sojourning until something great should happen; and many would wish to return to Zul and be among the crowds of their fellows, and away from here, from Axatlan and from the terrifying signs of Heaven and vague fear of what the building portended.

And especially the women sighed for the palaces and gorgeous sights they had been constrained to leave behind, and perchance there were regretful memories of courtly admirers whose smiles left favourable impressions. Well they remembered that their own blooming charms were superior to the faded roses of the beauties of Zul, and what woman could forego admiration without a sigh?

So they dreamed of the past as they watched the progress of the great wooden structure, shyly and blushing at their own thoughts, pertimes half-guiltily, and again relieved that here were no temptations. So insidious is sin and the contemplation of it! Still upon their round limbs glittered the golden rings, heavy and curiously wrought, set with precious stones that had been found in digging foundations, and supposed to be born

of sunbeams by the coloured rocks; and round the evening fire they wrapped around them the grand cloaks that would have graced the painted halls of Zul, and with them the men here preferred to cover their heads instead of with massy helmets.

Occasionally tremors shook the earth, causing dismay and terror, and an icy breath went abroad over the world, such as had never been known of before. From the north and from the east came that cold terror, with the legions of the hail and the pains of death, so that many died and all were afraid. To these workers in the mountains also came great fear, perceiving how the leaves of the trees withered and the sarracenas and ferns and palms and roses died, but the strangers reassured the frightened people and urged on the workmen. The long floors were placed on their foundations and secured, each having apertures through which a gentle slope led to the lower storey, faintly illumined by the light through the apertures. Every part was finished with the utmost care; it was for life they worked, and no haste must imperil it. And the more they wondered as the work progressed, and the two floors divided the internal space into three storeys, dark and mysterious, while the deck-like roof began to close over the whole, sloping like a turtle's back, or like that of the monsters of the deep that wallowed upon the waves occasionally. In the centre of the deck also another window was formed, a hatchway that rose above the white expanse. There was no confusion, no hesitation as to the plan. The strangers advised and directed, and Japheth designed, himself working with the rest, splitting wood and adzing the planks, lifting, pulling, hammering and fixing. And every night came that cold breath, causing a veil of gleaming silver to spread over all things, and sealing up the fountains of water. And being so strange it caused uneasiness and no small discomfort, and the ship-like building also was covered with that white beauty. *z*

On every seventh day the workers rested from their labours, and led by the sire raised their voices in prayer and praise. They prayed for Atlantis, for Zul, for all those gay princes and

z For theory as to probable approach of glacial epoch see Appendix § 5.

ladies, and Susi prayed for Azta. She believed her to be capable of anything, regarding her (as indeed did everyone else) as a supernatural being who could influence any way she chose. She prayed for Toltiah and pleaded his high birth before Heaven; and raised her sweet petition for me, which was so unworthy of such pure regard. She prayed that if by her death the sins of the nation might be forgiven that Heaven would take her soul.

Upon Saria, the younger stranger, she turned her dewy eyes, her features suffused with a modest blush.

“Sir,” she said, “could aught atone for the sins of a nation?”

“Sweet mortal,” answered the heavenly prince, with a look of chaste love, “thy words are heard in Heaven, yet not by thy blood nor by any other’s could sin be checked; not though the Seraphim descended to the Earth could the confusion be ended. By blasphemies that thou couldst never understand and by sins that have grown on other iniquities has man sealed his doom, and behold it is spoken that he must cease, for that his sins shake the firmament. A new race shall arise, sprung from a chosen few, whose seed shall replenish the Earth and perchance lead the heathen to the light of Heaven; yet still shall sin never cease.”

Greatly saddened, Susi hung her head, and abashed at her boldness in striving with one whom she perceived to be of Celestial mould, said softly: “Is there no hope for these created?”

I saw the bright eyes of Saria dwell with love upon the beautiful woman, yet not for long, and gazing steadfastly upward, he answered:

“Too long has mercy been extended, O thou fair pleader. Perchance ’twere better had the sword of mighty Gabriel been suffered to fall on the first offenders of the race than indulgence have been granted. For now the cry of nameless Sin roars in awful blasphemy in the ears of Heaven, and words are spoken that cannot be reversed.”

“Is it then hopeless?”

“Hopeless in truth: yet pitying eyes look sadly on a doomed race and weep for a misguided and potential volition that ever leans to sin and that even the Creator cannot check. Pray for

thyself, dear lady, and for thy people, for sin is not far from some among you."

Startled at these words Susi looked up, fear dilating her starry eyes; but encountered a glance so beautiful and holy and full of heavenly love that she ceased her fear and dropped her lashes with modest joy.

The stranger went forth and Susi pondered long and deeply upon his words. On her knees she considered, yet not daring to pray now, neither to strive against the spoken Word. Her mind, innocent as a child's, dwelt in awe upon these things, and she was silent.

Abstractedly she gazed out to where in the evening glow stretched the long mysterious building of wood, shadowy and leviathan. Yet how could she guess for what purpose it was for, up among the mountains! As a refuge against any sent to take them it would have been but of little avail, being readily consumable by fire. But so much the more the inflexible reality of some dread purpose overcame her with fear, and for a space her mind reeled beneath the certainty of doom, and her eyes, large and vague, rolled round in horror.

At the evening meal when they gathered round the welcome fire she recounted the words of the stranger, that were so pregnant with implacable vengeance upon Man; and the sire, listening with his eyes closed and brows contracted with pain under the white cowl of his robe secured round his head, caressed the brown hair of his favourite in silence. But her words caused uneasiness, and confirmation of a suspicion came with sensations of terror upon all.

Ham laughed defiantly, yet not with mirth; but Shem and Japheth were silent and the women paled with fear. The shadow stayed with them, and Susi's tragic words cast a gloom over the little tribe. What was happening now in Zul? Did those gorgeous halls still reëcho the wanton laugh and drunken altercation, the shouts of warriors and the silvery merriment of the fair ladies? Did the magicians still dare to show the hidden mysteries and the dreadful crowds still dance in the Market-place round their fires, in the face of dread signs in the Heavens and upheavals of the Earth? Could their terrible human nature still dare? Did

THE ICY WARNING OF DOOM.

martyrs still die on Zul's bloody altars in horrors of torment when the elements smote down their victims in scores all around by the terror of cold and hail and lightning?

Sadly I considered the fate whereby I had seen Azta; for centuries here or there would have mattered nought to me, and none other could have compelled that strange wild adoration that she received so carelessly; but I blamed myself bitterly for having stayed when I first observed, and for not considering the deepness of the quagmire into which I had permitted myself to be led.

C A P. III.

THE FOLLY OF THE LAND.

THE more I saw of Susi the more I grieved that my Love was not as she, fitter to be the Love of Angel than of an Earthly being. Sorrowfully I looked upon all my career since I had forsaken the guidance of Heaven and had attempted to interfere in that which God Himself could not direct, chaining myself with an Earthly alliance that was proving so disastrous. I looked back on all my madness, on deeds that I had frustrated by misdirected efforts, that would have been better left to their proper workers, and on others again that I had weakly allowed to proceed.

I looked upon the gathering culmination with dire forebodings; with an injurious eye to Mankind and a wild reproach to Azta who was so wickedly froward. As a wild bull caught in a net I plunged in spirit, roaring with rage and pain, blaming all things, and myself as well, for the torments I endured and those vague horrors to come. Only in this quiet spot could I support my soul at all, and I oft gazed with love upon Zula and Saria, longing to reveal myself unto them, yet not daring; quietly watching the progress of the great wooden building and wondering for why it was being prepared.

One night upon the cold high deck Susi stood alone, gazing upon the surrounding scenery, noting where the glow of the camp-fire lighted upon dark dead ferns and trees, and how curiously the unusual clouds formed themselves. A low weird song came to her ears from below, from where one of the women hushed her babe to sleep, but save for that and the chirp of a cricket all was still and silent. Afar to the east she thought she perceived a faint light, and, standing unperceived by her, my mind with hers pictured the great dark temple crowning the hill with its walls and towers and steps, rising storey above storey up to where

the evil flame waved; and in fancy stood revealed the torch-lighted hall of the palace, the roar of wanton voices and the occasional growl of the lions. There reclined Azta and Toltiah, and outside lay those stony figures with the mute impassive features. If they could but speak—but warn!

A slight cry from Susi caused me to awake from the painful dream. She was gazing to the north, to Mount Axatlan, with a terrified trembling, and moved by her distress I revealed myself, and bade her fear not, remembering how Heaven would protect her. And so, holding the hand of the fair being, we watched; and as we gazed a huge splendid meteor traversed the sky and rested over the burning mountain, lighting the whole Earth with a wonderous glamour of brightness, while among the clouds the echoing thunders rolled. Upon the path of that bright glory hung a veily cloud, still and motionless, and thence also arrived the sound of shattering explosions that shook the firm Earth.

And now the sullen flame of the volcano appeared to assume a human form of colossal dimensions, and the countenance was vivid and animated. The lips opened eagerly with a great import, but a hand flashed forth and the finger sealed those fateful lips: the countenance became as those of the stone lions, immovable, serene and placid, yet with an expression of awful solemnity.

How gazed that Majesty of Flame! The woman's eyes could not withstand the might of observation that rested upon us, and the orbs of horror that met my reproachful and defiant challenge. But for my supporting arm she would have fallen, her eyes closed and her bosom rising and falling quickly.

The voice of Arsayalalyur the Archangel bade her be of good courage and watch; and as, fearfully, she looked upon the distant glory, my eyes met his that were full of a great sorrow and compassion.

“What dost thou here, Asia?” he asked.

“I look upon the Future,” I answered, “and it is very dark.”

Perchance the despair in my voice answered more than any words. The bright Angel was silent, courteously deprecating his interference with a wave of the hand. It seemed as though three of Us stood there, so ethereal was Susi; the destroyer,

the rescuer, the mourner. Nor penitent was I, for a dreadful turmoil burned my spirit in its heaving waves of fire. But the woman gazed upon us longingly, and, "Would I were as you," she said, enraptured, "for the Earth is very small compared to Heaven, and how tiny its affairs!"

But Arsayalalyur spake: "O thou sweet mortal! Even thou art not all good, and see, how can such be contemptible that can arouse Heaven to such stern movement? There is that in the amalgamation of Earth and Heaven which is very terrible, and who can fathom it?"^α

Susi dropped her eyes, and in sympathy with her confusion I bent down and kissed her forehead, protecting her with my arm and the kinship of my feelings, so that she looked up and thanked me with a sweet look. The storm burst over our heads, and upon Axatlan the Form of flame unsheathed from its hip a sword that flashed with living light, and whirled it beneath the clouds over all the land. A fan of lightning swept from it, of blinding magnificence and volume, and then the darkness rolled down intensely, wrapping the world in ebon obscurity.

I felt the soft form in my arms tremble.

"O sorrow!" she cried, "that such punishment must come. And thou, who sat with Azta and art an holy Angel, could'st thou not stay the sin that causes such vengeance?"

I felt as though before this pure being I was a sinner indeed, and fain would I have cast myself down and told her with passionate grief how I had erred and been chained in spirit, watching with agony that which I had caused beyond all prevention, yet still remaining stiff-necked and rebellious. Yet I but groaned and was speechless.

Susi was of smaller frame than Azta, and I felt to her all the tenderness of a father as I comforted her fears and restored her to her frightened relatives, bidding the recital of all that she had seen that they might be the more ready to conform to whatsoever the future might bring to them.

^α We may here consider the agony of our Lord as the time for his approaching physical death drew nigh. What but the mystic meaning of the above words could cause the Son of God to fear a doom of earth? We cannot guess what the words mean; we can only believe that the mystery is "very terrible".

THE FOLLY OF THE LAND.

And afterwards the building of the great vessel progressed more readily, all understanding that for their lives they builded; yet being ignorant of the cause of such preparation. The deck covered wholly the structure, topped by the square hatchway, to the fitting of which door and of the door appertaining to the way in the side the nicest attention and care was given, that they should bar ingress of aught. The strangers inspected all the workmanship, and showed where lakes of bitumen lay, from which was taken sufficient to pitch the structure within and without. Stopping was hammered into any crevices, and from large hollows in the earth, heated by surrounding fires, the boiling fluid was placed upon the wood by means of bundles of soft material on the end of poles.

And there was war among the Elements by reason that balances were disturbed, and this attracted and that repulsed more than was meet. And watery worlds which revolved in certain dark places in the firmament ran together in confusion, wherein great meteors plunged in glory, yet scarce perceived of Earth. From Mount Axatlan came a storm of black dust lasting many days, falling even within the streets of Zul and lying like an ebon pall upon the sea, and many Spirits strove together in the air and rode with shouts upon the north wind. The unwonted cold rendered the peoples uneasy, and by reason of it also the flocks and herds perished and the trees withered. But the little place in the hills was secure from harm, being well sheltered, and the tempests which bowed the forests sped harmlessly over the village wherein dwelt the beloved of God.

Yet even now was no account made of the great signs in the Heavens, and I wept with despair to perceive the idolatry of the peoples of the land, which rather grew in frenzy than abated. For by chance one day I came to a place where was a tall hill in the midst of a great tribe which had cities and mighty men, and aforesometimes knew the name of Jehovah. And upon the hill lay a mighty semblance of a serpent, built of earth and stones, which stretched between the east and west, and whereof the middle was of the height of a man and containing a temple wherein burned a fire. Before its gaping jaws rose a circular mound, and the interpretation was that of the

Earth being cast forth by the serpent, which was worshipped in the temple, all the people which stood therein looking towards the Sunrise and worshipping the beast. And at certain seasons were offered little children, which were placed within the furnace, and whose spirits were believed to guard the place from improper or injurious intrusion; which sacrifices were made the occasion of great celebrations; and live serpents were cast among the people, and any who were bitten by them were esteemed to be beloved of the god. The birds and beasts also, which preyed upon these reptiles, were destroyed, so that their numbers were very great, and those who died of their poison were cast upon the furnace. Nor were there few of such, and at the season when the serpents by reason of nature were full of frenzy, the people held great festivals and died in numbers; and he who killed a snake by accident or design was hamstrung and placed in a certain spot where dwelt a great white anaconda which all believed to be the Spirit of the image upon the hill, that it might deal with him as it pleased.

And when these people observed the signs which were over all the Earth they believed the god to be angry with them, and making themselves drunk with the juice of the vines (which grew abundantly about them), they offered monstrous sacrifices to the earth-formed image, sacrificing their children and mistresses with dreadful rites, burying some alive within it and burning others. Their imaginations conceived nameless horrors; and with a curse upon their frowardness I went from the place, wandering in dismay over the land and discovering nought but abominations of evil, perceiving how celestial imaginations had caused the committal of atrocious crimes among man and beast. The grand temples with their outbuildings and fountained courts were but monuments of sin, and the fair cities, palm-shaded and far-stretching in glories of massive architecture, held but a hive of devils, goodly to look upon, but debased and prostituted beyond aid or hindrance, bowing the knee, with that strange instinct of man to worship a tangible something, to creations that would have shocked even them could they have comprehended their hideous enormity.

With a sad pleasure I looked upon the family of Noah the

THE FOLLY OF THE LAND.

Righteous, gathered around their frowning wooden palace and raising their regards to Heaven, pure-minded because that their hearts ever dwelt upon the Beautiful and were pleased with the contemplation of it. By the command of Zula the great vessel was named the Mexiah, and to its structure no more was added. The little ones were not so pleased with their playground now, for, in place of long beams and cross-stays, there were but smooth bare walls, and the large dark interior frayed them. Still they ran merrily over the expanse of deck, and held no fear, like their elders, of impending doom, and no momentary dread that those who were now regarded as enemies would discover and enslave them or put them to the torture. Neither yet had sin cast its dark shadow over their minds, and as long as they had plenty of food they lacked nought. Such happy little mites were they with their Angel natures, and it gave me pleasure to watch how they disported themselves without a thought of care or sorrow. They never dreamed that this great house was the saving ark of a nation, nor that they themselves were the future responsible forefathers who should people the new world with countless myriads of living souls.

C A P. IV.

THE CURSE OF ATLANTIS.

WITH the earthquake that had separated Toltiah and Susi the change had come over the seasons. Terrific omens were abroad in Zul; strangers of terrible aspect were seen, coming from where no man knew and disappearing mysteriously; a great dark bird had extinguished the flame on the temple, and simultaneously the fires on the temples of Neptsis, the Serpent, Winged Things, and all the others had expired; a leviathan had appeared off the coast for some days, fearful of aspect and prodigious of bulk; while the black storm from Axatlan had covered the city and the waves with ashes, and there were rumours of many new volcanoes and appearances of meteors.

Toltiah associated these things with the curse of Noah, and, mad with a feminine terror and fury, caused the guards of the gates to be massacred to a man, supposing them to have slept while he passed forth.

The earth tremor was followed by two others, so that half the great city was nearly in ruins. From the walls every idol had been shaken down, and the Fish-god by the landing-stage in the harbour lay submerged in the deep water, appearing by the movement of the surface and the refraction of shadows to move and writhe. Everywhere stretched long fissures, in places dividing houses in halves and piling up masses of debris with columns and beams. The magician Gorgia died in agony among the ruins, where, scalped and pinned down by a vast column, some embers from a fire fell upon him continually; and in the lingering torture of a slow furnace and the stings of clouds of flies he died; and also in like manner many perished.

The unfinished building of the Baths was not touched, although its great reservoirs of water were shaken, but the temple of

Winged Things was levelled to the ground, falling in thundrous ruins, and the Pyramid of Atlace was despoiled of its crowning symbol. A gloom was over all the city and dismay sat in every heart; and now of a night the far clouds were seen redly illumined by some mysterious fire that added fear to the terrifying things around.

The red palace had suffered severely, a fissure parting the terraced steps from top to bottom and dividing the Hall of Feasting one-third from the remaining part. Upon the main roof an anaconda lay coiled, yet how it came there none knew, nor did any dare approach it. And Toltiah was greatly moved thereby, remembering that great serpent which had come to him in a vision when he lay with his army before the walls, which had bade him go back, nor dare the anger of the gods. But Azta killed it with Marisa's axe. And much damage was wrought to the colonnades and statuary, and a continual earthy dust arose, carrying with its strange odour a feeling of depression and fear.

And I saw where Amaziel wrestled in Zul with a portentous Spirit in the chamber where he dwelt, both striving for mastery with great gaspings, while from communicating dark chambers came many other Spirits to watch in those days of the beginning of vengeance. And the portentous Spirit broke away and fled downwards through the place of the colossi, and downwards past where the three vast idols looked upon the lake of fire, disappearing therein.

And, lifting up my eyes from afar, I perceived in the night a long line of bats issuing forth from the temple in swift flight. And more came forth, and yet more, and there was no end to the silent exodus of the small people which wheeled up and up into the sky and departed over the sea with such silent ordering. As I watched I marvelled, and ever issued the winged shadows, without squeak or any sort of sound, and the mystery of it lay heavily upon me. Also the sea moved with a different fashion to its usual wont, hurling great waves to the shore and swirling in vast eddies; while from it seemed to rise unceasingly a moaning and weeping sound, and the dense clouds covered all the sky with darkness, and a leaden horror of night.



THE SMALL PEOPLE WHICH WHEELED UP AND UP INTO THE SKY.

Azta I found dismayed by all such things, for having seen more than the rest she also feared more; and in her terror my heart went out to her with a love made greater by absence that was all unavailing to make me forget her or to keep from her.

How could we but sorrow! Partners in sin we stood looking forth from the western colonnade, the shadow upon us deepening as a low heavy roll of thunder muttered from the clouds and a great light became visible, illuminating Earth and sky for a long while. And it was night.

"O my Love!" Azta wept, clinging to me, "what shall befall us? For when I think upon all the wonders that my eyes have looked within, my mind becomes but a bewildering chaos of mystification, in which I perceive but an ungovernable vastness of living terrors without possessing any knowledge of a power that could direct and restrain the unutterable immensity of awful creation. I shrink in terror from my thoughts, Beloved! Would that my impious mind had never gazed upon those mysteries!"

"Alas, poor Love," I answered her, sadly enough, for my soul was also distraught with fear; "would that I might comfort thee!"

"Ay, comfort me!" she implored; and the bright moon flashed forth upon her, lighting her wild eyes and her face that was deadly pale, and showing where the mocking chaplets of roses hung beneath her uncovered breasts—the wanton decorations of a late feast that seemed to shrink before the terror of the elements. "Comfort me! For my senses swim with horror at times, and my thoughts helplessly stagger from infinity to infinity. Would I were as the lower animals that think not!"

I pressed her to my heart, and front to front our two hearts beat with pain and anguish; while, dismayed, I perceived that again Azta wore in her hair the golden symbol of a butterfly and her eyes were red with wine as they looked into mine.

A sort of horrible calmness fell upon my spirit, with a feeling that this surpassingly lovely wanton deserved some punishment then a rebellious rage against Heaven, that such should need to be at all, possessed me, together with a blasting scorn against myself. With a strange coldness I held the beautiful being in

my arms, noting, with no enthusiasm, her splendour of form, and criticising with calm eyes the glory of her features upturned to mine. What Wonder was this that I held, this last of created beings? Was It of Earth or Heaven?

I gazed at her almost in terror as the thought came to me (that had come once before): Who is master? Myself, or she? and for a moment I wished I had not returned to her, but wandered in solitude afar until all was inevitably accomplished.

"Behold, thy love is gone from me!" she cried bitterly, "and I shall die! Wilt thou forsake me now that the Sun is hid and darkness is over all? Long hast thou been absent, and my heart has waited in sorrow for thee, my Beloved."

She wept and clung about me, and in grievous pity for her I wept also. Whereat she took courage and said, "If thou lovest me as thou hast said, it is well."

These words struck my mind in such fashion that I laughed with scorn and blaspheming merriment.

"Yea, in very truth, it is well!" I cried; "Love is the greatest thing in Earth and Heaven; it creates and then ruins, and laughs at the wreck. Love sits in Heaven and nourishes the Earth, making it large and fat for the sacrifice, punishing aught that unwittingly crosses its caprices with unrelenting hate. We two can laugh at all that may come, because we love; soaring above a world whose regards rise no higher than its belly; hand in hand can we go to the gates of Paradise and claim admission, because we do very fully that which we were instructed to do; and if in ought we have sinned, and crave upon our mouldering knees for forgiveness, surely He who is Love and Mercy will forgive! There can be no Hell for us: how can there be Hell where love is? Of a surety we are blessed, thou and I!"

Azta looked at me and trembled as she gazed.

"Thou jestest, Asia," she whispered fearfully.

"And why not?" I asked in savage bitterness, tormented and horror-stricken. "It is permitted to celestial beings to indulge in mirth, even as Azazel provoked the laughter of Heaven by creating a Platypus; and when the heart is full of mirth the jest will arise. Was not merriment created for good, in order that the gloom might fall yet the deeper and more bitter for

that light from the Paradise of fools! Accursed, aye, and twice and thrice accursed be the Love that can so destroy its own children and drive them from the brightness of morning to the dark of night! Accursed be the Love that can see its penitent worshippers writhe in flames of Hell and take no heed of their remorseful sufferings! Accursed be that Heaven that can create and continue creating evil for to destroy it in weltering misery, that can raise its own chaste head above the abominations of its womb and trample its own creations under foot!"

A great voice checked the torrent of my fury and my impious words.

"Peace, O Asia, thou fallen being!" it thundered: "Thou knowest that sin is not of Heaven, but of volition. There is no sin too powerful to be overcome if the will is there, and why dost thou farther insult the ear of Heaven by thy curses?"

And there stood against me the leader of the Seraphim, great Chiron, whom formerly I loved; and now, strong in my despair and not quailing before his celestial splendour I confronted him with upright carriage.

"I have sinned," I cried, "and bitterly am I punished these long whiles without cessation or hope of aught. Yet get thee from before me, thou who art holy, and taunt not one who has known more suffering than thyself. Perchance my woes shall crown me with a brighter, if sterner, diadem than any that thy smooth path of righteousness could bestow, and pain uplift the spirit to a higher level than sin has lost. Perchance He who has known the sting of disappointment—even the sinless One—may lean in the fellowship of kindred woe to me in the time that shall be appointed."

I stood alone, save but that the prostrate form of Azta lay by me. And as, looking upon her, my anger softened, I raised her up and took her in my arms.

"O my Love, how I love thee!" I cried, with intense passion.

The woman wept and our tears mingled, terrible burning drops as of hot lava.

"What can I say to thee?" she sobbed desperately.

"Love, no word of thine could remove the dread fiat of sin," I said; "nought now that thou couldst say might blot out the

past, the period of sin that has left its mark upon us both, nor bring back that which can never be restored. For even couldst thou love me now, yet couldst thou never restore the peace of mind that was aforetime, and the purity of the past before sin had passed over, nor fully remove all doubts which prey upon the soul."

Azta wept in despair, and I could but love her for it, and spoke words to comfort her.

"I know not what portends, yet know that whatever shall come, to thee am I ever true, and doubt not that I love thee more than my own immortal soul, O my fair Love. Too well I love thee, too well for both of us; yet blame me not that my love is so great, for I will never leave thee. Though Earth shall consume in smoke, and the Heavens roll away and depart, yet where thou art there also am I; and should aught perchance separate us I will wait for thee, through all the bitter pain of knowing that thou wouldst follow another, until haply we meet again. I live in Hell for thy sake, nor will I, craven, enter Heaven without thee. Kiss me, my dear Love, and let us not spend the shortness of time in such sad misery."

She lay back in my arms, regarding me with half-closed eyes, her hands clasping me.

"How wonderful thou art!" she murmured.

I kissed her fondly, and, embracing one another, we sat watching the strange sky.

"Thou rememberest Susi, of the family of Noah?" asked Azta.

I bowed solemnly, for the fair woman ever appeared to me as an Angel of Earth.

"That night of the earthquake she came to me and spoke in serious fashion, and her words have never left my mind. Surely thou wert also there! and thou didst mark the strange bird that sang by her?"

"Aye, Beloved. Better had her words found good result, yet it is I which am to blame, and not thou. For behold in the youth Toltiah is the curse of Atlantis, and I, myself, have wrought this thing in the sight of Heaven."

Azta was silent, horror-struck by her perception of things.

"Yet," she said, slowly, as one who would persuade her conscience, "yet has he been in the companionship of righteous

THE CURSE OF ATLANTIS.

Noah and of his people, and thou, his father, art holy. What better examples could he have? For I, even I, am not as most."

"Alas, poor Love," I answered her; "it is nought to do with example; nor has example any power, methinks, save evil example. Yet if thou sowest tares, (and also if thou sowest them not,) tares arise in abundance, but the beauteous sartreels require a certain care, and also the roses, and even then they may never appear. But here it was the previous error that but reaped its sure harvest."

Azta perceived as in the unravelling of a skein the process of sin, where a fallen Angel and a fallen mortal had raised a being who caused the nation to stray more than all the times before. She perceived approaching the vengeance of God upon the fearful mixture of the sins of mind and body, and simply and despairingly she said, "We have both erred."

I answered not. I only drew her head on to my breast and in silence we sat down and looked forth upon the night.

C A P. V.

THE SHAME OF ZUL.

THERE came a day when by the advice of Amaziel and the command of Toltiah, nor less by their own fearful inclinations, the people of Zul propitiated the Lord of Light with gorgeous ceremonies, and word was sent to all the cities of the land to worship and seek atonement. Vast crowds gathered, and pallid eunuch priests and yellow-robed priestesses wound their way up Zul's dark height with humble mien and weird chants, followed by all the great ones of the city; such as could find no room upon the roofs crowding the courts and outlying pylons. From every temple arose the roll of gongs and drums, and thronging myriads gathered in fear to try and propitiate the god to whom they believed they owed the terrors that beset them, carrying with them all manner of things for sacrifice.

Every person in the city came to swell the vast throng, wrapped up in warm garments to protect themselves from the passing downpours of hail that melted in pools among the ruined places; and the gaily-clothed thousands stood in grim contrast to their estate, uneasy, as dire forebodings lay upon all, and a sense of the urgent need of a united propitiation that should ease them of the catastrophes that were befalling. Warriors, merchants, nobles, mothers with children, all gathered in hopeful concourse, gazing dismayed upon the ruins and shivering in the strange cold. Nevertheless, they cried aloud to the god, prostituting themselves before the hidden divinity in unseemliness and frenzied exhortation, and shrieking aloud for him to appear. They exposed their broad bosoms, gashing them with knives and spears and tearing them in bloody furrows with their own fingers, so that they were dreadful sights to behold, while with frantic cries the priests ran among

them, horrible with self-inflicted wounds and far-streaming hair; those with black robes exhorting the multitudes, gradually working themselves up to a like pitch of frenzy, to sacrifice, asking for children to be delivered up to them as offerings to the god.

An uproar broke forth continually, pierced by epileptic shrieks of some wretches in fits through excesses. With a loud rustling of garments and clang of armour the throngs fell upon their faces, as, outlined against the sky, Amaziel stretched his arms in supplication to the hidden Sun and invoked the deity.

"Come forth!" he cried, "scatter the clouds which lie before thy face and shine upon thy servants. Behold the Earth stretches abroad her arms to thee her lord, eager for thine embrace, comfortless without thy warmth, and atones to thee with great sacrifice."

And all the priests at the sound of the drum shouted in a loud voice; "Hear, O Zul, and forsake not thine espoused!"

The victims emerged upon the platform, where stood the noblest of the land, and a long echoing shriek fell upon the ears of the nearer thousands as the first poor wretch was slaughtered and his heart upraised to the sky. Kas, a noble of the western side of the city, stepped forward and demanded to be sacrificed for the good of the land, and inflamed by his example others did likewise, among them being a priestess of Neptsis. The blood began to run in streams on the golden floor, and the worshippers smeared it upon their foreheads; while, catching the awful frenzy of those above them, the crowds commenced to murder their mistresses and children, encouraged by the priests and magicians who ran like devils above their prostrate bodies, shrieking and exhorting. Alas, that beings of such intelligence and arts could fall to such as this!

Little children were disembowelled alive and passed into the abominable flame, their dismal cries and fainting screams of agony drowned by the loud chanting of the priestesses and the shrill voices of the eunuch priests. One of the furious women, foaming at the mouth and maddened by the spirit of sacrifice, suddenly shrieked aloud, and then stepping to the edge of the platform, cast herself headlong into space and was dashed to pieces upon the lowest roof. The High Priest foamed

likewise at the mouth, rolling his eyes and waving his arms, red with blood to the elbows, frantically in the air.

Azta, standing in the midst of a group, among whom were also Toltiah, Nezca, Chanoc, Adar, Tua, Emarna and other great ones, watched with a slight sneer upon her face while the bloody work continued, frowning occasionally when some pretty chubby infant was murdered. Her heart felt very dark and evil; more than all this wickedness was it evil. For on the part of those around her and of the crowds beneath it was but wild, unthinking wrong, while her heart spoke to her of deliberate spiritual sin and a wantonly strangled conscience.

A slight tremor shook the earth and a quavering moan of fear rose like a long muffled roll of thunder, echoing for miles from every quarter of the vast city. In the great spaces beneath the temple that weird cry of fright vibrated fearfully in the close atmosphere, rising and falling in mournful cadence, and by reason of the varying distances obtaining a marvellous effect.

Amaziel brought out from the central tower the sacred symbol of Atlantis, the four-armed Cross, that had led the nation under great Tekthah to its victorious empire, and with a shout lifted it towards the sky.

A deafening roar of mingled import reached him. There was horror and frenzied approbation in that assent of a nation that their symbol should be sacrificed, all who perceived knowing and understanding that by such thing a nation signified its surrender to a Divinity whose power they did not comprehend, and which, their suddenly-strung consciences told them, was not the God of their fathers. This was Devil-worship! But the hope of protection for the wicked present overcame every scruple, and also the knowledge of unstemable and unatonable sin made them turn for aid to the Divinity they had followed most.

Therefore an echoing, approving shout bade the High Priest consummate the blasphemy, and in the blood-fed flame the symbol of a nation's victorious greatness was consumed in wicked sacrifice.

And now it appeared that a great relief spread through their hearts, as having humbled themselves to the god and become his slaves they believed that they would be under his protection;

and even such as should have been instructed differently by the excellence of their minds, felt this consoling reflection.

The reaction from fear to a feeling of security rendered the populace jubilant with a shameful joy. They need fear no lower fall, for there was none; and overcome by their acts they indulged in terrible excesses with an abandonment that was fearful in its lowest degradation. A very monster of crime brooded over the land, and those who had offered up tender babies with tortures too vile for utterance would scarce hesitate at aught. Incestuous beings, sunk beneath the level of brutes, cried their shame aloud, nor was any enormity too gross for them; believing that by prostituting their souls and bodies they engendered a blood-alliance with the Sun, and rejoicing with a vast drunken pride in their shame.

There was a great running to and fro, and much searching among debris for aught of value; while stores of food-stuffs were sacked by hungry crowds, and there was no order at all. The people shouted continually, mocking the idols that had been shaken from walls and pedestals and heaping insults upon them; and as with night great bonfires were ignited in the Market-place, they cast the graven figures thereon, howling with joy as the flames licked around the fat and oil soaked abominations. Having surrendered themselves to the Sun, they had no need of these deities, and cried out with glee and much mocking talk as explosions rent the grotesque figures, until the huge idol of Increase, a monstrous figure of obscenity, suddenly terrified them by emitting a volume of coloured flame from its jaws, whose beastly lips disclosed long pointed teeth. And, to terrify more the vile audience, an owl fell headlong into the flames and died in screeching torments; while from the terrible and blasphemous group of the Conception of Love sprang an anaconda, a tempest of hisses sounding as it writhed with widely-distended jaws and popping eyes in the flames, revolving in swift coils and swishing like a Titanic whip among the embers from which it hurled burning splinters and logs in all directions. Cries of fright arose as the onlookers fled in a dire panic, fearful of its onslaught; but it perished where it writhed, and such as worshipped serpents were greatly dismayed. From

all the idols came forth vermin in swarms, which had fattened upon the libations and offerings; and great centipedes, scorpions and spiders dashed madly over the burning embers to fall and wriggle and leap, crackling and agonising, in the flames.

But after a time any misgivings were lost in the frenzy of wine and excitement, as the devilish priests bade them fear only Zul. There were great vats full of wine placed at different spots, and from these the people drank, dancing and shouting and falling upon the ground. The gathering was the greater for the reason that many houses were untenable, and the leveling influence of the terror and sacrifices caused many of the princes and nobles to mingle with the mad throngs of warriors, traders, merchants and women. These last were greater in number than the men, and being more abandoned increased the evil of all, flashing their wanton eyes among the dark masses of hair that in most instances, despite the cold, was their only protection from the lewd eyes that ever unsatisfied gazed upon them. Maddened by the whirling limbs, the glittering jewellery, the flash of arms and lenient presences of nobles, they abandoned themselves to every passing desire, fair fiends of darkness, urging and encouraging the men in all wickedness.

Several died through excesses, crying blasphemies to the end in a fever of evil desire, and there were many furious brawls and murders. Bodies of armed men ran through the crowds, killing as many as they could, and so dreadful at length became the uproar that Nahuasco at the head of three legions attacked the debauchees, the warriors charging with a shout and dealing heavy blows with spear-shafts in all directions, regardless of age and sex.

Curses were showered upon them, and the newly-created Lord of Trocoatla was furiously assailed in turn, so that the riot became a pitched battle. But the veteran prevailed; the crowds were broken up and dispersed, many people being wantonly pushed into the great fires and causing merriment to their murderers by the way they shrieked and plunged amidst the embers.

Azta in a cynical rage had ordered this attack to be made, as she still remained upon the temple roof, ministered to by

Amaziel. Now alone she stood, and far below upon the one hand was the moaning sea, upon the other the moving bonfire-lighted brawlers. Above, the low clouds rolled awfully in vast evolutions, and thunder, audible at intervals, sounded in sublime contrast to the howls and shrieks below that filled Azta's spirit with a great unrest to hear. Her eyes glowered red from her shadowy form, and were as lions' eyes in the dark, nought but two round discs of flame that looked out over the far crowds and flashed at the sounds of martial strife as Nahuasco dispersed them by violence.

Below, the sound of the wind among the dead trees sounded like weeping voices, and the woman, gazing into the darker shadows of land and sky and sea, thought she perceived legions of dreadful figures and forms of monstrous shapes. To her came the horror of the central cavern where lay the Heart of the World as she watched them where weirdly they swayed and amalgamated, floating high above the Earth, their eyes, as saurians, filmy and vague, seeming to gaze towards her.

Then the moon shone out, and as in a dread vision the forms changed into clouds, through which the scenery below showed as through a veil. The walls and towers and pylons of the palace sprang like unearthly monuments from the darkness, and all the vast architecture of the matchless city was visible in distance-fading array, wondrous and enormous. A sound smote the quick ear of Azta, and looking, she perceived a large dark creature of hideous shape drag itself above the edge of the roof and advance towards her, the attenuated limbs scarce able to support its gross trunk. Exaggerated by the light to large dimensions, it gasped loudly with a whining cry, and scarce had it attained the roof than it appeared to give birth to an offspring with a difficulty whose consummation was apparently fatal.

Azta, disgusted, retreated to the farthest edge, watching with straining eyes the new creation, which, endowed with great vigour, rose up, and, growing visibly, displayed a monstrous form of indistinguishable hideousness. The woman gazed upon this terrific creature with a horrible curiosity, unable to define aught, and marking with disgust the hog-like yet half human gruntings,

while she now perceived the mother to be a large hound. But what the offspring was she could not see, and but entertained horrified suspicions of it, shuddering as the abortion stretched itself out with a hideous yell as though racked with pain, and then fell furiously upon the prostrate parent, biting and clawing at it and finally devouring it.

Azta hid her face in horror and nausea, and the beast reared itself up and stood upon two legs, tearing at the bloody remains hanging from its jaws with claw-like hands. A great light caused her to look up, and she perceived a form of fire descend swiftly upon the lightning. From its outstretched hand flew a bolt that fell upon the dark horror, consuming it with a crackling sound until only a heap of ashes lay in its place.

So bright was the splendid figure and so wondrous in its world of heavenly light, that, all the city perceiving it, the revels ceased in terror. Beneath its feet a cloud of intense blackness rolled, and its countenance was awful in stern majesty and displeasure, as with far-reaching arms spread abroad beneath two winged canopies of light illumining the sky even to the highest clouds, it hurled the swift lightnings from either hand, while crash on crash of thunder rolling from the depths shook the Earth to its deep foundations.

A flash of light flew towards where Azta stood, consuming her garments in a breath, so that she stood out before the eyes of Heaven and of Earth naked but for the robe of glory that wrapped her perfect form in brilliant light. Thus she stood, in plain view of the amazed crowds, flawless and perfect, her hands crossed over her bosom in mute terror. And then a swift stroke blasted the ornament which upheld her massy hair, and with the shadowy fall of the tresses the light vanished and black night brooded in horror above the city.

CAP. VI.

THE WAR OF THE SPIRIT.

INVISIBLE, I looked upon the Earth, rolling in far spaces; surveying the shadow world from the hot womb of the tropics to where the illuminate electricity floated in wavy bands above the poles and the mystic axis. α I looked upon Atlantis, a torment of thought in my mind, as I felt the fever of unanswerable riddles, and suffering that could not be analyzed; the bitterness of self-inflicted torture and a terrible yearning for what could never be. Alone, in the Infinite, came to me sensations more than visions, of depths of shadow through which neither eye nor thought could pierce, and over all a dread feeling of remorse and hatred, and the ever-present embittering knowledge that although I suffered through my own fault yet also someone else had done it to me. Allured by the Earth and impregnated with its knowledge, pleasing yet dreadful to my clear perceptions, I rolled in the meshes that encompassed me about, yet would not cast them away.

What joy the glories of the stars and deeps of ether when torture preyed upon the sleepless, deathless spirit! The spirit destined to live for ever as its own bitter punishment, ever

α The "aurora polaris" or "northern lights" are a manifestation of quiet electrical discharges round either pole, attaining its greatest brilliancy and frequency near the magnetic poles, which are at some distance from the true geographical poles.

It is believed that the aurora is a sheet of rays which converge downwards towards the magnetic axis of the Earth, a kind of luminous collar, the top of whose arch is as much as 130 miles above the Earth, though parts of it are believed to be quite near the Earth. It is therefore an electrical discharge taking place in highly rarified air or vacuum. The aurora is certainly closely connected with the magnetic condition of the Earth and also of the Sun. When any great sun-spots appear on the latter orb, the magnetic balance of the Earth is affected, as shown by the irregular movements of the magnetic needles and the simultaneous appearance of aurora at both poles. D. Archibald, M.A., R.M.S. Lond.

craving and never satisfied! The more the thoughts strove the more lost in inextricable problems they were, until the soul writhed in flame of agony that wrapped it in their fevered horror—the unquenchable fire of Hell.

I considered the state of the fallen Ones and compared my ambition with theirs, I thought of them and of their conversation aforesaid, the pondering upon those shadowy vague ideas of some grand scheme whose glimmering beauties they thought they could perceive, and the power to execute which they believed themselves to possess: some grandeur that would have failed in detail and have collapsed of its unsupported vastness like a bubble of air. Now I perceived that splendour of detail, atom on atom perfectly formed, was necessary to greatness of structure and stability of immensity, the wonder of the infinitely tiny as of the infinitely great.

Had I offended as they? I cried in my heart, No! yet I thought that perchance I unhappily had done so. Notwithstanding, a consciousness of reproachful emotions swept through my heart that could scarce be expressed even in thought. Why, in the ordering of things, was sin possible? How could it be that pure immortal beings like myself could sin? What was that wondrous instinct of Heaven, inherent by it of Earth, (the Life that was Love, the Love that was Life,) the instinct of Amalgamation that was pure and holy and could yet be sin? The meeting of extremes either of awful reverence or of an abomination of blasphemy? What was that tiny step that was an indescribable sensation dividing good from evil?

Slipping into space I surveyed the Earth, perceiving there the Unity which was strength exhibited in mortal and tangible shape that lifted its thoughtless head among the mighty wonders of the Universe; and saw an instinct, like mine and my compeer's disastrous one, that aspired not so much for perpetuation of identity and addition of strength as the wish to perform something new, a great thing of marvel, good or evil, to cause wondering of the soul; unheeding that in holiness union strengthens, while in evil it weakens. Therefore in their amalgamation was there sin, which was the sin of disobedience to the command that no farther enquiry than was permitted should

be made into things, lest, knowing more, curiosity should lead on, unsatisfied, and if unchecked know no bounds to its enquiries; and perceiving incomprehensible marvels retreat in panic and ruin, not comprehending, yet unable to forget what it had seen. Those fallen Ones by amalgamation sought to oppose a vast mind to the Creator, but they knew not of some tiny detail whose omission caused the whole fabric to fall, neither had they the courage of their daring convictions, being seized of a fatal doubt.

O Azta, why did I so love thee? What was that feeling that bound my soul to thee, and what was it to me that thou wert female; I, a spirit? Save that through our sin came one who completed the ruin of Earth. I could not solve the wonder of it and my soul burned with fire; the dulness of Earth, clogging the delicate perceptions, making me but see the bitterness of the moment, as a mortal man sees.

And then by me stood One looking with contempt upon my wringing of hands and groaning of spirit, upon whose portentous brows sat the old wisdom of the ages; appalling in majesty, sublime in grandeur.

"For why this softness, thou proud one?" he asked.

A tumult of feelings surged over me at the mocking question, which also said, "I am now thy equal and thou canst but answer me in such wise"; and in bitter irony I made reply:

"Could I but answer thee, thy riddle would be solved."

"Thou shalt never solve the riddle," answered the mighty Angel firmly; "in the ordering of Life there is no softness nor pity, else would all be confusion. The march of Progress must go on unflinching and unheeding, nor grieve that weakness fall in groans and anguish to form a bridge over which the strong ones of evolution pass to its continuance. Thus triumphed the Lord of Heaven over our confederate minds containing certain elements of a fatal weakness. Had all been as I, all had been well." And sternly he cast about his crystal orbs, whose vivid glances were as the lightnings; vaunting before the worlds his dire intent.

"Perchance thou art right," I answered sullenly, envying the pitiless beauty of my companion, the ascetic purity and inflexible will that had made Heaven tremble; the purity that

was as that of the iceberg, cold, hard, unheeding yet beautiful. I marvelled at the daring ambition that had made the name of Satan so dire a terror and a menace, and the control of all emotions that rendered him almost a rival to the Creator.

"Yet," I said, thinking upon this wonder of a created being having been so created with danger therein, "thou wast formed as thou art and I was formed as I am. How can such sin, being created holy?"

"We sinned not but by the sin of failure, my Asia," answered the Prince, looking fixedly upon me.

"But had we not failed," I pursued, "what then, great Satan? Still must there have been things to cause pity and sorrow; in our triumph would have been the defeat of another, and sorrow to us over the sorrow that it caused."

"It is the voice of our failure that speaks, O Asia!" cried the Archangel: "what is sorrow and pain to the attainment of Perfection? It but helps the consummation, and should not hinder its march."

"Yet how can there be aught but happiness proceed from the Omnipotent?" I asked desperately, knowing, notwithstanding, that sorrow was created and that this one must perforce defend such creation. "It fears me that Life holds such contradictions that none could reconcile but Him who rules the worlds, and a misjudged atom would cause the downfall of a vast fabric."

"Sorrow strengthens and opens up yet more boundless realms of thought," answered Satan, "and to those whose wisdom is greater than thine are no contradictions in Life's ordering. But concerning the cause of sorrow, thou canst not fathom it; for behold, thou thyself wert sent in all compliance to do good, but in thyself thou hast sinned. Look upon the Earth and tell me for what are its mortal beings created? Thou canst not."

I looked upon Mankind. I saw its children, born in sorrow, sinless save but by the sins of others, yet eagerly embracing frowardness as soon as the dreadful human nature overcame the spiritual.

"Are they not but mortal?" he pursued; "and thou hast given thy love to one of such. Yield it up! In the contemplation of a mortal is vexation, disappointment, and sadness,

but in the pursuit of great works is increasing joy and pride. Recall thine unrequited love and take thou peace of mind."

"That will I never do!" I cried in agony and direful wrath. "Get thee hence, O Prince, nor seek to rob me of that drop of water that cools the tongue of Hell, and, given up, would leave me stranded and desperately evil beneath thy governance. I tell thee it shall yet be well! and when the mortal atoms return again to whence they came my Love shall see how I have loved, and perchance in happier times we shall meet again before the Throne of Heaven and be forgiven the sin for my love's sake."

And ah! the glance that fell upon my spirit, as those eyes that had looked upon the face of God swept upon me with the cold fury of a wrath which would have blasted a lesser being. From his thigh flashed forth the desolating sword, falling amain upon me through the firmament, and rising in storms his rolling crest lowered above his buckler seven-fold and vast. But front to front in elemental war my unslung shield parried the thundering death, and rising high in the might of Heaven, though sadly dimmed, I cast upon the dread Prince the hissing horrors of my spear α to which the tallest tree of Earth was but as a splint of wood to itself.

Through Heaven resounded the dreadful fall, as with shield and breast-plate scarce hindering the bolt the might of Satan was lowered in reverberating overthrow. Yet rising in bristling dread and horror, he dashed upon me the circumference of the infernal buckler in thunder, whereof the sound filled all space with uproar, and from afar the lightnings hung upon his flashing sword that sought to bury me beneath its name of Havoc, as in gathering tempests it wheeled upon me.

With rage o'ercoming fear flew forth my brand, and meeting the falling ruin in mid air the flaming sparks of light burst like a torrent of fire in the midst of the universe. The tower-

α The description of this favorite weapon resembles that of Holy Scripture, where we hear of four sorts of spears. *Chanith*, a spear of the largest size, held in the hand, and carried by Goliath and great warriors such as King Saul, capable of inflicting a fatal wound even with the butt-end (2 Sam. ii 23): *Cidon*, or javelin, carried upon the back when not in action: *Romach*, a sort of lance: and *Shelach*, a dart.

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ing god rising high so that his impious crest touched Heaven,
bore hard upon me. and buckler to buckler we stood with



THE COLD FURY OF A WRATH WHICH WOULD HAVE BLASTED.

stubborn knees advanced, striving by might to obtain the
other's downfall. Bearing the one upon the other in vast con-

vulsions we swayed, essaying by force of limb to gain the awful mastery, scattering the storms before our heaving breasts as we wrestled in level strife. As two great serpents fighting for mastery, full of fatal venom, so we entwined, watching the fortuitous moment for striking; when to me came the sudden knowledge that only my purity of intent, though so mistaken, permitted me thus to so formidably war, and I staggered beneath the thought. Then with a vast shout the Prince upreared his shadowy buckler, thinking to crush me beneath its torrential weight. Which nathless he had done but that I had seized his uncovered portion and cast him with dreadful violence upon his crest so that his arms rang out upon the plain and lay prone in dire disorder.

Nor words can tell the rage that now filled the bosom of the fallen god! He roared, so that his roaring shook the skies, and, as world rushing upon world from its forsaken orbit, he bore full upon me. With foot advanced I stayed his onslaught, yet but for a space, and then, tottering beneath his might, I fell in my turn with crashing ruin, so that one half of the stars were hidden for a while. But rising with renewed force, I stood against him, marvelling that so I was enabled; and in furious seizure we wrestled, now heaving up, now sinking, rolling in panting fury and wavering mastery, now upon a knee casting thunders afar, now locked in horrid expectancy.

And the noise of our strife shook Heaven, so that He whom men call Michael, Captain of the hosts of God, came upon us who warred so furiously and bade us cease, having with him a shining guard. And looking up, the courts of Heaven opened before me, the flaming galleries which rested upon space stretching in their awful glory beyond vision, court beyond court, tower above tower, brightness upon brightness. The walls of amethyst and crystal lay down the slopes of ether to the far pylons radiant with heavenly hosts, and the steps of light swept as a bright vision up under the golden shade of columns whose feet rested on Eternity, supporting the shadowy domes of the celestial abodes of which none can adequately tell. Beyond idea or remembrance lay the streets of light, and glory upon glory rolled in magnificence beyond all thought to imagine.

Above the reach of Angel's visions rose that dream of bewildering loveliness where flames sprang into form and shape and were reflected in wonder in seas and lakes of translucent ether, rolling in their calm beauty to still more beautiful horizons and undreamed-of pleasures. A Life, One, yet separable into tiniest atoms, was the whole of thought, of sensation and of vision; and a glory of the knowledge of it, filling all hope and desire with enraptured ecstasy that could rise for ever and never reach a limit. And therein dwelt the Glory of the Universe, the Lord of Mysteries, of the Name which cannot be uttered, the Splendour of Eternity; before Whom countless worlds ministered, and flaming Spirits, winged with all knowledge, bowed in adoration. And there, before the awful purity of my adored Creator and the sweet pity of ineffable love, I bowed in shame, and burning shame, and my heart melted before the Glory that once it was my dearest pleasure to contemplate.

And there was silence in Heaven. Through all the vast expanses not a sound ruffled the awful stillness that lowered before the frown of God. But one long look of longing rage my erstwhile opponent cast upon that bright vision, and then with routed arms fled as a dark thought flies before the smile of joy. But I, abashed and irresolute, stayed in my place before the Presence of Him who cannot be named, the Spirit of the Heart of Flame, nor dared to raise my eyes to the Holiness; for the shadow of my blighted love lay upon my soul in black despair, and within my memory, graven in letters of fire as a punishment to me and a condemnation of myself, were the words—the words spoken by her at that first meeting—"I came not to thee."

Reproach and shame swept over my soul, and my eyes closed with torment. A sweat which was as of burning drops of fire rolled from me to stand thus before the eye of Heaven, and though my heart cried: "I dare to confront Thee though Thou blast me, purified by the suffering that I undergo, and spurning immortality that is full of horror," nevertheless I said it not, neither could I speak there.

And certain enquiries were made concerning me, and the voice of WAEF, the accuser, said, "This is Asia;" and I waited in terror to hear more.

THE WAR OF THE SPIRIT.

And a voice, more sweet than the music of countless harps, said:
"And thou also, Beloved?"

Whereat my soul fainted with sorrow, and I wept with unutterable sadness that I had so grieved the Heart of Love: upon my knees doing homage to the Throne.



YET WOULD I NOT RELINQUISH MY LOVE.

And again the voice spake, filling all space with song, and falling with thrilling mournfulness upon my respectful ear.

Yet ill would it become me to speak of the communications of Spirits; for those things which are rather expressed in silence of subtle understanding which is neither of the human heart or brain, it is not decent to frame in speech.

And how canst thou comprehend God, O man! Thou who

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doth not know nor understand thy fellow-man, which is manifested in human form before thee?

Thus in silence I stood to plead for my Love and excuse myself with bowed head and downcast eyes before Mercy and Comprehension. No words would have excused as that mute eloquence, no impassioned gestures have pleaded as that bowed head; yet I argued an impossibility; and in the midst of that Heaven, my home, I remembered my love to that mortal being and would not relinquish it.

Consumed in flames that purified and purged all evil, the spirit writhed with moaning anguish in deathless and hopeless torment, with quivering lips that disdained to cry for palliation for self. With a heart throbbing with tortures, and desperate hands wrung in despair, I lay before the face of Heaven and cursed all things with a hatred that fed on itself, blinded, delirious and suffering, tossing in fevered horror with dry lips that cried, and cried in agony, in their unconscious woe, for a little mercy, a little palliation, as the awfulness deadened the pride at length.

Yet would I not relinquish my Love.

CAP. VII.

THE LEAVEN OF SIN.

IN Earthly solitudes I wandered inconsolable, always not very far from Zul; and sitting down one night, I buried my head within my arms and thought. Sure here all was fair, yet there hung a menace in the atmosphere as amid tumultuous clouds behind a veil of lava-dust the sun set red, and raising my countenance I gazed upon the scene.

It was tinted with crimson, as though the wantonly-shed blood of Man lay there upon it, and among the thick growth of dead flowers and ferns and stately trees crowding in their luxuriant array yet brown and pinched by the cold winds, rose tall broken columns and piles of scattered masonry, thrown thus by earthquakes and the hand of Man. There were bones and skeletons and all the wreck of households from which rose in shattered fragments those dreadful idols that were ever apparent.

Presently the moon arose, a vast angry globe of light among the massy clouds; and moving through trees and dead palms that once shaded the ruined courts with grateful coolness, I presently arrived upon a river, edged by graceful willows and whispering rushes, whose waters the rocks and masonry fretted into silver, where fish leaped and enormous saurians breathed with their nostrils just above water—their long, slimy bodies lying on submerged wreckage.

Upon the farther bank two tall figures sat upon pedestals, as brooding over the scene, which was soothing to my spirit lying in ruins like those buried steps and temples. In quiet majesty they sat above their dead, unhurt by the ruin that had spread over the hither city, and there was no man to disturb them; but their heads were the heads of eagles which lifted themselves

to Heaven, and there was in their expression that gazing beyond the Earth which all of the statues had.

Flitting shadows began to move about frequently, caused by beasts of prey which searched among the ruins for food and at times uttered hideous cries, and bats of large wing flitting with gleaming eyes like coals of fire. Serpents crawled over the blocks of masonry and piles of bones, anacondas dragging their yellow length of columnar body from buried vaults and damp courts hidden beneath withered vegetable luxuriance, where also rats and vermin lived in myriads, and upon branches of trees and tall cross-beams sat rows of roosting vultures.

Thus lay Chuza. And crowning her high places stood the shadowy figure of a very large lion, motionless and terrific, watching a moving shape that hovered among the shadows and paused among a row of columns that marked the outer court of the temple dedicated aforesaid to the river-god Nop. In a little while I perceived, despite the grotesque outlines of furry ears and swinging claw-fringed flaps, the splendid carriage and presence of the masterpiece of God: Man. It was Ham, the son of Noah.

Without any signs of fear the monarchs of men and beasts gazed the one upon the other, and then the lion turned slowly away and disappeared among the tangle of bush, fern and ruins.

A mass of clouds, tinged with the red of volcanic furies, were creeping up over the moon. Because of Chuza lying in a valley the farther mountains could not be perceived, but the fires threw their weird light on the high clouds, reflected afar, and the Earth took a certain crimson tint by reason of them. The tall warrior, holding a spear, came forth and stood upon a crumble of steps from which he looked long over the shadows as though expectant of something, surveying with close scrutiny every point. A long shadow flowed over the heaps from behind him as he thus stood, and he looked round swiftly to learn the reason of it, fearing the attack of some beast of prey.

It was a woman who approached, of tall stature and majestic carriage, with flashing ornaments and costly robes of civilization.

"The moon has passed," she said chidingly, pointing to the orb of bright light.

Ham laughed with ironical humour. "'Tis a new thing for the Lady Emarna to reprove her faithful lover!" he cried gaily, tossing back the skull-covering from his massy curls, his large brilliant eyes rolling as the light of the moon flashed on their whites, and his arm revealing all its mighty muscles by the action.

"Would that I could say 'tis a new thing for the lord Ham to forget his tryst," she answered a little sadly, shivering with cold.

"Peace, woman!" he cried, seizing her and pressing her to his bosom and kissing roughly her full lips so that his teeth clashed against the jewels in her own and she cried for mercy. "Art satisfied? What would the old ones say, and Ru?"

Emarna frowned at the mention of his wife's name. "Nought matters to thee," she said, annoyed.

Ham laughed, yet somewhat crestfallen. "And thou hast come alone to see me, how I have fallen from a lord of Zul to the follower of a mad old man? Though of a truth," he said more solemnly, "there is a method in the madness of the old one, my father."

"I have come alone to see thee because of the love I bear thee," answered Emarna, "and in my heart is a great fear by reason of many things."

"Hast seen aught of signs in the heavens, and wonders?" enquired the swarth giant, with a certain fear in his voice.

The woman glanced up in apprehension at the masses of clouds that were lowering about the moon. "There have been days of terror in Zul, and the face of the Sun is hidden; by reason of which the altars of all the temples run with the blood of endless sacrifices, yet the cold wind breathes with the whisper of doom, and the flocks and herds are perishing so that there is but little to eat. Even Huitza is moved and Azta is distressed, and there are those who would fain lay hands upon Noah and you, his sons, because of a rumour that 'tis Susi who caused these things on account of a foolish act of Huitza."

"Let Huitza beware!" cried Ham: "let the shade of Maxo the Archer whisper in the ear of the foolish one." For Maxo had secretly disappeared when the army marched upon Zul

and lay inactive upon the banks of the Hilen, being slain by Ham for an insult.

"Nay, he did her nought of harm," said Emarna; "the gods delivered her and have never ceased to trouble the people. Principally have I come to warn thee of the wrath of Huitza. Yet did not the old Noah say he was not Huitza as all believe?"

The giant laughed grimly, shaking his spear in the air.

"He is not Huitza!" he cried. "Spawn of a Devil is he, begotten of Azta, and nourished up among us to this end of evil!" He laughed wildly, not guessing how near the truth he was; and seizing Emarna rudely, tossed her up as though she had been an infant, dandling her in his arms, while the whites of his eyes and his teeth gleamed in his dark face shaded by black masses of hair.

"Thus would I serve thy warriors, soft mistress!" he cried, "but I should not catch them. Nay, by the truth of God! I would cast them down in such wise that they would not want to rise again."

Emarna was frightened by his mood, but presently he placed her down and demanded to be told more of what transpired in Zul, enquiring after many of the queens and how they fared. Yet there was not much to be told that he did not know, save that there was a great uneasiness beginning to be felt at the mortality among the herds and the lack of game animals, which the hunters said were emigrating to the west for some unknown reason.

The clouds covered the moon and the pair entered one of the deserted mansions lying in ruins, a broken battering-engine stretching with swinging thongs, like a limbless misshapen monster, across the debris. The warrior spread his bear-skin mantle upon the mossy flooring and they reclined upon it, after assuring themselves that no animals were there in hiding. And now the man assumed a more lover-like attitude which pleased the queen better, modulating his loud rude voice to melodious speech; and vowing he loved her above all other women, promised to do whatsoever she might ask of him.

With soft caresses she listened, charming his senses by her beauty and compliance and enwrapping his moral nature as a

serpent, reversing their physical strength with the subtle tact of a woman, and while ministering to his pleasures enslaving his regards. No thought of sin restrained the dark chief, no warning through the woes of others; in enjoyment of the moment he disregarded the teachings of his sire, esteeming himself sufficiently dutiful to have left the capital and his high honours at his command, neither having indulged in its pleasures as deeply as he might have done. Perchance the memory of Ru, his faithful spouse and mother of his children, at times crossed his mind trained in the ways of righteousness, but did not check the enjoyment of Emarna's wanton caresses nor interfere with her subtle conquest. Well was it for him that unsullied lips presented his name before the Throne of God, and faithful hearts, believing him as sinless as themselves, trusted in Heaven to preserve all their little family.

Emarna made her request, which was that she might follow her lord whithersoever he might go: and the warrior joyfully acceded to it, being in soft mood. These mortals heard not the warning note in the chirrup of beetles among the ruins, nor did the voice of the frogs perched upon half-submerged masses by the river sound in other than its accustomed wont. The lion, afar, shook the atmosphere with the deep thunder of his roar, but the hunter slept with his mistress in his arms, snoring loudly.

And upon them I cast dreams and visions, and behold it appeared to the warrior that in Zul he entered the Hall of the Throne of Atlantis and prepared to climb to the seat. But there sat a figure with hand outstretched against him, and the face was that of the Accuser. A feeling of anger sprang up within his heart at the opposition, and then he perceived that from every brazier sprang up a winged figure and each one with opposing hand bade him desist from his attempt to mount the central steps, while WAEF spake thus:

“Thou hast sinned and sin yet: begone and beware!”

And then came thick darkness through which arose the sound of flowing waves, and a wind, cold and spray-laden, swept upon him. Upon an ocean the dawn arose, and on a rock he stood alone in the midst of the waters.

And then a feeling of terror came upon my own soul as I perceived my power of weaving the dream to pass from me. Yet I perceived how that a voice arose from the waves to his ears and also to my heart. It was soft and sweet and unutterably sad, as only perception of the soul aiding the ear could make it.

"O Love," it seemed to say, "all is dead, but love remains. And thou must go and forget, and love must stay and remember, for ever and for ever. Yet if haply my voice shall speak from the old days to thy soul, think not hardly of thy Love, for punishment shall wipe out the sin and purge the crime. Go, while I have the strength of mind to bid thee go! And beware!"

The voice came from the waves, yet nought was visible. Amazed, the man looked around. "How can I go?" he said.

Then before him swam the Mexiah, as a saviour upon the face of the waters; and, as awaking, he perceived the Sun to rise over a snowy land of forests and mountains, in the midst of heavy storm-clouds, wakening also the world with its life and tinting beauteously the high points. Soon the lower lands would catch the glow and all would be bright. The warrior rose up upon his elbow and shivered by reason of many things, looking to where Emarna slept, her brown bosom rising and falling regularly under her breathing. His heart being tender with love for her, he stooped and kissed her lips, sensuously beautiful and full in their soft curves, and smiling in her sleep she exposed her gemmy teeth. Yet even as she smiled a sob arose in her throat, and opening her eyes which were very large and brown, she sought for her lord where he leaned upon his elbow regarding her curiously, and much tossed in his mind concerning her.

"I have dreamed a strange dream," she said, turning and leaning upon her elbows while the shadows of sleep lay within her eyes. "I am disturbed because of it, my Love, for in a vision I saw thee so tall and beautiful, and one came between us and bade me depart and leave thee."

Her voice rang deep with anguish and her bosom heaved. She fell upon her side, clasping her breast, the tears gathering in her eyes and sobs choking her voice.

“How can I go, and forget my Love?” she cried; “what when the darkness of night shall come and I shall stretch abroad my hands to find him and he is not there! Cannot thy God by my God, and may I not follow thee? How can the world live without the Sun, and how can the desolate heart live without the love that bade it rise and look upon life?”

She turned to Ham, where he sat frowning and plucking at the fur of the mantle. “Thou art here now, my heart,” she whispered, pitifully touching his garment, “but what when thou art gone? Wilt thou remember Emarna and of how she left all to follow thee? How she cherished thee on her bosom and braided thy hair? Wilt thou think, when thou meetest thy espoused wife, of another who loves thee more, and will die when thou art gone?”

The man groaned and sank his head. “Thou dost not understand; thou wilt be happier in Zul,” he said.

“I cannot return thither,” she said in a despairing whisper; and then as the knowledge of his feelings came to her sad heart she fell in a sudden swoon and lay as one dead.

For thus is love, that knows that no return can be forced, and dies at the thought of its self-raised horrors.

The warrior arose and looked upon her pityingly. He lifted his spear and turned away, slowly moving forth into the light of the day and disappearing with but one backward glance over the frosty ruins.

And I wept that such sad woe should be able to be caused by so worthless an object.

C A P. VIII.

THE ANSWER TO THE CHALLENGE.

HOW changed now was that Zul from when I first beheld her greatness! The bright days had changed to gloom and terror, the starry nights to dark periods of cold and horror and dreadful manifestations, where meteors flew through lurid clouds, with loud explosions. Her palmy courts were covered in debris and ashes, and her pleasant fountains ceased to sound their music upon the air: the roses and the water-lilies were dead. In ruin lay her palaces and temples, and fallen were statues and columns and shady colonnades, burying many in suffocating death.

Everything appeared to have been broken up and a dread period of alteration to be impending, wherein lives of terror ended in violent death, nor were there any more services to any gods. Water from broken cisterns ran down the terraces and lay in every hollow, hidden under floating coverlets of black dust covering the putrefying bodies of men and animals. Many layed violent hands upon themselves to escape the fear of unknown terrors, a frenzy occasionally shaking the populace and a depth of despair as all means of atonement failed. There was a terrible scarcity of food, and half-starved creatures, naked and wet, gazed with listless foolishness upon the ruins around or fought for scraps of offal; and in the black pools starving children waged war with dogs and vultures for the carrion remains. Some killed and ate the beasts themselves, and the more abandoned kidnapped children and devoured them. Even now were there reckless ones who took advantage of the terrors to their own advance, entering mansions and palaces, stealing riches and abducting women whom they afterwards murdered, and, sitting upon piles of ruins, cast the dice for division of spoils.

Couldst thou have but seen this thy night of desolation, O Last-created Man! The darkness that overpoured in horror, the famine and the earthquakes, the wreck of proud buildings reaching to Heaven! The domestic animals had all perished of divers diseases, and the hunters of meat, not finding more than was sufficient for their own needs, did but lessen the small supply; and the fruitful sea now swarmed with sharks and terrible monsters, so that the warships had to become fishing boats after many deaths and disasters in the small vessels. For even a large raft had been capsized and its crew dragged down by a beast with arms like serpents, so that the fishers on the large warships were uneasy, nor made any great catches, while to increase their fears a most supernatural monster was reputed to be frequently seen in the deep waters off Astra. At times it basked on the surface of the waves, and anon it dived beneath them with a storm of waters round it, and leaving an eddy that would sink the *Tacoatlanta*. In shallow water by *Zul* it stranded, and awe-struck crowds watched it making vast efforts to regain the deeps, noting its shape which was equally saurian, cetacean and serpent.

The ships remained in the harbour, moored to the waterway, none daring to venture out. No fish save sharks could be obtained, and many people driven by hunger to forsake their congregations, wandered over the land in search of food, and because of its scarcity and their inexperience in its obtainment, perished. And beasts of prey and such as fed upon flesh came to devour them; and now within sight of the erstwhile proud walls ran lions and hyænas and a great number of wolves.

The people, terrified at their own fearful blasphemies and deeds that, aspiring to Heaven, were now confronted by Heavenly weapons, degraded, enfeebled and even shocked, were silent and full of despair. They were but human after all, and famine, disease and enfeebled constitutions carried them off to regions that they had been trained to believe were governed by a cow, or a serpent, or some horrible malformation, inspiring incredulity as to possibility and a chaos of feelings as they found they really believed in nothing.

Another earthquake came, destroying the southern fortifi-

cations and burying many people under falling masses and in opening chasms. Azta, from the palace, saw the mansions and temples heave, separate, and fall crashing in a thunder of noise, enveloped in clouds of smoke and dust, and although her heart beat wildly, yet it was with a curious feeling of carelessness that she heard the loud explosions and crashes and the whirlwind of shrieks and cries. A wave of water leaped from the earth, scattering the smoky clouds and impregnated with their atoms, to fall with a swish and roar, rebounding in resistless waves in all directions. The earth rocked, and the advancing upheaval passed between the palace and the higher terrace on which the crowning temple stood.

The Queen leaned against a statue, and, gazing with dilating eyes upon the approaching terror, perceived the ground open horribly with a rending sound, and felt with a creeping of the skin a suction of air as a draughty rush of atmosphere followed the opening of the chasm. She saw, with a whirl of giddiness, the vast mass of the temple shaken as by a mighty hand, and a wind-blown echo of a shriek was borne to her ears on a violent gust that sent her hair and garments streaming out and the fire from the tottering tower flying in showers, leaving but one small brand waving in the sudden tempest, extinguished but to leap up again.

Toltiah strode forth on to the terrace, followed hastily by several favorites and ladies, while from every opening streamed forth terrified menials. The Tzan cast a startled glance at the great chasm, gazing on the temple that leaned horribly towards them from a reversing convulsion of the earth. As he perceived the one little flame a frightful sneer overspread his features, and, turning, he placed the heel of his sandal upon a smoking brand that had fallen from the tower, scattering the dust disdainfully in the face of the Heavens with a loud and scornful laugh.

A beautiful black-eyed boy clung to his arm and endeavoured to restrain him. His face of deadly whiteness ashen to the lips made his great frightened eyes stand forth the more conspicuously, and the masses of ebon hair framing his face appeared oppressive in their heavy contrast.

Azta's fiery glance flitted over the boy and rested with a piercing look upon Toltiah.

"Fool!" she said, in a deep, terrible voice; and the chief turned, and dragging after him the black-haired boy, re-entered the palace.

And Amaziel the high Priest was in the temple before the earthquake shook it, with him being also that Mah, who, in the person of a slave-dealer, had wrought much confusion with his women by leading astray the minds of the men through them.

They spake together slowly and in fear because of the approaching horrors, not knowing yet what form they would take or what should happen to themselves. For having taken on so substantially an Earthly form, each was in a measure greater or less bound to the Earth and subject to what should befall it, which was a great fear to them.

"Too far have we provoked Heaven," said Amaziel, which was Leira; "and now comes crushing defeat that shall sweep us for ever from the Earth. For now is the time accomplished, and now enter the Worlds of fate upon the final revolution of doom, and for a space is a dread crisis hovering over all life, the which shall go hard with us. In the revolutions of Uranus our doom is written, and in the Heavens is hung the Balance."

And Mah, which was also Pholia, a Spirit of small power in Heaven, was greatly terrified, crying aloud: "Behold, what shall come to me for the evil which I have wrought!" But Leira sneered upon him in scorn.

"O brave to sin," he cried, "whence come these tears? Thou who hast laughed at the woes of others weep now at thine own. Shame upon thee, craven Spirit! Who inflicts should at least be silent at like infliction, nor cower before the Inevitable which cannot be avoided."

And Pholia turned upon him in rage, crying: "Thou art to blame for that thou didst lead me and instruct me in all the ways of evil! And now thou but smilest upon me and utterest platitudes instead of extending aid!"

But Leira answered not. With folded arms he stood gazing upon the walls of the chamber and the mystic courts beyond with a dreadful scorn upon his lips. There was triumph in his

countenance and a certain sorrow, and after standing thus for some while he threw abroad his arms, and with a strange look upon his face turned his gaze upon all around.

“I go,” he said; “fare thee well and hasten thy flight, for now is the time come.”

As with one great stride he reached the central space that led downwards to the mystic Fourth chamber, the earthquake shook the temple. A gust of luminous wind sprang up from the opening, enveloping him, and the fleshly Spirit writhed and would have perchance turned; but Shapes of flame seized him, and he passed down and I saw him no more.

And from that place of echoes rolled up a strange murmur that filled all space with sound as of the humming of countless bees, while the symbols on the sides of the chamber of Leira ran together tumultuously as the walls swayed above the earth movement. The obsidian mirror flew into sparkling fragments and splinters, and upon the brazier a cloud arose in which writhed some horror with life and movement. Dull sounds filled the place, the noise of falling ruins mingling with the faint murmur of a mighty concourse of people, and great puffs of dust and smoke filled the chamber, blown from outer courts, as in that terrific movement fell column and colossi, and bulging floors permitted the walls to fall inward.

And ah, what fearful things were revealed, coming from hidden places, which were the handiwork and experiments of Leira! Misshapen horrors of some unknown life, monstrous births of Devils mouthing in sightless misery as an instinct of doom fell upon them, dusty, mangled, half-crushed and terrified, crying with strange sounds and wriggling in painful movements. The whole building was full of cries and sounds of the earthquake, and Pholia, huge of form and trembling from his wide shoulders to his shaking knees, stood with bursting eyes gazing into infinity. With his fingers he tore his cheeks and shoulders as though to strip away the hateful flesh that he could not control, and, half as in a vision and half in tangible form, writhing upon the floor, strove with great throes to cast from himself the carnal atoms, that he might fly. Dread sight where flesh and spirit fought with hands that forgot their cunning and beat the

THE ANSWER TO THE CHALLENGE.

barrier that lay intangible but potential above the hidden bolts of Life!

In a great light a figure entered, grand and terrible; one of the armed Seraphim, glowing as a rosy flame, having a drawn sword in his hand and a buckler upon his arm. Before whom the writhing Demon leaped up, fleeing upward to the highest



WITH BURSTING EYES GAZING INTO INFINITY.

roof in swift flight, and being smitten there, falling. In sight of the people the carnal figure flashed downwards into space, striking upon the terrace below, which sloped earthwards by reason of the mass being slanted, and bounding off with a spatter of blood clear beyond the building down to the yawning chasm beneath.

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But the Spirit fled, pursued by the Seraph, which had order to bind such; and as a wind-blown wraith before the sword of flame he went, casting over in his hasty mind what he should do. And in dark places among weeds and short trees grew strange plants, into one of which he entered, hoping thus to escape; but the swift pursuer espied by how he entered the plant, and bound him therein until certain revolutions and a cycle of revolutions had passed.

C A P. I X.

THE SCORPION WHIPS OF GOD.

THERE were riots in the city and dreadful scenes, as deserted by the priests (many of which being removed as Pholia), and with none to direct them, the people became as wild beasts, panic-stricken and starving. For all the granaries and all food stores had been seized and reserved for the army and the palace, the mass of the people being commanded to seek their own sustenance. And in the great trouble many in authority enriched themselves by secretly bartering food for much wealth against the times when the trouble should have passed; and the slave-dealers received many beautiful girls who gave themselves up to them in order to be fed and to escape from the cold. But by reason of the famine and all the animals having at last been devoured, it became usual to eat human flesh, notwithstanding that some of the bolder ones preferred to wander without the walls and wage war with the ferocious beasts, feeding their stomachs upon the flesh of lions and wolves. Yet even these disappeared, and in a deserted land the half-ruined city lay beneath a direful canopy of gloom, enfeebled and dying of its own inflicted horrors.

From wantonness mobs sacked the Bazaar and loaded themselves with all manner of ornaments and jewellery, although the merchants had hidden much of their wares in fear of such attacks; but many of them, while covering their shrunken bodies with robes of splendour and adorning their limbs with all that the Earth could produce of flashing gems, sank down and moaned, being seized in the intestines of a vile cramp whereby they gnawed their flesh and all things of leather until such also were gone.

The desolation was dreadful, but the moral condition of the

people was worse; and nothing was left now to fly to for protection from the terrors that devastated the land. All in authority appeared equally helpless, and only once of late had Azta's slung coach passed before their eyes, moving at a swift pace with drawn curtains, its guards not daring now to wantonly interfere with the dreadful creatures who sat stark and starving, glaring upon their full persons with the lust of hungry lions. There was no wine in which their misery could be drowned, and silent groups sat in terror and only shuddered when the earth shook, dying in the fatal cold of the nights.

Their numbers were augmented by discharged domestics and slaves, as the nobles found themselves unwilling to endanger themselves by feeding useless mouths; and these unfortunate people, being fat, and also by reason of remembrance of past arrogance, were killed and eaten. And this hostile feeling was also extended to such of the nobles themselves who were not too powerful, and at times the passage of such was violently obstructed; while a madman attacked furiously the Lord Nezca, only being struck down when he had killed two of the guards.

Having commenced such outrages, the starving populace turned with fury upon their superiors, accusing them of causing their miseries and forgetful of their own evil. Leaders arose among them, principally of those who had been cast forth from great establishments and knew of stores of hidden provender, stirring them up to sack the palaces of the nobles.

Even those at the Red palace became alarmed at the aspect of the people, who also were taught that the gods required the death of the mighty ones of Zul which had grievously sinned against them. In dreadful swarms they surrounded the more isolated mansions and entered them by storm, sacking them and compelling their inmates to disclose where food was hidden; jeering with brutal taunts at the plump beauty of high-born ladies dragged before their dreadful ranks in whom no passion but for food was left. Little fat babies were instantly slaughtered by the ravening multitudes and devoured in their blood, and older children also; but this dreadful food (they being unused to it) brought on diseases and death.

And particularly the indignation of the people burst furiously

upon the slave-dealers, who were of noble rank and great influence; both because they remembered how many of their young girls were abducted by them in past days for the palaces of the great, and because now they must of necessity have good store of food for those they now possessed, notwithstanding that they had cast forth many as others had their servants. Therefore great crowds assailed their establishments, and dragging forth the lords stoned them to death with the ready missiles of the debris. Their splendid apartments were wrecked and the ornaments and valuables scattered broadcast over the mob, while the women were brought forth for blood-shot eyes to glare ferociously upon, and scan with lewd pleasure their rounded and exposed beauties. Upon these unfortunates the women of the crowd hurled vile abuse and pitiless mockeries that were not lessened by the beauty and plump appearance of the tender creatures thus dragged from their luxury and plenty. There was one Temassa, a noted courtesan of the city, who was the most violent of them all and the most atrocious in savage deeds, slashing the faces of the more beautiful of the women with a knife and breaking their teeth, that they were beautiful no more. Heaps of furniture were smashed with axes and clubs, valuable rugs and mantles were torn to pieces in the efforts of individuals to secure them, and the original excuse for the violence was lost in the madness of carrying it out; while the unfortunate beauties, after horrid outrages, were stabbed to the heart, and some were devoured.

And thus the dark days passed and the people scarce kept their lives within them, many dying of diseases, and of wounds received in storming the palaces or fighting among themselves. Thousands lived upon such fish as they were able to obtain, and upon a few birds, upon the bark, leaves and berries of trees, upon grass and leathern things; and indeed their struggle for food stayed at nought (they being weakly human despite their ideas). But the great ones in the Tzan's palace determined to set forth, before they too were seized of the dire famine, and attempt to re-enter that Eden from which their traditions sprung. Long had it been discussed, and now was a most imperative need for it to be undertaken, for the army was a

great drain upon the food supply left for its needful maintenance and of such as were in the palace. Touching which, Nezca:

“Wherefore hesitate ye, lords of Atlantis? Thence ye came, and now what shall prevent your return? Is it not a very desirable land, nor having been, by any known testimony, removed from where it stood; nourishing also the Tree of Life and that dire plant which now might prove acceptable. Nor are the Angel guards to be feared, for we have tested the virtue of such, and methinks great Azta were match for aught that wears the guise of man. Why should ye tarry longer where Famine reigns and unseen Death is lord?”

Discreet messengers were sent to the cities near and far, to bid their governors lead forth all they could save to the north, where under their king, who would also arrive there, they should leave their unfavorable land, desolated by Zul, and retake their old places. For it was necessary that they should go in as strong guise as possible, remembering their brothers and all those families of Adam which they had parted from when they came first to Atlantis, (whose possible arrival Tekthah warned them of,) which might dispute their passage, or might even have taken the land for themselves. Yet this, as I have said, they never did, being destroyed with Atlantis. But in the issue these messengers never arrived at their destinations, nor was any more heard of them.

But the secret preparations becoming known to the populace by some means, aroused in them the greatest fears and rage. Their leaders were about to leave them to starvation and death, and to face alone the mysterious night of terrors; while by removing even the official mediums of the gods thus—the last thing left to them—the chaos of mental nothingness into which they were plunged would be unendurable. Why might not they also go to this pleasant land from which they were sprung, that the superior knowledge of their lords told them of, they said, regretful that such as had aroused the legions of Heaven against them should now depart and leave them to face the heavy judgment; deserted also by those magicians of wicked arts who left their mistresses either dead by unseen means or raving maniacs who declared frightful visions.

Exasperated therefore by such things and perceiving their frail mortality, a vast horde of emaciated people thronged up towards the Red palace, around which was encamped the whole army which was in Zul. Nor was there as yet so great a danger encountered by Toltiah, for the thousands which came up against him were far greater in number than the thousands of the legions, and armed with weapons from the sacked emporiums of the Bazaar, being also desperate warriors and very large in frame and sinew. Their exposed teeth shone amid masses of uncombed beards, and naked arms, shrunk by famine, but still formidable, beat the air with swords, spears and clubs, while the earnest panting of the mute furious crowd betokened how deep were its feelings.

Upon these dirt-grimed arms glittered rings of rare value taken from sacked palaces and emporiums, and grand tiaras crowned by peacock's feathers were secured among the tangled masses of hair of both men and women. Upon some wretches from the battlements and dreadful haunts of the city, whose lineaments would inspire fear by their degraded ferocity, was buckled armour of gleaming gold and silver, and the colours of splendid mantles covered up most of the dirt and shame and misery that marched beneath those myriad weapons. A vast relief was upon all as the delight of the present action overcame the past fears, and the joy of acceptable and pardonable violence filled all hearts, together with the thought of storming the granaries.

How sad it was to see where human passions rose from their foul corruption into which they had fallen in order to rend one another, and near relatives glower in loathing hatred each upon each. The women in the crowd, perceiving among the legions many lovers, shrieked curses upon them, holding forth tiny infants dead of cold and famine and too emaciated to be eaten. The lines of guards gazed in fear upon these appalling enemies, whose fevered eyes glared from huge sockets and who resembled an army of the dead coming up against them in overwhelming vengeance.

Aroused by the murmur of the crowd Toltiah appeared, and at sight of him a great yell of rage went up as the

starving people hurled themselves upon the guards and an instant battle closed furiously with sounds of clanging bucklers and mighty blows. And at first the guards did but fight with small stomach for the fray, because their enemies were brothers and they had great pity for a plight that might soon be their own; but as the weapons bit deeply and the joy of war overcame their fears and delicacy, they smote hard and fast in dread of being overcome.

There fought with Toltiah all the men of note which were in Zul, whose towering crests were known of all, and upon the high terraces and roofs appeared those queens whose fames were upon all tongues, to look with fear upon the near battle. They read in those bright arms and splendid mantles and jewellery the fate of the lower city, and dismay was upon them to perceive the dreadful ravages of a famine that had not as yet touched themselves. The humming of the sling-shot was as the sound of bees where in deadly strife men fought, and limbs, dismembered, flew into the air. Sword-blades, splintered at the point of furious contact with shield or metal harness, hurtled dangerously, transfixing far opponents; while beneath, the stabbing spears and knives of obsidian and copper did their deadly work. Arrows, sent above the battle by both sides, fell among the swaying heads, and long thrilling shrieks of agony arose as they pierced them. The Lord Chanoc, governor of Atala and Lord of Astra, who was sojourning in Zul, hewed his way to the front with an Amazon's axe, where fought Toltiah with Marisa's broad cleaver towering high above the thickest fight. Around them fell many, beaten down by clubs and pierced with spears, and the dead and dying lay like autumn leaves where Nezca fought, his great sword carrying destruction in its sweeping death. Backwards and forwards swayed the dense crowd, too earnest in fight to cry out, but the women screamed shrilly, and such as through weakness fell never rose again, being trampled and smothered.

Around them were masses of ruins and debris, and in the dust of fallen arches and pylons they fought. The low walls that had been around the gardens before the earthquakes were now heaped up above their ruins by heaps of dead bodies, which

also fell among the trees and reddened the fountains with their spouting blood. The red terraces were dotted with bodies where the fight waged thickly, the guards now being driven back by their opponents. Oris, giant warrior, fell over a dead body and pitched his whole length down the steps, falling among the opponents. Ah, luckless chief! Nor was he ever to rise again, for seized of numerous hands the cruel weapons beat his life from him so that his blood ran down the steps and mingled with the rest. And nearly also had Nahuasco died, for, stooping above a foeman, a huge toothed club smote upon his back and he fell groaning; but Toltiah rushed upon his foes, bearing them down by his great size and the strength of his arm, and rescued the old warrior. Many in such manner were smitten down as they stooped to take the rich ornaments from their vanquished opponents; and thus went the fight, the leaders with fiery chivalry pressing forwards far in advance of their comrades, courting capture and wounds, and both giving and receiving dreadful blows. Nezca swung his terrible weapon untiringly, glorying in the rushing blood; but, around him, arms began to tire, and the combatants grunted at every smashing blow, panting and sweating and smiting with both hands upon their weapons.

And because of utter feebleness many men fell down, and many more were seized of agony in their empty intestines so that they groaned, neither were they able to fight any more, lying in cramp upon the ground. And in spite of far smaller numbers the guards prevailed against their famine-stricken opponents, and beneath the dark clouds lay mingled in sad confusion the wrecks of Earth and Man, formed (with but amazing differences in quantities) from the same atoms.

C A P. X.

THE BEAUTY OF HOLINESS.

EVER is there sadness greater or less in all the worlds, for where Love is, dwells also Sorrow; and indeed they cannot be separated, for without care is no love. And among the godly family of Noah was much unrest concerning Ham and his waywardness, and his espoused wife especially was distressed by his absences and coldness towards her. She knew not of the mistress he had deserted in Chuza, leaving her helpless and alone in the midst of such terrors; to her loving heart it was sufficient that he excused his absence for so long to the phenomena of the Heavens. And these were great indeed, nor did Ham mock any more at the rolling thunder-clouds which hung above them like the bellying roofs of a tent and stretched afar to form a meet background for the flaming majesty of the volcanoes, whose fires cast an infernal glow upon the darkness above, whereby all the Earth appeared to be consuming in burning horror. The winds, carrying the ashes and scoriæ afar, laid a pall over the land to cover its fallen ruins and prepare it for what should come; and looking over its dark sorrow Ham wished to have transfixed Emarna's heart with his spear, being haunted by the pleading love of her large brown eyes.

Still in the village sojourned the two strangers, whom gentle manners and speech had caused to become greatly beloved. Which two now ordered to be prepared much food-stuffs for a long period, which were stored up within the Mexiah upon the topmost floor, arousing great curiosity in the minds of all, who received no answer to their questionings save that so it was commanded. There was an abundance of fruit to be obtained, for the forests preserved the central trees and vines safe from

the icy winds that shrivelled the stately palms and ferns which were away from such kindly shelter; and to such haven came herds of animals, indeed every sort of them appeared to flock to the hills; which also was a phenomenon causing no little wonder and uneasiness, as Ham reported the absence of them upon the lower lands. Thus all day were carried in piles of all manner of fruits and vegetables in rush baskets woven by the women, and great cakes of bread prepared with honey; and in earthen vessels of rude manufacture water was stored and sealed up. But of a night, when the black deck cut clear and sharp against the dull red clouds, and the blacker shadow of the door was displayed in the fire-illuminated side, the quiet people marvelled at the structure and the preparations, and thought in awe upon the nameless sins of Zul and those in high places, and the mighty wonders wrought of the towering sons of God. Yet their minds being either pure or simple it came not to them to argue upon the mysteries of generation beyond what was meet and comely, and the dread sins whereby came such future doom being impossible and unsupportable, Man becoming as a vast beast that wrought confusion without power to govern or limit its appalling powers.

Now upon a certain day, (the ship being completed,) Noah built within it a temple wherein to worship fitly the Lord God Jehovah, and made within it an altar, upon which he sacrificed in the presence of all his family and the two strangers. And when they were gathered together it was dark, but there descended upon the altar a soft light that illuminated the place, and a chord of music sounded upon the air. Low, beautiful and wondrous, it seemed to gather from a great distance until in a swelling note of marvel it vibrated all around, and as the harps of the Angels swept by the wings of rosy dawn to the voice of myriad stars it fell upon the ears of the adoring sons of Earth.

A cry of joy broke from Susi, but Ham, sinking his head upon his deep chest, durst not raise his eyes; yet prayed fervently. There was an awful silence, and methought it seemed as though a Hand had been placed upon each bowed head, from which sprang a light of exceeding beauty. Upon the

children's foreheads it shone, lighting their sinless eyes that need as yet not droop even before that beauty of holiness, they turning with fearless inquiry towards the Power of God to see what might befall, nor fearing when from the visible Form of music a voice came.

"Go forth!" it said: "be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the Earth."

It ceased. The bright light faded and a flash of lightning consumed the offerings which were upon the altar; while from great spaces came an echoing chorus, most beautiful and sweet, "Go forth!"

And the two strangers, which had knelt in most holy adoration, arose; "Go forth!" they said; "trust, and all shall be well with you: and hinder nought that shall come. Servants of God, go forth, and fare you well."

And leaping up, as bright comets they arose and were no more; and for a long while the people remained prostrate and marvelling, Ham in his heart confessing his sins and making vows of repentance.

And when all had gone forth and were asleep in the night, Susi sat with Shem by the fire at the door of their tent, holding his hand and watching the glowing clouds. And as they sat they perceived many fiery orbs moving and crossing continually, strange sounds breaking upon their ears with the shuffling of myriads of feet, while the scintillating points increased in number. The man would have arisen and enquired into the cause of it, but Susi restrained him and they sat and watched for what should come.

Into the light of the watch-fires came moving forms, and presently they came nearer so that the watchers perceived them to be animals; nor was their wonder lessened when they observed the number of varieties. From large to small they gathered in a far-stretching circle near to the fire-blaze, crowding together as in deadly fear and whimpering pitifully. Stately deer of great size towered with their antlered glories above hideous baboons and huge apes of various species that looked

with their vivid eyes and gleaming teeth like demon forms; horses snorted by the side of terrified crouching panthers and ferocious aurochs, a cayman pushing its fearful muzzle through a great crowd of rabbits, wild swine, porcupines, tortoises, conies and timid gazelles. A fearful form showed among them, whose tiny eyes, twinkling and evil, and the long horn upon its head bespoke the dreadful unicorn,^α and large tapirs with others like to them—half-mammoth, half-boar—thrust their huge bodies forward. The sweeping tusks of a majestic mastodon shone white in the glare, and long necks swung high in the midst of the moving throng, from which the luminous eyes glared softly. There was no trampling down of weak ones, no disordered rushes; but a vast fear seemed to pervade the mysterious multitude.

There appeared no elucidation of such a perplexing mystery, nor could the man's expanded nostrils discover aught but the animal odours. There was no smoke by which he could read of burning forests, whose abundant herbage should have sufficed the beasts in satisfaction, not yet being withered.

The muffled thunder of a lion's roar vibrated the atmosphere, and as at a signal, and without a sound, they were gone; fox, mastodon, pig, deer, rabbit—all gone. Those lithe forms that would sweep along with the speed of a tempest, those gigantic shapes that would rush with the terrors of an earthquake through the forest, had vanished without a sign, a sound.

The two watchers sat there for long, thinking and wondering. Upon the clouds the manifested fury of the volcanoes was magnificent and awful, and Susi wondered if again that figure hovered above Axatlan in flaming majesty holding the sword of fire.

Thus passed the wondrous night, and next morning a number of the smaller animals were discovered in the Mexiah, having entered by the sloping gangway through the door. Mindful of the words of the Angels they were suffered to remain undisturbed, and were nourished with food, being endeared to the women and children by their tameness, yet causing fear by the know-

^α The Rhinoceros (probably); see note Cap. IV., lib. II.

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ledge that they sought refuge from an impending catastrophe that as yet their superior lords knew not of. Yet these understood that some great thing was to come by reason of the evil of Atlantis and the confusion of Mankind, and all prayed greatly to Heaven and were afraid.

But ah, with what fears I looked upon the altered face of Earth and strove within myself concerning the unknown Future! What were these Mortals to so greatly move Heaven? Beings of initial holiness who afterwards developed into incarnate Evils! Beautiful they were, but mostly used their beauty to the forwarding of evil, and, the more beautiful, so much the more did they sin and were able to sin. Yet who would deem that those little children, guileless and unwilling to do wrong, should take to themselves a talent to go astray and lead others with them? Instructed of Angels, who loved them, they were happy and mighty in innocence, mightier than strong men, and yet in after days they fell and became as the rest.

How I loved those little ones for their joyous fearlessness and for the beauty of their unsullied innocence, and loved to watch them play until the shadows of Earth's weariness gathered in their great eyes, surprised that they must cease to play, but glad to leave even Earth's joys for pleasant sleep; when with their little plump limbs deserted by their spirits, folded softly within their tender mother's arms, they slept that mystic rest they cared not to enquire of in quiet peace until bright dawn kissed them into new life of Earth. Little living forms with souls of Angels, until one day a wonder grows upon them, and an awakening, as the body grows and the germs of Earth grow within them and awaken to life and the voice of their mother Earth.

Fondest of all was I of Huri, a tiny daughter of Susi, and oft would beguile her baby hours with pleasant play, and guide her feet to where the water-lilies grew in shady brooks, where careless of harm she wandered, until the cold came and the little brooks were sealed up and the lilies died. And always did I look in longing for her to come and play and with her baby laughter to drive away the load of sorrow in my heart for a while, as in loving guise I held her little hand, or carried

her within my broad arms where she lay and gazed so strangely upon me as half-divining my nature. And one night I found her alone in that temple within the Mexiah, where in dread contemplation my feet had led me; and as she stood there in the awful shadow of the Holy of Holies, lifting the veil in her little hand, not a doubt clouded her baby face overspread with a joyous smile as she perceived me.

"Come!" she cried, putting out her arms towards me, as a tiny Spirit of Love that would lead to Heaven. But all unbidden the blinding tears arose at her pretty innocence, which might go before the Throne unchidden, whilst I, with the knowledge of the ages, dared now not enter the awful Presence thus.

"Nay, dearest of God's little Loves," I answered, (and at the thought of my words the tears burst forth,) "I cannot come." Were ever words so sad?

Yet she persisted, catching at my hand and pulling with all her tiny strength, pleading tearfully that I would grant what was to her a small request; yet although it tore me to say her nay, I would not. And yet once more in strange persistence she required my obedience, nor would she be refused save by force.

So I went in with her and knelt before the altar that was to me, with all my dimmed perception, the steps of the Throne, trusting in the great purity of her who so importuned, and waited for a sign. But none came of any sort at all; the Spirit was not there while I stayed, offended at my frowardness.

"It is not for me to be here," I cried in sorrow, pressing the little one to my bosom, "but for thee, little beauty of purity, it is meet; for ever thine Angels pray for thee before the Throne of God, and as a very precious thing is thy name cherished in Heaven. Would that I were as thou, my baby!"

And so we went out, and I saw in the night many Spirits descend to the Earth which were to work the appointed Word.

C A P X I.

THE NAVEL OF THE CLOUDS.

AND Emarna from the wilderness raised her heart in supplication that her love might be satisfied by even so much as a sight of her lord. For with such things is love content, asking but little for its share and forgetting in one moment's bliss the misery of past years.

And for a punishment to both that they did love in such fashion it came to pass that Ham, scanning from a high point the surrounding country, perceived her where she stood afar; and yearning after her guiltily (whom he believed to be dead), sped downwards towards where he had seen her.

Swiftly he ran and arrived at the place, she also running to meet him, throwing abroad her arms to embrace him.

"I knew my lord would come again," she cried joyfully. "Upon yonder peak I saw thee poised as a god, and my heart cried out to me that thou wouldst come."

The dark chief seized her, pressing her to his breast and kissing her rapturously. "Thou mistress of my heart," he cried, "would that I had known thee sooner!"

He set her down, and seating himself upon a rock, drew her on to his knee. He laughed and patted her cheeks, kissing her at times and wreathing her compliant arms around his neck; while she, delighted to be so entreated, lay still and suffered it joyfully with half-closed eyes, while above them the dark clouds rolled and spread and the lightning flared on the horizon of fear. Yet it recked not to that twain that the land was black and forbidding, for in each other's presence was all desire satisfied for a time.

"I dreamed that we should be parted, my Love," Emarna said, toying with the warrior's braided hair; "yet, although I

thought my dream fulfilled, have I sought thee long, and behold there is but little to eat."

The man gazed hard upon her, suddenly perceiving in her shrunken appearance the wealth of this woman's love for him.

"And I left thee alone to die," he murmured in self-reproach.

"But thou hast come again," she said, "and in thy love I live."

He kissed her lips passionately, while she clung to him with a fast embrace as though fearing he would go from her as he did before. But the great man dandled her in his arms and swore he would never leave her again though all the Angels demanded it, saying that now he would return to the camp and get her some food. But she forbade him, praying that he would not leave her for a little, because that she had rather gaze into his eyes than feed her body.

Whereupon, nothing loath, he sat with her, laughing and talking in merry humour and pinching her cheeks; but she, filled with sadness and forebodings, would have preferred him to be more serious with her.

"A truce to thy silence, fair mistress," he cried gaily; "yet thou art hungry and an empty stomach makes poor cheer. I will go up yonder and bring to thee plenty of victuals."

"Nay, go not yet. Of a truth am I hungry, but hungry for thy love. My heart is fearful and my soul disturbed because of the signs and wonders in the Heavens, that bespeak no good, O Love of my love, and the heart of a woman speaks in words that come sadly true. It tells me that if thou wentest to obtain aught afar from me we should never meet again. May we not die together, dearest?"

"Die! Who speaks of death?" he cried.

Emarna smiled faintly, yet a terrible fear gathered in her dusky eyes. She opened her mouth and gasped, while a shiver vibrated her from head to foot. Then her eyes dilated as she gathered her forces for what she knew was a test her lover could not stand, and pointed despairingly to where the clouds rolled black as ebon night, as great spheres moving on one another in a vapour of ochreous and purple hues.

"'Tis nought," Ham said, following with his eyes her pointing

finger, yet somewhat dismayed, for the sight was appalling in its gloomy horror.

"Ah, my dear lord!" gasped Emarna, clutching at her throat as though she suffocated; "but perceivest thou not the terrible figure that comes towards us with the naked sword outstretched over the land? His feet touch the earth and the whirlwinds go before him; his awful head is crowned with horror and blackness, and storms arise about his path. O my Love! To flee were vain! Kill me and then thyself, and in one another's arms will we die!"

The chief sat motionless, with great eyes staring at the darkly awful form that swept along the path towards them, swung from the clouds. As the woman had said, a terrific commotion was about it; cyclones eddied around its feet and around it the lightnings, as fiery serpents, played, while afar sounded the roar and shriek of an hundred tempests.

Yet, brave in her despair, the woman kneeled and bared her bosom, pulling aside the mantle that the invited stroke might be sure.

"Strike, my lord!" she cried, lifting the spear and placing the point against her round breast so that the cold bright point was buried in the softness of it. Her lips were white, her eyes desperate and her bosom heaved with wild pantings. "Cause me not to suffer thus!" she cried piteously; "it is cruel, dear Love, and I am but a woman. Be brave, my Love, and strike!"

He lowered his appalled eyes upon her, while the distant sounds grew more distinct.

"It is because of this," he said hoarsely, "and behold I shall die because of thee."

Emarna sprang to her feet with a sharp cry of agony, sobbing wildly.

"That thou shalt never say!" she cried in torment, both hands clasping her breast while she gazed through floods of tears at the crouching chieftain. "Go!" she cried; "Go! while I have the strength to bid thee. Go! There is yet time, and thou art swift and strong! Fly, oh fly, and hasten! It comes!"

The warrior rose up hurriedly, and with a glance of abject terror made a leap towards the higher land—the foot-hills of

the distant mountains. Then he checked himself and ran back to where Emarna had sunk down to watch him.

“Come!” he cried; “I will save thee also!”

She leaped up in an agony of impatience, waving her hands wildly against him, while her countenance expressed the torture of her heart.

“Nay, nay!” she cried; “fly, oh fly! It is too late!”

Still he persisted, but, turning, she sped with the swiftness of a deer towards the approaching horror; not unwilling, if he should follow, that they should die together. But Love cannot mate with Pity.

With the roar of a vast tornado the terror was upon them, and the man turned and fled with all his powerful speed, urged on by a shrieking blast from the tempest that hastened his long bounds, filling him with fear and an agony of furious haste. Forward he sped with terrific leaps, the roaring, shrieking tempest approaching ever nearer behind him. He cast away his spear, his knife and axe, loosening the thongs of his bearskin mantle and suffering it also to fall, while never stopping for an instant his wild flight, only wishing that he had not delayed so long. He gave no thought to Emarna, nor one backward glance to where she stood and waved him a last farewell, with heart more full of fear for him than for her own swiftly-approaching doom, and then turned to face Death. He only ran as he had never run before, with a horror of darkness surging down on him and a deafening majesty of sound all around.

But far it was to the higher land. His furious feet beat the earth, his hair fell from its comely braids and streamed out behind: with gaping mouth he panted loudly, and on either side his strong arms beat the air to aid his desperate legs. On and on, leap after leap, racing and bounding, flying over streams and fallen tree-trunks, over rock and hollow; and presently a flash of lightning flew past him with a splitting of the air and a nearly overpoweringly sulphureous odour. A swishing sound rose above all others for an instant and a shower of icy spray flew over the fugitive, reviving yet urging him to fresh efforts.

His feet splashed in water as a wave rushed past him, and with a cry of terror he plunged onwards yet the more franti-

cally. Wonder it was that heart or lungs did not burst in that dreadful struggle for life, as before his eyes the landscape reeled and swirled. Death seemed to lie both before and behind, yet that behind was more certain than that in front, and the mortal instinct bade continuous action.

Over his wide shoulder he cast a fearful glance, perceiving thereby a horror of night in which opened a roaring, seething inferno. His feet gave way and his joints were loosened, so that falling down he lay still and panted as an hunted animal, until a wave of water lapped over his feet. Whereupon he leaped upright, perceiving a great and dreadful spectacle where the tempest in all its fury raged.

There the clouds shut out all light, driven before the storm, and enormous waterspouts ran in gliding circles that shone wan and ghastly against the thick darkness. Torn and shattered by the wind the vast clouds moved in swift battalions, swinging funnel-shaped trunks to the earth that was rapidly disappearing under torrents of water, surging and eddying, cascading over rocks and filling hollows with swirling pools. It seemed as though columns upheld domed roofs, and court upon court of ebony rolled back into the darkness above the wreck of storms beneath, where vast figures gathered within the gloom as called together by a signal. And now the thunder rolled, echoing round the vaulted blackness, and through the cloudy columns the wind swept with a hollow roar, reflected lightning illuminating the dark colonnades with majenta and purple glares. A rapidly-rising ocean flowed beneath, continuing the reflections downwards, and encroaching with swiftness on the foothills; a mangled body whirled and tossed upon the waves, and there were others also borne upon the swift tide.

Like the horror of a fearful dream it passed before his eyes, and then he turned and continued his flight, leaping upwards and onwards, searching with straining vision for the place of the village of his people. Fearful voices followed him and fast behind him the relentless waters rose, as fast as he himself fled from them. There was only safety in the mountains, and so great was the pressing peril that the man gave no thought to the great phenomenon behind him, but only stumbled

onward with panting breath and bursting veins towards the heights.

Confused and weary he ran onward, at times walking perforce, and then as fear possessed him afresh, racing with speed. He passed a large tree and for an instant hesitated, thinking to climb up into safety, but instinct bade him continue on lest he be cut off from all escape. Higher and higher he climbed in a horrid twilight, each step now being nearer the desired goal, (for the ground was rising sharply,) yet feeling pains all over him and perceiving his limbs to be cut and bruised and covered with blood. Torn and gashed by thorns, briars and rocks and many fallen branches, he marvelled that he had so escaped, as he sank down in a patch of fern high above the boiling flood and gasped in a great self-pity. Nor did it to him occur that, fleeing one day from the punishment of his sins, he might not haply so escape when the gates of Death were closed upon him entered within them, and the Tribunal was set.

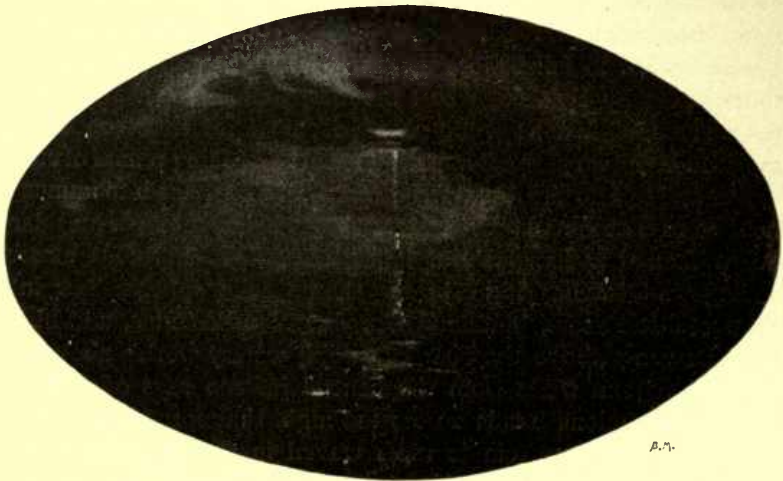
Yet also other eyes had witnessed that dread scene without understanding it. For Azta, watching the lowering masses over the land, had seen, as it were, a world burst in the heavens with an outpouring of thick horror, and shapes descending therefrom in the cyclones and dark night, and from very far had come the voices of the storm while yet in Zul there was a suffocating calm. Covering whole horizons the clouds nearer to the city appeared to fall as in a vortex to where the awful gatherings rolled, rent by lightnings and bursting with thunder that shook the suspended Earth; while as a palace of Infernal wonder and magnitude the varying columns and roofs and rolling pillars of cloud stood, fading into the illumined distances. From Earth to immense heights rose those awful galleries; across halls of purple and dark ochre flamed green fans of light, disclosing enormous masses rolling and tossing high in air where solid spheres flew into shattered streamers, clutching like fingers of demons, and black trunks swung above the roar of falling watery worlds above the doomed region, while from the central inferno rays of darkness lay like tremulous bands across the night that spread above Zul.

A few flames on temple roofs waved in the oncoming gusts of wind, and ghastly nebulous apparitions showed where palaces lay, but mostly an amorphous gloom was upon all. In the

darkness the square entrances of the palace sprang into light as slaves ignited the torches, the glow illuminating strips of the great terraced steps for a short distance; and fearing more than I dared say I stood beside my Love to shield her if I might. She shivered as I took her hand, looking upon me with her great mystic eyes that flared like golden stars in the gloom; and I saw that her strong mind and will were subdued before the elemental terrors and reduced to subservience to what might come.

Yet the cloudy Horror touched not the city, passing in its dread procession afar; and to-night there was going to be given a great feast to all who should set forth with to-morrow's light in the desperate retreat from a doomed land, and fly to carry sin and all evil imagining over all the world so that there should be no end to the wickedness of it all.

And I, what should I do? With my Love would I go, still hoping against hope that I might cause her to rule in holiness from another throne that would arise amid the same conditions as the present one was deserted in. But standing with her on that last night of sorrow by the cliff that overlooked the sea, we perceived a star to fall from Heaven into the waters. Down it fell, and ever downwards, nor did the waters quench it or



P.M.

NOR DID THE WATERS QUENCH IT.

THE NAVEL OF THE CLOUDS.

dim its brilliancy, as tremulously twinkling it sank lower and lower, a great light beginning to spread from it so that it moved in a sea of silver. Brighter the coloured light grew and of deeper tint and increasing, until in liquid flashing gold it shimmered with living beauty; and still the hue deepened gradually to fiery red. Figures leaped to meet it, bright and beauteous, surrounding it in bewildering mazes until the light darkened upon an ocean of blood, and the night closed upon the wonder and the mystery of it all.

C A P. X I I.

“FOR TO-MORROW WE DIE.”

THE Hall of Feasting was crowded and the granaries and all stores of provisions had been thrown open that their contents might be carried forth with the fugitives on the morrow. And many who had never entered there before, and only knew by repute what they now found to be less than the gorgeous reality, gazed delightedly upon the frescoes and the vast golden mirrors radiant in the torchlight; and happy they who could forget if but for a little space their load of anxiety, drowning it in the pleasures of such high fraternity and the glowing warmth of light and colour, until it was recalled to them by the mute reminders of yawning cracks and that long fissure, roughly covered, that stretched from side to side of the room, one-third of its length from the dais.

Some shuddered as they remembered that it was here that the great massacre of the princes and nobles took place and where their resurrected Chief was murdered; while the deep roar of the lions that guarded the Hall of the Throne caused them to tremble by its uneasy omen and its nearness to them.

Torches flared wherever they could be placed, so that there was much light, and without were bonfires where the army lay. At the blast of a trumpet slaves began to dispose the guests according to rank and directions, most being placed below the fissure; those less exalted, luxuriating on costly furs, finding themselves awed by the presences of some of the mighty of the land whom they had before only seen in the distance.

But all eyes became centered on the dais, where lay Azta and Toltiah, crowned and in full harness, in a blaze of light that flashed upon armour and gems and made brighter the coloured vestments, continuing in gleaming masses around where stood guards and gaily-decked menials, the shield-bearers, pipe-

bearers, fan-bearers, and all the great retinues of the nobles immediately attending, and falling upon the array of gorgeously apparelled queens and princes nearest to them, all wearing everything they possessed too valuable to be entrusted to slaves, ready for the morrow. The mistresses of the Tzan lay in masses of coloured light, where all manner of starry gems cast back the torch-flare: Ievie, Sumar, Annis, Vasni, Zia, Eval, Sio, Cyvadne, voluptuous queens, shining as flaming Spirits in their splendour of form and flashing ornaments.

Here one in a blaze of emeralds, turning upon her wide hips, caused the beauteous gems to cast their flashes in a bewildering dazzle, and from the darker places where the wearers melted into the shadows came the scintillating gleams of wondrous jewels. Dark-eyed Sada, whose breasts were hidden beneath shields of pearls, flashed her priceless gems with every move of her large fat arms; blue-eyed Tua still held her head disdainfully opposite Axazaya, mother of princes, her eyes bluer by the contrast of the pearl-dust upon her face and strings of pearls dependant from her red hair dressed high with gemmy fastenings. Tola, pallid and large, looked around under her immense coral tiara crowned with peacock's plumes, and beside her was Kah, elegant and tall, who spoke cheerfully and laughed, as also did the beauteous Mea, a very young girl, wearing emeralds in her teeth.

By the daïs was the lord Nezca, splendid in his glittering harness and vast symmetry, and there also was the veteran Nahuasco, whose lion-like head was scarce rivalled by Iztli, the dark conqueror of Trocoatla, and whose regards were much sought after by the more elderly queens. Chanoc, Lord of Astra, shone in brave trappings, and among the throng were Lamec, Adar, Eto-massē, Hammur, Mehir (Lord of Chalac), Rhea, Hano, Uta, Sidi-Assur, Iru with the vast shoulders, and many more great ones. But such as Xoleph the slaver and Mataca the purveyor of meat found themselves ill at ease where they sat opposite to the sea-captain Akin and the huge Hoetlan, who wore a Unicorn-skull helmet and had great gold rings upon his arms and ears and legs; and all who reclined below the fissure envied the grandeur and beauty of all above.

Yet how sad was that gathering! There was no happiness nor even freedom from care, for there were many there with sore wounds received in the recent furious battle with the people, and all knew it was a farewell banquet fed from their terrible scarcity, perchance the last meal they would eat or could be able to obtain; and the people gazed upon one another, stern and gloomy, thinking of the starving inhabitants of the great place, who would be deserted and left behind to die. Only to such as had never perceived the grand Hall before was there any pleasure, and their delight at the bold beauty around brought them relief. These did not notice that the huge wine-vessels were not filled; they had never known their measure: neither did the meagre variety of the viands cause them uneasiness, as, surrounded by such bravery, their old desires began to appear with a regret that they must leave their beautiful city.

The slaves handed round the meats and drinks, and in time the gloom began to fall from all. It is enough to human hearts, the joy of the tangible Present! The sound of many voices began to arise, more and more, and laughter to flow as the wine covered with its veil of mercy the remembrances of woes past and to come. The slaves ran nimbly through the tables, yet with a dire terror in their hearts, for they believed that they would either be left behind or be slain when the feast was over. The red torch-glare cheered the feasters' hearts, and snatches of old songs were sung, and at length some of the women, in whose thoughts the unused luxury of wine had aroused wantonness, arose and danced with increasing gaiety. The warriors roared applause, excited to enthusiasm by such careless act that banished all thoughts of care, and braceleted arms were waved in the fummy atmosphere, and beaten shields thundered to the accompaniment of measured song.

Then Azta arose, and a shrill trumpet blast commanded silence as she stood forth upon the daïs, crowned with the Lunar diadem upon whose crystal symbol the lights gathered wondrously, her whole majestic form alive with fire where wondrous gems in teeth, belts, plates and shields accentuated her sumptuous beauty of outline. No chaplets of roses swept

in their soft loveliness beneath the swelling glories of her bosom to-night; the roses were dead: but from masses of large emeralds and opals rose the ivory beauties, and between them, pressing the soft skin, reposed a pearl of enormous size. Her hair was interlooped with strings of pearls, rubies and diamonds, and even now her eyebrows were dressed with care. Over all was cast a yellow veil of very fine silk covered with gemmy points, and standing forth in her incomparable beauty before the hundreds, she began in a clear voice the recital of the nation's history, from when the tribes sprang together at the signal of Tekthah up through their wars and triumphs to the present, when, deserted by Zul and their gods, they must leave their land and their glorious cities and set forth, not in ordered march, but as best they could, to meet in the north, beyond the mountains. Thence, if haply they survived, they would again join their arms and endeavour to recover the return journey to that Eden whence their old forefathers had been ejected, and retrieve by force of armed knowledge their inheritance under a leader whom the gods had given back to them from the dead.

A great shout of approval answered her, and when she raised the tall orbed sceptre of state, whose golden sphere rested upon the four symbolical arms of their adoption, the enthusiasm was very great. As a goddess of Atlantis she appeared to them, wondrously arrayed, and never stood forth such a standard-bearer!

Tears of emotion streamed from warriors' eyes and loud sobs showed more than the grandest roars of triumph the intensity of feeling wrought by a woman's magic. Toltiah, sullen and observant, dared not rise to hinder the ambitious act that should have been his, and Azta, moved by an uncontrollable pride, cried out: "To-night am I Queen of Atlantis!"

"Hail, Neptsis!" cried Nezca, bending low before her his golden crest. But no mortal lived to comprehend such comparison.

The Tzan's countenance expressed jealousy and mortification, but Azta's eyes flashed fiery joy at the great ovation from all the princes, satisfied ambition for an instant triumphing over even that great love she bore to Toltiah; and I wondered

would it have done so had Huitza in verity stood there.

But Tairu began to sing the old battle-songs of the wars of Tekthah, and all there beat upon their shields and sang also in chorus; and becoming of reckless mood plunged their heads into the wine-vessels and gorged themselves to the full, nor were the women slow to follow their example. Clouds of sweet-scented smoke rolled up from the inhaling-pipes, and being, as I have said, unused to such by reason of enforced abstinence, it wrought mischief within all; and as the strains of music commenced, many young women sprang forth in the dance, kissing their hands to the company. Lascivious eyes watched them, and drunken men raised themselves from the litter of victuals into which they had fallen helplessly, to follow the wanton voluptuous movements, which became wilder and more abandoned by reason of the applause.

Screams of women arose, but, unheeding, that weird dance of death went on; and as exhausted dancers fell back into ready arms, others eagerly took their place, whirling to the furious music with flying garments that they did not hesitate to relinquish. The streaming torch-lights that flung their lightning shadows now here now there excited them the more, and the rich perfumes of the wine and viands pervaded their senses so that many fell down and writhed in convulsions; but through the redly-illuminated dust swayed in reeking odours by currents of air, swung coloured mantles and flashed spear and sword, and the myriad gleaming points of gems. A hurricane of sounds swelled to the lofty roof, pierced by screams of wantonness, the people tiring themselves by the violence of their passions, which they continued nevertheless. Toltiah, wallowing in ignoble confusion, led the wild debauch, his mighty voice, now grand and vast as an organ rising above a storm of wind and hail, now attuned to sweetest music, crowning all other sounds with melody.

The nobles joined in the revels, the Tzan, supported by his mistresses, drinking to Zul from a bowl formed by the skull of a newly-killed slave, in horrid blasphemy. His drunken eyes rolled wildly and he threw his great arms about in helpless foolishness, as around him lay many overcome by exhaustion and apoplexy. But still women whirled with flying hair in the

dance, the warriors seizing upon some by force, which being wives and mistresses of merchants caused many combats and murders.

Azta, like an Infernal queen, drank with any chief who petitioned her, and Iru, in the blood of two servants whose heads he smashed together, drank to the conquest of Eden, calling upon the warriors to remember the northern place of gathering. The dazzling mirrors intoxicated the drunken senses of all, and not a few raised their shaking bowls with lewd expressions and drank to the obscene frescoes amid roars of merriment. The time sped in outrageous pleasures, and still that wild saturnalia continued as the Devil's brood danced to its doom. The licences were degrading in their daring extremes as the wine was drained to its dregs, and men and women, sunk below the level of the beasts, became mingled in a dreadful whirlpool of disgrace.

Suddenly a gloom fell over the light, and all believing the torches to be becoming exhausted, the dances and revelries became more frenzied still. A current of icy atmosphere entered the warm chamber, and savage curses were shouted against the return of the dreadful day that should end the joy of that foolishness. With a last diabolical effort the music banged and crashed and in dilirious mazes the dancers leaped, clasped in each other's arms, in the fading light, panting in the dust and heat and falling in confusion over prostrate bodies. Then came a sound echoing through the vast hall and stilling all else. It was as though a silver trumpet had been sounded, loud, shrill and piercing; and all who were able looked to see what it might be, noting with dismay how the darkness increased.

I knew what it was, and Nezca knew also.

“Peace!” he thundered involuntarily, with a great shout; but Azta laughed loud and long, her voice ringing in mockery over the tentative silence that had fallen upon the throng. And looking upon all there in the stillness that followed, the thought leaped into my soul, which appertained also unto myself: In the enjoyment of the Present prepare for the Future, (for also in so doing is a certain joy); because the Present even now is the Past, and the Past is for ever gone from us, nor is its enjoyment active, being but a memory; for we can never recall the joy of the Now, but in preparing a pleasant Future we lay a golden road of ever Present.

CAP. XIII.

“MENE MENE TEKEL UPHARSIN.”

AZTA'S ghastly merriment died away in fearful silence as a cloud descended, filling the hall with an intensity of darkness and extinguishing the lights. With a knowledge that this was the end I hastened to her side, for such was my chosen place before Heaven, advancing my buckler for her protection against all that might come, and daring to oppose The Omnipotent for the sake of my Love. Not in impious revolt, but rather in despairing justification of a course that had gone so sadly through not submitting to superior knowledge; and loyalty to a spirit so madly beloved, and so disastrously.

A wind swept along, chill with an indefinable horror of death and corruption, and a low sound of mortal terror followed it. All below the daïs cast themselves down, save Nezca; and the knees of Toltiah shook with fear.

A flash of vivid light cleft the dark obscurity, and there appeared a Hand holding a four-armed cross, like to their standard. In full view of all it appeared, and many believed it to be a recognition of their symbol by the gods; but Azta and Toltiah, perceiving that they were in the presence of an awful power, prostrated themselves, leaving but Nezca and myself standing with shining countenances and figures visible to all. For having sinned by knowledge and volition we cared not as cravens to avoid what should come, standing with despairing hearts while came another Hand and slowly broke the symbol in twain.

An irrepressible groan broke from all who witnessed it, and then a voice, more mighty than storms, but plainly and awfully distinct, spoke:

“It is enough, O People of the Last creation! Your sins are

no longer endurable and the word is spoken that you shall all die. The tree is evil and the branches spread, but the axe is laid at the root and it shall cease. Thus is it spoken! And you, the shining ones, that stand so boldly now, beware! For you also are words spoken that cannot alter. By the curse of this people shall thy curse be doubled, Hesorio; and what shall be done unto thee, O Asia? Not for thy forgetfulness of that dear love extended to thee, for which in exact measure art thou repaid, but for the havoc and confusion that thou hast wrought must thou account. Kneel!”

The lightning sprang towards us and all was dark. Nor in words were these things spoken to us, but by the perfect comprehension of Justice, which is of the all-understanding and all-seeing Spirit and is not biassed by deeds or manners nor bound by any fear of varying criticisms to pass its sentence upon the motive of every act. The only unforgivable thing is disobedience, whereby superior guidance is stultified.

Sounds were in the atmosphere, sounds of grief and wailing unutterably sad and mournful, but below reigned the silence of death and each man wondered if he were the sole survivor of a nation. Presently the darkness broke and the light of that last day of horror crept in over the prostrate multitude. Heads were raised fearfully, and soon, believing what they had seen to be the result of their furious revels, many shamefacedly arose, yet carrying within their souls a dread presentiment of coming doom.

With a terrible anguish I raised up Azta, pressing her passionately to my bosom while the bitter tears fell fast.

“I cannot part with thee, my Love! Thou art all I have!” I cried, with intense agony; “O Hesorio, can nought be done?”

The prince shook his head gloomily. Entering now from without the people thronged, leaning upon spears or the shoulders of others, waiting for some signal from Toltiah; while among the debris of that carnival of sin lay many, dead or unconscious from the effects of the wine and dissipation; dishevelled women lying in their shameless nakedness with their drunken lords. One or two raved in madness, with bursting

eyeballs, and foam upon their lips, tearing, biting and shrieking; and the daylight shone fearfully gray upon the assemblage.

Toltiah arose, shuddering with dilating eyes. For the first time he turned in appeal to me, gazing with drunken orbs upon me in horrid terror, mad with excesses and fear and with his godlike perception fearfully keen.

"Father," he said, with imploring sarcasm, "behold our plight which has come upon us. Canst thou not aid by thy power?"

"Fool!" I cried bitterly, "and craven as well as fool! does not thy remaining soul rebel against appealing to one hitherto, unacknowledged and spurned? Too unutterably late art thou who hast impiously challenged Heaven and now shivers beneath the lash. Begotten of sin, poor wretch, I, even I, pity thee yet cannot aid. Thine hands, Devil-directed, have pulled down ruin upon Earth, and Death usurps thy throne this day."

He turned with impatience and wrath to the assemblage.

"Come!" he cried, supporting himself heavily; "let us go and leave the gods to kill each other."

But even as he turned the ground heaved, and the earth, moved irresistibly, burst the floor pavement and fell asunder, and down the abyss, buried in clouds of dust, fell tiles, bones, amphoras and shrieking people with clang and clatter. The gap closed with a sickening movement, and a sound, that caused faces to blanch in awful horror, issued from it. The end wall crumbled away in ruinous masses, and all the walls bulged fearfully and rent themselves with that great movement, while scarcely the four columns in the centre of the hall upheld the ceiling that leaned in broken planes upon their different lengths.

A strange weird sight broke upon all eyes, where, through the tremendous gap caused by the fallen wall, the temple of Zul leaned from its height, dark against the gray dawn. From every aperture and long rent in the shadowy mass streamed a blood-red light, dull and awful, and as all eyes turned upon it the topmost and second storeys fell in a cascade of ruin into a mist as it were of blood, where a great released brightness illuminated the dust of that fall. The third storey fell, leaving the wreck of its columns and vaulted roofs standing, and the

walls of the fourth storey which faced the palace fell in ruins, carried away by the torrential masses from above so that the central chamber was exposed in which were the dark mysteries of Neptsis and Zul displayed in fire upon its walls. From the square space in the midst shot up a strange dull-red flame, and methought there were awful figures which moved in dismayed fashion within the brightness around. And crowning the horror sat the stern majesty of WAEF, the Accuser, looking upon the ruin of Earth; sublime in immovable majesty, awful in inflexible testimony.

Azta shrieked in my arms, hiding her face in my bosom, not wishing to longer view that portentous god and those awful ruins where, flung afar, the golden fire-tower gleamed amid the dark heaps. Protected by all my diminished power she had no hurt upon her body, but in her mind was hell! And to add terror to terror the two great lions which guarded the Hall of the Throne came bounding with broken chains among the people, half-starved and of ferocious appearance. Unheeding all else, they leaped straightly to the dais and with a great spring hurled themselves at once upon Toltiah. The mighty being fell beneath their weight, and with a roar one of the brutes smote the grand Solar crown from his head. Azta with a shrill scream of anguish leaped forward and attacked the brutes with a dagger, but before she could avail and before I could hasten to the rescue they bounded off among the panic-stricken people, biting and roaring savagely, disembowelling with tremendous blows and bearing all before them.

But Azta cast herself by her so strangely regarded offspring in a passion of anguish. She gazed with madness in her eyes upon his countenance and shuddered with a dreadful moan as she perceived that his skull was broken, blood and brains oozing in ghastly flux between the shattered bones and among the ruddy masses of hair. His hand fell as lead from her horrified grasp, and with a panting cry she fell as one dead.

I gazed wildly around over the poor wretches fleeing from that place of death, and saw how Iru rent one of the beasts with his godlike strength and that the other lay pinned to the earth by a spear. What would happen now? Too well I knew

there was no escape from the pronounced doom, yet could not my power prevail aught to save this one who lay unconscious at my feet?

Nezca moved off last with measured strides. "Fare thee well for a space, Prince of Heaven," he said, raising his great spear in salutation towards me: "We shall meet again when these have passed."

He was gone, all that remained now were dead, save only Azta and myself. Upon my heart lay an icy horror. "For you also are words spoken that cannot alter." Yet not even now for myself I feared, but I knew that if my Love loved me not we should be parted for ever; and the thought bowed me beneath its weight of agony with a torture that would have annihilated me could I but have died. In an agony too keen for words I stood in so fiery a hell of suffering that my soul fainted within me.

Monarch of the dead I stood; my murdered victims! Around me they lay amid mounds of debris of earth and masses of masonry, dead by the beasts, by their fellows and by their own excesses, dead in their formidable might of sin amid stripped bones and smashed amphoras, with their mantles and armour and gems gleaming between the dusty ruins from which the painted frescoes reared themselves in mockery and the long golden mirrors stood out brightly. Earthworms wriggled over the debris, and scorpions and centipedes ran over the dusty remains of the feast. Portions of the ceiling kept falling with crashing and clinking sounds, piling up the ruins and revealing the sky hung with thick clouds rolling ominously.

A great cry of despair came up from afar, tossed upon the icy wind like the wail of lost spirits. It came around the walls where the thousands who gathered for flight were augmented by all the starving population, who hoped by accompanying the more privileged ones to obtain some succour and escape with them. But they found all egress barred by a broad river of water, stretching as far as they could see in eddying, swirling currents, bearing upon its flood trees, debris, and corpses. Drowned animals floated feet upwards, their bodies swollen incredibly and emitting a noisome odour, but there were many

things that lived—sharks, sea-unicorns α and loathsome cuttles.

Small wonder the poor creatures despaired! There was no escape from the horrors that were upon them, for from north to south the stream joined the ocean, eddying in waves that encroached more and more, and beaten into fretted points by drops of heavy rain that commenced to fall. A dark freezing mist covered the city with a dreadful night, and none knew what hour it was, neither were able to distinguish aught by reason of the gloom that dropped as a veil over the Earth. They ran up and down the walls, alarmed, terrified, panic-stricken: with wringing hands they shrieked, cursed and raved, yet dared attempt no crossing.

And there were many who believed they might obtain salvation through the ships, and these, running swiftly, made for the harbour, not a few losing their way in the obscurity and remaining among the streets and houses. And this thing spread as it seemed by instinct, whereby the thousands began to run all in one direction; the stronger getting before those who were weak and the starved ones, but all following the leaders because of the instinctive dread of being left alone. Yet there were many who understood not the reason of the wild flight and felt a vague terror that some dreadful thing was befalling, and numbers of the weak ones fell down and died, for the distance from the farther walls was very great.

Beneath their feet the ground heaved, hurling hundreds down in suffocating masses, and shrieks rose from their parched throats. A great light broke through the gloom, where from the crater of Zul shot up a column of lurid flame, and there was visible to many the three giant idols that sat within the volcano above the lake of fire, by reason of the walls having fallen in. Crowning the whole city they sat, immovable in the bright glare as though in Infernal conference, and all perceiving them shuddered. Yet in the light two gamblers sat, with eyes only intent upon the dice, regardless of the cold and mist and rain.

There approached the patter of the sandals, by twos and

α Probably swordfish or narwhal.

ATLANTIS.

threes and dozens and scores, and from far distances sounded the rustle of the myriad-footed rush. And then above all rose an appalling sound that reached even Azta's dull ears and caused her to lean upon me, trembling, her eyes, widely open, gazing with a dreadful dark void from her ashen face.

The great reservoirs and the huge tank of the Baths had burst and suffered a mighty wave of water to leap like a solid cataract down the terraces, sweeping all before it and carrying hundreds of the fugitives to whirling destruction. As flies before a hurricane they went, dashed against impediments and flung headlong, crimsoning with their blood the liquid mass that swept a path of ruin from the hill of Zul to the battlements, and through, plunging with a torrent of foamy uproar into the waters that surrounded the city.

C A P. X I V.

THE ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION.

WITH dismay the leaders stayed their flight for an instant, and then, panting and perspiring in mortal terror, again made for the harbour. In their faces were hurled storms of spray from great breaking waves, which in their fury filled the harbour with wreckage. Of all the ships only the Tacoatlanta was left, plunging wildly in the midst of floating overturned rafts, coracles and little boats; the battered wreck of one of the other warships rolling like a great animal against the waterway, of which only the top step was above water, and that one being washed continuously by surges that dashed in over the reef beyond. Sheets of foam drenched the crowding people that thronged down to the boats, and against the darkness hanging like a veil from the clouds rose masses of wan spray, leaping over the rocks near the shore, in whose holes and crannies lived dreadful sea-animals, and at times dashing over the crater of Zul, which burst into clouds of steam at each contact.

Farther out, flowing sullenly under a heavy rain, the waves rolled in long gray lines to the shore, flooding the lower lands completely and breaking in thunder against the cliffs; but, as animals in their terror, and preferring the perils of the waves to the horrors of the land, the crowd rushed to the waterway, the leaders hastening in order to obtain possession of the ship and get out to the centre of the harbour to await events, warned by the throngs behind them of the deadly danger they ran. Nevertheless, so great was the panic that there was no halt or stay, and in a frenzied mass the people debouched on to the platform, none giving heed to friends or relatives in that great rush for life.

Hoetlan was the first, and recognising the danger of hauling the boat up to him, dashed through the waves, holding by

wreckage, and clambered up. There followed him closely a slim youth and a butcher from the Bazaar. The Tzantan with a slash of his sword severed one of the moorings, but scores of people began to clamber up, holding to the bulwarks and clutching trailing rigging. Yet there were no children to add to the horrors of that wild rush, for long before they had been left behind, struck down, deserted, or trampled under foot by the racing crowds.

And among them were persons of rank, high captains and Lords of territories, and a few great ladies, unrecognisable in their dishevelled array.

"Make way!" screamed one, trusting foolishly that her rank would secure a place; "make way! I am the Queen Axazaya!" But some pushed her down and she fell into the water; whereon, rushing through the waves, a black shark leaped, sweeping some refugees from their feet and vanishing with her amid screams of terror.

Now scores of frantic hands clutched the ship's side, which by reason of the multitude already on board leaned dangerously and offered a large side to the outer waves. Those within her slashed at the unhappy wretches, and as the last restraining rope was severed at length the vessel began to move from the waterway under the hauling of those on the anchor ropes. But clinging hands held still, and others clutched them; and, falling upon the side, a wave rolled the great ship so that the gunwale dipped down, plunging the miserable beings below the water, and by the movement causing to fall the stowed sails and bursting the lashings of the catapult which was amidships.

Relieved from the overbalancing weight for a moment by the water floating it thus, the Tacoatlanta rose with a heavy roll nearly upright; but the weight pulled from the waves caused her to dip again more violently than before, and those who would have cut away the strangling mass had enough to do to save themselves. Long dark forms threshed through the water as the fierce sharks swept towards their prey, and the waves were topped by triangular fins.

The ship rolled up once more, and then, as with a sickening

lurch the catapult and all loose things fell down the slope caused by the downward roll, the people within fell down over one another headlong into the waves heaving red and terrible. For an instant, so compact was their mass, it appeared as though they struggled upon a flooded pavement, but they spread abroad and sank, and the red water rose among them. Some sharks, overwhelmed and surrounded by their victims, leaped up through them, falling upon the dry and solid masses and struggling ferociously until they fell through.

Nor availed the godlike power of physical man where the Tacoatlanta wallowed, the farther bulwark high above water, the hither supporting a struggling mass to which breaking waves, dashing over in a falling mass of foam, added confusion to hideous confusion. Solid red patches rose up horribly through the water, breaking into pink froth upon the waves, above which tossed a forest of arms, legs and heads of the weltering wretches who strangled and fought, those who wore harness sinking like lead when support was removed.

The crowds at the waterway watched with blanching faces. A silence was upon them and they stood as though carved in stone, gazing on the frightful scene before them. The tangle of rigging, the floating spars and oars and enveloping sails, the seething mass of humanity, appeared like a vision of delirium, and among the writhing masses the long gleaming forms of the terrible fish dashed swiftly. Gorged and satisfied they bit right and left, gouging out bloody masses of flesh and severing limbs from trunks, while, below, the congers and water-snakes tore the unhappy beings, their graceful forms at times appearing above the water. Limbless bodies were tossed about and a headless trunk was pushed upright high above the rest, a hideous sight with the spouting blood. From far the sharks crowded the harbour eager for prey and attracted by the scent of blood, until it appeared to be alive with them; and the great warship, full of water, came floating up to the steps of the waterway in ghastly mockery.

Within her, as it were in a floating tank, a small shark dashed about, until a poulp, entrapped in likewise and annoyed by its rushes, seized it in a grasp from which there was no

escape, while another serpent-like arm fell writhing among the spectators and drew a victim to a dreadful doom.

The crowds broke up, and through every street the people ran bewildered and terrified, shuddering at the increasing thunderous roar of the surf upon the cliffs, that sent the icy spray flying afar over the city and at times eclipsed the light from Zul. With the exertions of the past few hours, the chill fever and starvation, hundreds lay dead and dying all around, as now within the palace the flying scud drifted and fell, pattering among the ruins and raising little clouds of dust. Upon the daïs, surrounded by desolation and death I stood, while Azta, returned to her wild grief, sat with her head buried in her arms, holding Toltiah's cold hand. From her head I had taken the heavy crown, I, who had placed it there above the sceptre of the Vengeance of God; and now not a sound or a movement betrayed the fact that aught lived within that place, and the sounds of the ceaseless rush of feet, the moans and cries of the populace and the noise of the tempest were borne to us softly, as of a dream. The dreadful glow from the volcano quivered through the mist, and there sat that conclave of silent figures majestic and immovable within its mouth, in grim semblance of judgment upon the city.

"Wilt come with me?" I asked of my Love, yet scarcely recognising my voice in that hoarse utterance, longing to take her away.

She shook her head. The time passed on, yet we moved not, we who lived, each possessing the knowledge of unrewarded faithfulness, yet with the determination thus to remain to the uttermost instant. In dumb despair I stood, unable to think or pray; for I, who had lavished a love upon this Love of Earth that should have been rendered but to God, would not now cry to that forsaken One to aid me. And of Earth, it is the nobler nature that flies to God in joy, and not in sorrow; for when all is dark the recreant soul cries for aid in its extremity to a Heaven that is all forgotten in the bright day, but the noble nature praises the generous hand that it will not unworthily petition. Yet a wild prayer burst from the depths of my heart that Omnipotence would help the woman I loved not wisely but with such devotion. Let me bear her punish-

ment, but let her go free; for it was through me, and me alone, that this had come to pass.

Yet there was no sign. The rain poured down and the great hall was awash, streams occasionally bursting with a rush through dams of wreckage and carrying the debris swirling to another level where pools were formed by water that trickled in all around the walls, in which the livid and swelling corpses rocked hideously. Azta noted nought as she sat in a stupor with a dull weight of aching horror on her that numbed her senses; she, who had seen the mysteries of the worlds, who in daring wantonness had stood face to face with God and laughed. The splendid dark golden masses of hair flowed in their glory among the strings of pearls and gems, but she had cast down the sheltering mantle from her head and the rain fell unheeded upon her. Raising Toltiah's buckler I held it above her so that the water fell from it in a pouring cataract around, and at times the lightnings played upon its vast surface as thunderstorms added their majesty to the elements. In sad mockery the gems which Azta wore gleamed and flashed, splendid glitterings of bright coloured lights that were so contrary to the desolation around, and yet seemed to find weird company in other glancing points where from dusty pools came the reflected lightning from great gems that ornamented some poor Clay half-submerged. Or a bright circle of light upon the buckler of a once godlike chieftain, smitten all amazed in his mortal frailty, who perchance esteemed himself imperishable in his arrogance and dared to face Heaven in blasphemy.

From very far off came a dread sound and presently the earth rocked, and as the fearful time crept on, a great fall of heavy spray sounded with a swishing hiss all around. What horror! what suffering!

O to be free!

To wrench from out our hearts

The sad remembrances of days gone by;

Past—ah, God! Lost! And ne'er shall come again

Bliss that was ours for such a little while—

Bliss that was given us but to destroy!

O stars of light that mock us as we weep—

Tranquillity that mocks our wild despair—

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Agonies that may pass, but to us now
A burning horror.
Wild tears that gush from sorely stricken hearts,
Groanings of spirit, frenzied teeth that gnash
Impotent in fierce agony of thought!
Never again! Why was it given us
To know the blessedness of those past days—
The awful misery of days that are—
And worse, of those to come?
Creator! God!

Hear us and help us of Thy love! Thy Love?
Is it Thy Love? And do we hear aright?
Vengeance is sweet, sweet for intended wrongs,
But this were vengeance for invited sins—
Sins we were made to do, and pleasant made—
O God! What vengeance upon helplessness!

C A P. X V.

“BEHOLD, I WILL DESTROY.”

MEANWHILE the other cities were in similar plight, as, full of their own inhabitants, whose numbers were greatly increased by fugitives from hundreds of villages and great tribes of the plains who had fled thence from the terrors of the outlying lands, they waited in fear and trembling, dismayed by storms and earthquakes under whose influence they lay in panic.

The crowded cities of Axatlan, which being near to the large volcano were always in danger of being overwhelmed with streams of lava, poured forth their refugees to the Atalan cities and crowded the capital, overrunning Chalac also. The Hilen river, swollen and turbulent, overflowed its banks and surrounded towns with inundating moats, overwhelming such as lay low, and by reason of this and the numbers of people requiring food that grew impossible to obtain, the horrors of famine lay upon all the land.

Upon the streets and roofs of Talascan and the neighbouring cities the volcanic dust lay thick and dark, and furious blasts of icy wind swept the lighter particles far and wide. Earthquakes had shaken the buildings and temples to their foundations and filled the people with consternation. In every street lay piles of ruin hidden under gray ashes until they appeared as huge dust heaps, from which the dogs and vultures dug out crushed corpses and devoured them. And believing the mountain Axatlan to be the cause of their woes, there was talk of deserting the ill-favoured land and going down to Tek-Ra, to rebuild the capital and settle there. Yet the people of Talascan loved not to leave their beautiful city, and though many towns around them were deserted for the higher-lying lands of Tek-Ra, they still remained, notwithstanding that Zul, as Lord of

Fire, ravaged the land. Holocausts had been offered to him in vain, nor to any cessation of his wrath had his dread altars run black with bloody sacrifices. And even He who told me of these things spoke with disapproval of the horrible excesses that o'ertopped in wickedness even those of Zul.

In lesser degree the tempests terrified them, sweeping over the city with fearful violence and damaging the buildings, while they flooded the streets with water, The shipping by the waterway was wrecked or carried away, and the river-god Nop was implored for clemency in vain on behalf of his favoured city, around which he spread a watery desolation far and wide. Through every street ran a stream hidden under floating scoriæ and volcanic dust and no man dared venture abroad, so that the famine became great and many died of it. With feelings similar to their brethren of Zul they cast down their graven images, hurling abuse and sacrilege upon them and burning those of wood. All the dogs and such animals as could be obtained for food had disappeared, and in dread and secrecy the miserable people began to devour their children, believing that in thus saving their own lives they prevented suffering to those who would have at least to die some day. Yet this platitude but extended to the slaughtered ones, for each mortal believed that himself would never die.

Bands of murderers satisfied every lust with violence, causing fierce reprisals and bloodshed, and at length the whole city appeared to be threatened with self-annihilation. A sulphurous night hung above it, illuminated by the glow from the nearer volcanoes and the gleam of bright lightning; the rain and hail began to fall upon them in torrents of water, and a humming roar that silenced all else bespoke the advent of that dread tornado that had buried Emarna and many cities and villages that lay in its path, and which fell upon the drowning city with the horror of a bursting world of waters below which the disturbed Earth rolled in frightful convulsions. Scores of warriors, attracting the lightnings to their metal-clad bosoms, were blasted and calcined; and piteous shrieks were carried by the wind like voices of demons in the air, as with falling ruin many half-broken structures fell, arches, columns and great

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stone idols toppling into the splashing flood. Streams, dammed by wreckage, began to force torrential passages, carrying with them dreadful streaks of blood and tangles of entrails and whirling masses, and from the lurid roof of clouds a funnel-shaped trunk swung over the centre of the city, to which, with a fury of tempestuous power the winds gathered and swept all before them with appalling force, whereby the grand temple of the Sun was hurled crashing upon all the buildings beneath. And now came swift destruction to the doomed city, as from the river in a seaward direction appeared through the gloom a vast nebulous veil moving towards it. This was a tidal wave approaching from the ocean, which sweeping with fearful violence through the Gates of Talascan and bearing within its world of waters the ruins of the towns of Reb and Hir as stones within a war-engine, advanced its swift front, higher than highest temple, upon the battlements, spreading over the flooded land with great velocity and irresistible power.

With the sound of appalling thunder the walls, torn from their deep foundations, sped forth with the wave-like bolts from the artillery of Heaven, and hurled thus, smote down temple, palace and column, that adding their masses in the forefront of that moving wall of death swept every obstacle before them. The lower part of the mighty wave was a mass of seething, dashing foam, broken into smaller waves that struck and recoiled, carried onward again by the power behind them; the foamy crest flew in a falling veil of spray all over the city, and its frothy sea reached the farther walls in advance of the devastating mass beneath.

Onward swept the tremendous bore, and when it had passed there was but a level expanse of water upon which no vestige of the doom of a great city could be read, although farther on were heaps of tossing refuse that carried terror to the hearts of the crowded cities of Chalac and Trocoatla and the villages of Tek-Ra and northern Axatlan, as, swelled by a thousand overflowing streams and the refuse of a hundred cities, the great flood lapped around their walls.

Beneath the waters of a stormy river the ruins of Chuza were hidden from view, and within the whole path of that great

wave of the Ocean even such towns that lay upon hills were swept away or so surrounded that all escape was cut off from the inhabitants. Such as dared to attempt flight upon logs found themselves afloat upon an interminable sea agitated by violent currents and whirlpools and ever rising higher and higher, the air also being poisoned by the fearful odours of corruption, as corpses, swollen to bursting, floated upon the waves, dotting the watery plain with myriads of points. There were the huge bodies of mastodons floating in the company of human corpses and dead sharks, and millions of smaller creatures emitted poisonous gases from their rotting bodies. The sea-animals were the most odorous, some of them being of enormous bulk and shape, floating like islands upon the expanse of water that the rain beat into fretted hollows. By such forests as remained from storm and wave these floating things collected in shoals, causing many hunters who had taken refuge among the branches to fall down unconscious and meet their death in the waters by reason of the effluvia.

The territories of Atala, Axatlan and Tek-Ra were entirely submerged, and great regions in Chalac and Hava were flooded. The highlands of Astra had disappeared beneath the waves, sunk by earthquakes and landslips and topped by fathoms of vasty waves, that washed the high walls of Zul, and all her cities save Surapa, which lay inland upon a hill, were swallowed up and drowned.

Every hill appeared to become a volcano round which storms raged and thunders shook the Earth, while the clouds carried the reflected light from the eruptions far out over the waters, giving them a terrific appearance as of deep places of storms. It was all one dread night now, traversed by terrors of elemental warfare in which Death stalked, pitiless and devastating. Long before had the great tribes of the savage peoples fled to the West as the first signs of awe touched their instincts, flying before the horrors that stalked like the spirits of Furies above their conquered places and the doomed tribes of their conquerors.

Tek-Ra had sunk beneath the waters, but the high walls of Aten and Lote still resisted the sweeping violence of the flood that had buried the low-lying villages and towns of Axatlan,

nearly all being along the Hilén. Driven to the higher storeys of mansions and temples by the deluge of waters, the thousands of these cities were plague-stricken by the stench of the floating carcasses, and many in panic fled upon rafts, vainly hoping to find safety in some direction or another. But the greater numbers remained in terror and famine, reduced by dire distress at length to eating their own flesh and that of the least corrupt of the floating bodies, which, impregnated by salt water and putridity, brought on hideous maladies. Heavy rain, hail and snow poured down without ceasing, raising the waters rapidly; earthquakes caused high storm-waves to break upon their walls and level them, and in many places the people ran upon the ruins, wringing their hands and cursing blasphemously.

And of those which went abroad upon rafts some returned, dead and putrefying by reason of the plague that had smitten them down, while every outburst of the storms and waves developed new masses of debris and dead bodies, some, as their dress bespoke, being swept down by currents from the ruined cities of Hava. As the waters deepened unclean beasts appeared swimming in them, writhing slimy tentacles as a nest of serpents which grew from one head. Hydras flourished innumerable arms, and down in the south grew forests of sea-weeds sheltering countless fish and reptiles that terrified the wretched people by their numbers and by their rapacity, notwithstanding they had enough horrid food. Upon the larger floating bodies vultures sat, and by rending the inflated skins with their beaks caused the gases to escape so that they sank quickly; and some few hunters were able to obtain certain sustenance by shooting these birds with arrows attached to lines, and also by ensnaring the fishy creatures that swam in the waters.

A large volcano suddenly sprang up by Aten, whose eruptions were very great and shook the ground afar. *z* In the gloom the

z Volcanic disturbances are very wide-spread in their terrors. We read in Prescott's "Conquest of Peru," chap. ix:—"The air was filled for several days with thick clouds of earthy particles and cinders, which blinded the men and made respiration exceedingly difficult. This phenomenon, it seems probable, was caused by an eruption of the distant Cotopaxi, which, about 12 leagues S. E. of Quito"—and, at least, double that distance from the narrator—"rears its colossal and perfectly symmetrical cone far above the limits of eternal snow—the most beautiful

tall cone lifted her crest of flame, and the fiery waters appeared to burn with a glow of their own under the lurid reflections. In fancy the people perceived figures rise from the fires and others descend into them, and, smitten with a despairing terror, dared whatsoever would to fall upon them.

And by reason of this violent mountain the volcanic dust lay many cubits deep in places, formed into a deadly mass by the waters, wherein people perished miserably. At length the far ranges of volcanoes beyond Axatlan became violently disturbed, communicating afar their travail, the glare from the fires lighting the clouds with fearful effect and rending them with electric explosions. The new hill burst into eruption more greatly than before, whereby huge rocks were hurled into the air to fall again in every direction; while the whole great basin from the mountains to the coast was upheaved and shaken continuously, above which the high waves ran in conflicting currents from all directions. From Axatlan flowed a sea of fire, which meeting the waters exploded and burst into steam with a continuous and terrible noise, and, by reason of the coldness of the air above, causing a thick mist to hide everything. Dead fish floated in myriads, boiled and mangled, and soon a long ridge of lava rose through the waves like a dead peninsular from which other volcanoes arose.

These, stretching afar, caused the unhappy people to believe that they would be engulfed in the fiery embrace, and hundreds preferred to risk death upon rafts, whereon they fled, regardless of destination and desirous but of escaping so dreadful a doom.

and the most terrible of American volcanoes. At the time of Alvarado's expedition it was in a state of eruption, the earliest instance of the kind on record, (1534) though doubtless not the earliest. Since that period it has been in frequent commotion, sending up its sheets of flame to the height of half a mile, spouting forth cataracts of lava that have overwhelmed towns and villages in their career, and shaking the earth with subterraneous thunders, that at the distance of more than 100 leagues sounded like the reports of artillery!"

Dr. Samuel Kinns in "Moses and Geology" tells us that during the last eruption of this volcano in 1741 the column of ashes and vapour is said to have risen a mile above the cone, and in 1533 a mass weighing 200 tons was hurled from it a distance of 10 miles. The volcano Coseguina in the Andes threw its ashes 700 miles with a noise that was heard 1000 miles away, after being dormant for 26 years.

“BEHOLD, I WILL DESTROY.”

And what was Man to face the terrors of Heaven! Amazed he was as he perceived how powerless was his esteemed might, and how simply the body of Earth could be deprived of life without even a little power to save that which God had commanded to cease. For these floating people there were the cooked fish ready to hand, yet for water they could but drink the nauseous rains that fell through the poisonous atmosphere and caused madness and fever in their veins.

But their sufferings were cut short by an eruption of vast magnitude, as suddenly the waters burst through a thin crust of earth into the very heart of the near volcano. An enormous puff of steam and water mingled flew high into the air with a roar as the whole cone of the mountain lifted and toppled over, a tongued circle of flame leaping forth all around. The earth rose up, collapsed, and then with an uproar that rent the clouds a world of lava, rocks, earth and water was hurled into the heavens. The whole force of the explosion was concentrated on Aten, and up went temples and mansions, walls, towers and ruins in a flying horror of ruin, hurled by that awful bomb high and far. For long there sounded the heavy splashes of falling waters and debris mingled with red showers and human remains; while a wave, raised by the vast upheaval, sped over the waters with fearful velocity, sweeping away half-submerged forests by its awful rush. Onward it went with more than the antelope's speed, a wall of moving force that stretched upon the right hand and upon the left for leagues, carrying before it the ruins of Bar-Asan, Katalaria, and Azod, and all towns and villages which lay before it.

It struck the high towers of Lote, tearing them away, and bearing on its rushing flood the crumbling ruins and the bodies of struggling thousands, soon silenced in its vast suffocation. It smote Surapa upon its tall hill, and swept away such devastated cities of Hava as remained; passing thence from far Trocoatla with incredible speed, pregnant with its rolling masses and rushing majesty of destruction; to cast its trophies with a seething roar at the foot of the walls of distant Zul, where it broke in a majesty of foam and flung its spray over the remains of the temple crowning the doomed heights of the last city of Atlantis.

C A P. X V I.

THE TRAVAIL OF EARTH.

UP to the distant mountains, where dwelt in sojourning the tribe of Noah, spread the waters, the pouring torrents of rain which the people could perceive upon the horizon increasing their volume, and long tidal waves carrying their flood up to the heights from which it never receded to its former level.

Yet Ham, notwithstanding the escape which he had had from doom. (which great phenomenon had been seen of his people also, causing much fear,) became of a morose temper, gazing long over the flooded plain as though he looked for one who came not. But an occasional sickening odour borne from afar spoke plainly of death and corruption out beyond the foothills and forests that stood as a barrier between themselves and myriads of dead things, while around them also was death, yet only of the lower creation, such animals of plains as, being driven up into the mountains by stress of circumstances, were unable to support their existence there and perished.

The two lower storeys of the great ship were now inhabited by many animals, moved by apparently individual instinct to seek shelter; the fitting survivals taking a refuge thus among human beings as a last escape from their hardships.

The heavy rain and storms approached nigher, and of all their griefs for the unhappy people Susi's was the saddest. For all she grieved, but especially for such as she had known the high ones of Zul in whose company she had sojourned for so brief a space. To beautiful Azta she felt a great yearning love and pity, despite the haughty air and indescribable coldness manifested by her, yet dared not pray to so awful an Omnipotence, that had spoken the doom, to avert it. She had warned the proud Queen in such manner as none other would have dared to, perceiving the great heart beating beneath a possi-

bility of power that would have wholly enslaved some people, and had read, written upon the surface, the potent might of a current that flowed strong and irresistible in its great depths. She had been impressed with the feeling that in knowledge and power this wondrous woman was as an Angel, fallen indeed, but never losing the bearing and power. For her, therefore, she sorrowed with a woe the reason of which she could not herself define; but in the object of her grief recognising a potentiality that, if differently employed, could have saved a nation from its sins.

Vast clouds, blood-red and terrific, hung above the volcanoes and formed an Infernal canopy around flaming Axatlan, where thunders swept around the abysmal darkness fearfully and continuously in muttering wrath, and the electric currents lighted the vapoury dome. The rain fell luminous through the gray shadows like showers of swords, and great birds flew like wraiths of the storm with weird and ominous cries. There were many strange voices in the air, some of awful sound; of despair; of strange musical sadness. Fearful of such and greatly impressed, the families repaired to the Mexiah, inhabiting the topmost storey, because they dared not sleep longer upon the Earth, soaked with spray and in danger of inundation. Shem had carried within all his collection of storied tablets and treasures, placing them in safety with care and zeal, and the food which was prepared for the unknown period was also stored up and the large water-vessels filled. The spray of the tremendous rains was blown by the winds to them, and of a night the forms of many beasts moved around them upon the earth, some recognised by their cries, which carried an accent of fear, proclaiming that their instinct spoke of approaching terrors. And they who watched upon the deck perceived many to ascend within the ship by the long gangway which reached from the earth, and enter in by the door: such as were already sojourning therein being penned up. And as each night the pressure of the terror became greater, the more wild or more timid animals were also constrained to seek a refuge, until upon one night came a great number which were perceived by the watchers upon the high deck.

There were many large creatures which climbed upwards, yet of what kinds could not be determined, save but by the indistinct sounds made by them.

Occasional snarling sounds and grunts and strange whistlings came from the moving shadows, and once the subdued roar of a lion sounded with its majestic utterance afar. Snorts and hisses, moans and squeaks, mingled occasionally, but there was mostly only silence filled by sounds of shuffling and scrambling. It was a dark mysterious procession, from which for an instant a long vague object rose up even to the deck and then vanished, and wonderingly the watchers lay with their hands upon ready weapons and covered with cloaks because of the spray of the deluge and the cold wind. From behind them the dull, lurid glow from the volcanoes only made the darkness in front the more conspicuous and vague, but a great blue reflection of lightning that lay upon the clouds, as though a very bright moon had shone upon them, brought instantly into relief the ground, the gangway and the animals.

There crouched horses, deer, cattle and many felines, their ears lying flat and fangs exposed in a sudden snarl of fear as the bright light startled them, and many other animals of all kinds, among which anacondas and smaller serpents recoiled with the swiftness of the light itself, hissing loudly, their movements, combined with the sudden brightness, causing a whirling appearance to all around. Instantly a myriad gleaming eyes sprang into prominence, and on the farther boundary of a dark mass of animals stood many forms of vastness appearing as dark cliffs rising above a sea; some by the curling glories of their immense tusks proclaimed themselves mastodons, above their heads waving serpent-like trunks; but there were others of huge hairy bulk, black and terrible, whose necks, tall as palm-trees, supported a serpent-like antlered head, now thrown low back over their quivering bodies. There was also a strange monster whose similitude none there witnessed before, and, not recognising, the eye was unable to define its outlines before the darkness came; yet nevertheless the weird enormity of it filled them with horror.

With the morning light all such as were harmful and noxious

were gone and not one remained, although no eye had seen and no ear detected the sign of their retreat. Upon the horizon Axatlan raged furiously and it was evident that an eruption of more than usual magnitude was taking place. Weary and awe-struck, all gathered upon the deck to witness what might happen, with prayer upon their trembling lips, perceiving how as a temple of blood-red flame the aisles and domes of cloudy vapour extended even to them, so that the surrounding scenery was as one Infernal hall where a throne of fire raised itself at the distant end in a horror of revolving flames: and as a curtain of luminous gold the pouring hail fell before all the scene. Around them an electric deluge heightened the waste of waters, where, rising from their deep fathoms, only the tops of hills and remains of lofty forests showed, surrounded by their putrid gatherings.

Suddenly a far disturbance shook the floating storms where that spurt of watery steam that spoke the doom of Aten rent the tempests. The waves separated to right and left in steamy hissing spray as a ridge of earth, running swiftly as a serpent rising from the ocean, appeared above their troubled expanse with sounds of explosions and rendings. A cry of terror broke from all as the circling volcanoes burst into a fury of fire and uproar and the heavy clouds rolled into worlds of light, while with a stunning majesty of sound came to their ears the noise of the awful explosion that had hurled the proud city in wreck and flying horror to the sky. Great Axatlan trembled and reeled, vomiting blood-red matter, and then the high cone vanished in a bed of fire.

In a silence of awe they watched, believing the world to be sinking in molten horror, themselves the last ones of its myriad children. A vast wave of water, high-rolling and foam-crested, flowing in the opposite direction to the watery destruction that had submerged Lote, appeared to seal the doom. The Earth shook and rolled in mystic space. Below, the moving waters ran in hills and deep valleys of fear; above, the tremendous masses seemed about to fall and bury them with their disturbed spheres, torn by lightning and thundrous tempests. The watchers fell down and cried to Heaven from the depths of the great

wrath of the vengeance; the mothers with their children fainting in fear below. The wind was now one great humming roar and the voices of the Doom were terrible and stupendous.

The wave broke high among the mountains, and in its gray-green seas, reflecting in open places the luminous clouds, the bodies of poulps could be seen writhing in death's agonies, burned by steam and dashed upon the rocks. In the open waters the spotted sharks swam, their white bellies gleaming in sudden terrified rushes when whirlpools formed with a seething cone of suction as the waters fell into opening fissures. They swam in groups, full of terror, uncaring but to snap at floating bodies, and avoiding such places where the great poulps struggled in their misshapen hideousness with sliding shield-like eyes and gnashing beaks. Unrecognisable shapes, which had been carried with violence from the sea, grovelled in the depths, some spouting blood from their scalded heads to great heights and rolling on the disturbed waves, convulsed by the lower earthquakes.

Ham, with pressing words, would have entered the vessel and closed the ports, as before his eyes ever appeared the figure of one who was buried beneath the flood because of him, and superstitious fears caused him to see her in every horrid wave; but the sire with quiet words of authority forbade unseemly haste.

Earth and sky were shaken by awful thunders; and fireballs, flying from ebon masses that appeared almost solid, plunged into the violently agitated waves in volumes of steam and spray, sending watery columns to the clouds. The mountain basin in which the Mexiah lay was agitated continuously by subterranean eruptions; upon all hands could be heard the thunder of falling masses, as larger rocks, blasted by the lightnings, parted in bursting ruin, whose fall, echoed by every tortured defile of the hills, filled all space with an unceasing uproar.

A continuous light caused the unhappy people to look up, and Susi, who had come to her husband, first perceived the two strangers returned. With a cry of joy she ran to them, falling upon her knees with her fair arms outstretched.

“O Sirs!” she cried, her sweet young face radiant with enthusiasm, “we are but mortals and the storms terrify us. Leave us not, for we know whom ye are and whence ye come, and in your hands are the directions of the God which we know and love.”

The greater spirit laid his hand very tenderly upon her head.

“Kneel not to us, sweet one,” he said: “yet are we verily come to thee and to thine to bid you have trust and faith, for in the eyes of the Lord Jehovah are you blessed, and He will preserve you. Arise, old servant of our Lord, and hearken to the word that bids thee persevere in thy righteous course which has found high favour in the sight of Heaven. For to thee is given the task of again raising thy race which perishes, (save thy family,) this day to the uttermost one, to which ones saved thou shalt preach their mission, which is, to go abroad over all the Earth and lead the heathen to knowledge of God. For a space, Fare thee well; and fare you all well, O chosen of our Lord! We shall meet again. Get you within.”

They went forth, and as the prostrate people arose they beheld a very strange sight where for the last time on that scene the bright sun looked. Piercing the dreadful clouds, his arrowy beams shot bright and strong into the midst of the black inferno, filling a space with wondrous light, and casting upon the mists around the Mexiah a strangely beautiful tint, causing it to appear that it was surrounded by Heavenly glory. A zone of vivid green lay upon the blue Infernal halls, a splendour of colour that appealed to their minds in the voice of a chord of most perfect musical sorrow and hope, of unutterable depth and beauty. *α* And then it was gone, and headlong dropped the portals of horrid night, wherein, from a throne of flame set upon a rising floor of waters, Death executed the justice of God upon the land.

Within the Mexiah the family of Noah prostrated themselves before their altar. A sound was heard of closing doors as the hatches were secured from without and all light was shut off,

α Would this be the first appearance of the Rainbow? See former reference to this phenomenon, footnote p. 323.

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save such as came through the long screened windows which were beneath the roof for the draught of the air. The crisis was upon all.

They felt the floor beneath them roll and tremble, and to some of them the thought came in all its fearful import that they were afloat upon an Ocean. Terrified sounds were heard



PIERCING THE DREADFUL CLOUDS WITH WONDROUS LIGHT.

faintly; there was a lurch and a violent upheaval, causing them to cry out for fear. Roll came upon roll; the vessel appeared to be whirled around and lifted up, cast down and driven violently in all directions, while overhead sounded a tremendous thud and swish that caused the whole structure to shake. Be-

lieving themselves to be engulfed, they lay trembling with bated breath as a vast concussion drove them sideways at terrific speed.

A tidal wave of oceanic magnitude had broken upon the mountains and fallen over them, and the recoiling waters dragged them with irresistible violence to the inferno of whirling foam where the body of the wave rose, swirling and eddying above the basin. Over the falling mass a counter-current sped with tremendous velocity, bearing the Mexiah far out over the waters, where she floated in safety carried away to the east.

On a level keel she sped, and her inmates knew she was sailing upon the Flood, while the muffled thunders and the heavy tapping of the rain on her sloping deck were now the only sounds audible.

We may notice that no mention is made of the pillars of Seth, mentioned by Josephus, who appears to have mistaken the son of Adam for Seth or Sesostris, king of Egypt, said to have erected such a pillar in the land of Siriad. Seth, or Set, whose name appears in Setee (Sethos), another Egyptian monarch, was also one of the gods of that country, at one time worshipped, but afterwards representing physical evil. He is called Typhon by the Greeks.

Neither do we find any mention of Turk, the son of Japhet, from whom the Turks claim descent. The historian Abou'lgazi Bahdur-Khan calls him the eldest son but he may have been the first one born after the Flood.

CAP. XVII.

THE GATES OF DEATH.

BLACK horror brooded over Zul; a horror that knew no gleam of hope or of mitigation, but remained waiting in anguish of terror for a certain doom and trembling at every sound, believing it to be the herald of approaching dissolution. Above them spread the vaulted roof of thunder, alive with serpents of fire, and upon all hands stretched court beyond court of dreadful cloudy temples where the spirits of storms raged furiously above rolling waves pierced by the white columns of the hail.

The starved and half-drowned thousands crouched all over the city among the dripping ruins, not caring even to congregate in numbers by fear of sweeping destruction, save where crowds gathered upon the steps of the red palace and remained in shuddering terror, drenched and freezing. Here and there, washed along in swirling streams, were recognised corpses from other cities cast by the storm-waves even in the streets of the capital. From the darkness they came, these poor waifs, carried upon the mountains of water that cast their dreadful trophies far and wide, to speak with their dead presences of a doom of vengeance falling and to come.

But in some of the palaces yet standing men feasted on hidden stores of meat and wine and lay drunk and dying of desperate excesses, and songs, awful in their unheeding recklessness, were shouted in the face of Death. In such places men and women danced in hideous revelries, stabbing each other to the heart and shrieking curses and blasphemies to the last. But most sat in mute despair in the deluge of hail and rain and awaited what should come.

A madman clambered up to where the fire-tower of Zul lay upon its heaps of ruins, and for the last time the great drum

rolled out its sonorous echoes, scarce heard among the noise of the elements. Azta heard it, crouched there upon the daïs, and I heard it also. For both of us there was a voice in the deep booming sound, recalling the remembrance of a calm moonlit night; bidding a long, long farewell. A sob of agony burst from my soul, but Azta sat there as silent as the dead figure whose hand she held. My perceptions, more sensitive and deep, received a greater impression than hers; and indeed, could mortal have felt that stab of keenest horror he would not have survived it, so bitter was it in its depths of sadness. Yet from her eyes ran two great tears that trickled over her arm and splashed upon the floor; tears of a sorrow that was nigh all too grievous for her to support: and well the gloom and the rolling thunders befitted the sorrow of two hearts panting in the throes of death, yet living.

“Pray, pray!” she whispered in a fearful voice.

“I cannot pray!” I answered her in such tones of despair I scarce believed the voice to be mine, recognising that although praise is ever meet and proper, yet prayer is sometimes neither.

Without, the screams of storm-driven seagulls sounded like spirit-voices of the tempest; the high walls had disappeared, the lower terraces were under water, with a few tall buildings rising vaguely here and there and some broken columns showing. Before the rising waters the people were compelled to congregate, crouching above floating dead bodies and at times themselves washed away to die.

A quivering cry of horror, echoing from afar and carried by the furious blasts of wind, proclaimed a fresh terror. Around them the waters suddenly sank with a seething rush, sucking the rolling bodies with them, and like dark fangs bared, sprang up the masses of ruins. Those who witnessed it believed themselves about to be dragged into an opening chasm and fled upwards with white shrieking lips, while such as only heard the weird cry of fright cried out also from a sensation of unknown dreadfulness leaping upon them.

The crowds facing the sea and those crouched upon the red terraces of the palace steps and among the gardens perceived rolling upon them from the ocean a long floor of moving water,

making the eye giddy with the rapidity of its onward movement; as though under that vaulted roof, whose vast domes of thunder-clouds, upheld upon the columns of the hail, were wreathed with awful lights, spread swiftly a carpet of water.

Meeting the cliffs with a force that threw the gasping spectators to the ground, it broke into an inferno of billowy, foamy masses, bounding, tossing, seething, dashing high and falling in thunder and vast hills of hurrying foam, rushing onward irresistibly and burying temple and monument, column and wall, palace and terraces.

The vast ruins of the temple of Zul, upheaved and hurled forward with awful power, crashed down upon the terraces of the palace, sweeping the flights of stairways with their androsphinxes and the winding glories of columned porticoes and corridors and massy pylon towers in rending masses before them. Great trees of the gardens, torn up by the roots, flew forward and cleared the thronging victims from the terraces as though a besom removed them, and the largest buildings went down before the rush of oceans. Divided by the tall hill and the mighty ruins of the palace the watery Horror passed; but another wave followed, sweeping along with a high foamy crest and reinforcing the power of the first mighty destroyer, rolling the ruins of a vast city and the mangled corpses of its thronging population in a hurrying avalanche of blood and wreck over the waters of the sunken land, mingling the great masses with others and crumbling them to fragments in an eddying sea of pink foam.

One object rose above the fearful flood. It was the top of the crater of Zul, beneath whose protecting and dividing point stood a portion of the Imperial palace—the Hall of Feasting.

There, unsheltered and alone, were we three upon the dais. The floor had been swept clear of debris and bodies, and only streamlets and cataracts occupied the space so lately filled with warmth and heaped up with luxuries. A long portion of the side wall still raised its pictured imageries, the golden mirrors, dimmed with salt spray, blank patches between the gaudy colours, still showing through the ravages of wind and wave. One torch still remained, twisted in its holder and dripping water



REINFORCING THE POWER OF THE FIRST MIGHTY DESTROYER.

from its soaked, half-consumed materials. Beneath it lay a few remnants of the roof and the hideous figure of a dead man.

Then came the third wave, advancing swiftly under its long gleaming crest and, breaking upon the hill in two giant tongues of froth and spray, which, meeting, leaped all around the high dais with a giddy rush and then swept away the tottering wall.

Azta looked up slowly as she heard the crash, and saw the coloured ruins melt away in the churning white foam. But a little way beneath surged the waters of a level ocean, flattening under the deluge from the clouds and lighted up, until it appeared like a sea of molten gold, by the electric glories, that, quivering in bright paths of light or reflected in dreadful gorgeousness on the black and indigo vault, showed where the rolling gates of thunder opened to a wonderland of cloudy horizons. Against this bright background stood the bare black crater, steaming but silent, the last point of Atlantis, but above it appeared to gather rolling spheres, and among them moved great bodies, bursting and filling the air with molten lines of electricity. Opposing forces met and exploded all around the cloudy Inferno, currents and cross-currents of furious wind tore them, and, reflected gloriously in the flowing water, the great serpents of fire sped crackling from point to point of thunder.

There were skeletons in the water, now shimmering far down as they sank, and returning currents brought bones still covered with flesh, and bodies to which clung costly draperies floating with others bloated and emitting poisonous odours. Afar sailed a log of wood to which the last efforts of love had secured a fair young girl, now lying beneath it, because the branches had been smashed and broken off, destroying the equilibrium. Yonder, a broken raft still held some sad burden secured to its loosened fragments, and upon others were children held closely in a dead mother's embrace that no fearful shock had yet loosened: and lovers, faithful in death, floated secured to one another upon some frail support, to whose puny protection they had perforce trusted with a true and sad foreboding that for them no Sun would rise again. How touching a sight it was to see how love manifested itself thus, strong before the majesty of Death; and to me it came with a wild sorrow, for ever was I moved by

pain; and now was a great consolation in remembrances of its oft alleviation by me which it might not become me to have boasted then. But how dearly sweet now the memory of the full heart relieved that melted in tears of grateful joy, and the benedictions of eyes that spoke more than any words of Earth. Yet who could help Me?

The waters were calm but for a long rolling swell and the occasional flurry of opposing currents. A little way out, just under the surface, lay a long phosphorescent form, shimmering and horrible. It was a great shark, and Azta felt in a strange manner that she had witnessed that scene before, and was fascinated as she gazed upon that motionless body and marked the head with its strange monstrous profile that resembled a fearful caricature of a human face. She, who had looked upon the mysteries, felt in her soul a fearful depth of fright, dreadful in its appalling vagueness. Before us both an infinite Hell of horror opened a space in which the mind groped blindly, agonized, bewildered and deathless.

Around her fell a pouring torrent of waters from the sheltering buckler; upon one hand stood an undying, faithful love, stronger than death, proved dearly in this awful trial; upon the other lay the already gathering signs of corruption. Moved by some agency a golden circlet rolled from beneath the daïs, and Azta recognised it as a bracelet worn by Huitza, remembering that she had noted how it flashed upon his arm that night that he died. How it came there she knew not, but by reason of its former ownership she seized it eagerly, perceiving within the massive ornament a flat disc; upon which gazing, with eyes blinded with tears, she saw in the light that it was one of her own gold plates that adorned her forehead-band. There upon it was the symbol of the butterfly, and others that spelled her name.

Amazed by a shock more powerful than aught her soul had yet felt, she stared at the golden band. Stared with her eyes, her heart, her soul in a wild emotion that carried her far above the horror of an instant ago and swept her back to the torch-lighted hall, the warmth and grand cheer. She saw the fierce, rolling eyes of those haughty lords and heard, mingled with

their great roars of laughter, the wanton cries of women. The golden mirrors again flashed their dazzling kaleidoscopes of colours like sunbeams between the harsh, gaudy paintings, and the torches flared and guttered. It was the lightnings that conveyed the effect to her mind, so realistic and life-like, but she thought not of that, nor knew it. She only dreamed on in that vision of blessed rest and permitted her spirit-eyes to wander over the gay happiness, albeit of sin. She felt again the pang of unrequited love, that appeared to instantly change to a sudden wild joy as she gazed steadfastly upon the great War-chief of Atlantis and then looked beyond to where sat the Emperor and the gleaming Guards. The music fell upon her ears; sad, splendid strains of wondrous harmony, far beyond the performer's usual powers. She felt within her the pleasure of the mystic potency bestowed by myself, and looked over to the captain of her guards, Nahuasco, and next to Shar-Jatal with the hooked nose. He spoke softly to Sada, and she wondered what he said to her. There were Nezca, Mehir, Axazaya, Azco, Toloc, Tua, Pocatepa—so many that she knew! Old Na stood by her, and there was the young frivolous favorite, Gadema. The gems sparkled again as they had sparkled then, the wine flowed ruby red, the song and jest arose. She smiled in happy joy, her soul filled with delight, new and strange and thrilling. To her there was no gloom or cold; in a beautiful vision her Love had come to her in comprehensible form, and not as an illusive beauty that had ever faded before her dazzled understanding could retain It; startling by Its suddenly apparent grandeur and sublimity that compelled and fixed the awakened perception. Clear, perfect and all-mighty It stood, born of that vision to potential reality, but It had not the features of the one to whom her strange wild nature had clung so obstinately through good and evil and had been unable to forget. For now to her the brilliant chief appeared as a Devil, the incarnated power of her demon-father whose spells were so heavily upon her, and brother to herself who had conceived and brought forth the Curse of Atlantis; but her Love came in clear guise and filled her whole soul with complete and unutterable joy, high and sublime, gazing from its pure heights

of intensity upon the petty ambitions of Earth, and raising her upward.

Her eyes opened widely in delicious rapture and the glorious vision was past and gone. Before those yellow orbs, shining with a new light, the bright picture melted and faded in gray mists, and a sensation of deadly chill succeeded. Yet there remained the joy of love that nought could quench or lessen, the waters that now lapped the floor on which she sat frightened her not, and looking with her clear eyes upon Toltiah's dead face she perceived there such a dire expression of selfish crime and soulless sensuality that she dropped his hand, understanding all.

The watery plain was alive with light to the mysterious horizon, lying now like a flat table of fretted gold on which were myriads of black spots. Nought but the crater of Zul broke the continuity of the black and gold of cloud and wave. Sometimes a tremulous heaving passed over the waters, a shimmering movement imparted by submarine disturbances; the monotone of the thunder was like the voice of an organ that moaned incessantly, while as sad tears the luminous drops of rain fell upon the waters of the Flood. What strange peace! What gloomy majesty of subdued sonorous sounds and vast undisturbed immensity of emptiness! Yet it was very awful, and Azta felt that she was an intruder in the presence of the wrath of God.

A voice broke on her ear, terrible in its despair and the wild entreaty more felt than expressed:

"The End approaches," it spake; "Nay, but for a power that wickedly defies Heaven it were here long since. Arise, an thou wilt not come with me, and bid me farewell, O my Love, nor forget one who gave up all for thee. I can protect thee no more."

Azta heard the summons, and with a heart-rending bitterness came a pitiless intuition like a voice from those Heavens that were so dreadful, and she realized what I would never have told her—that I had perchance lost all hope of regaining Heaven for the preference of endeavouring to obtain an uncertain love of Earth. Her brows bent under the sorrow that crushed her beneath its weight and she caught at her throat as though she suffocated.

She slowly arose, groping painfully with closed eyes. Under the glare of the lightnings her face looked like chiselled pure marble, lovelier far than the coloured mockery of her wondrous gems, and she stretched out a hand as one in a dream. Her breathing had ceased, her white lips opened slowly with a sad, fearful expression as her head fell backwards.

My arm supported her and the outstretched hand rested in mine. I pressed a long lingering kiss upon her forehead and drops that were not of rain fell upon her face, hot, scalding drops of agony. Upon my shoulder her head rested, the glorious hair radiant with light. No breath moved the full white bosom; in that fearful moment she was as one dead, and raising my face to Heaven I lifted my voice in an impassioned appeal for her.

“Almighty God!” I cried in agony, “it is enough! Not for myself I plead, but for this one whom thou hast created. Forget not in Thy wrath who calls upon Thee, and for the dear love that thou didst bear in past times grant my petition and visit the sins of this one upon me, and me alone. Respect my despair and accept my confession and pardon one whom I have caused to transgress, O dread Avenger.”

I paused. My eyes undazzled by the lightnings wandered over the awful gloom. Beneath me I felt the ground tremble, and a long, terrible shriek broke from me in the soul's last agony as no answer came to my appeal.

Azta raised her eyelids. She was dying, and her body had ceased to feel any sensation, but those glorious eyes still lived and sought mine.

I looked upon her face and saw it set in horror as she met my awful glare and perceived within my countenance the shadow of a doom that was courted for her; the doom of an undying soul.

But, as she looked, the vision broke upon her mind, and within those yellow depths I read in that last moment the dawn of Love, the entire comprehension of all that had lain unseen within her grasp, the wealth of Heaven and her suppressed consciousness. With a new awakening her eyes gazed into mine as they had gazed with such strange questioning of old, a long joyous look that searched as it had vainly searched before,

and found and comprehended all at last. With a heavenly smile she threw her arms about my neck, her splendid beauty crowned with the ineffable majesty of death and a grand new life.

"I have found my Ideal," she breathed joyously; "kiss me, my Love, my lord."

What glory of happiness was mine! There, alone, surrounded by the falling heavens and the drowning Earth, we two stood, and upon me came the perfume of her breath and her hair and the passionate flash of the rubies. What to us were the opening gates of Death? In that great life were we invulnerable and unafraid. O splendour of exalted joy that with its opal wing brushed away the weariness and sorrow of the terrible past and set us upon a throne of living grandeur! This Soul was mine, mine with its beauteous eyes and expanding sweetness, won at such dire cost; yet as I folded her to my breast and pressed my lips to hers with a long kiss of love I only grieved that I had sacrificed more than I had a right to.

"O wonderful," she cried, as she lay in my arms and looked into my eyes; "that I should have been so blind. Kiss me again, Beloved, nor ever again will I leave thee."

What sweet intoxication was it that made us both rejoice in our new life and turn that moment of horror into a great pleasure? Queen of the Dead she stood, wondrous in unearthly majesty; for the first time she raised her voice in song, as an echo from far away that grew and swelled into an impassioned melody, in inspired words born of the new life within her soul; and over the grave of Atlantis floated the Requiem of Earth, the Welcome to Love.

Vision of joy more great than joy in seeming,
Shadow of Love more sought than Love's bright day,
Ever beyond all grasp and ever growing
With each great step that takes us more astray.

Height after height surmounted grows more barren,
Step after step, each bringing greater pain,
Hope after hope lies hardening in our spirits,
Speaking of shadows that we cannot gain.

Where is our Love, sweet joy of joys Eternal?
Pleasure of pleasures pure as purest gold;

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Life of our life, and Sun of that vast Heaven
So empty that our hands could never hold.

Where is our Love, that, fed by Love, would flourish
Greater than worlds of sunlit visions bright—
Fill all our soul with vastest satisfaction
Passed in mad dreaming of a dream's delight?

Fire of bright fires enravishing our spirit,
Subtly unseen by eyes that know it not;
Come, though in Death thy dear embrace be welcomed!
In Death's dark valley welcome me, my Love!

Her head fell back upon my shoulder, her arms clung about my neck. With her eyes she gazed upon me in all the mute eloquence of a perfect understanding and love, as a long sigh came from her heart. Then the light faded from her eyes; one word gasped from her lips: "Forgive."

And thus passed Azta, once ruler of Atlantis, last of all those thronging crowds that had stood before her there where the waters flowed. But I remained alive, supporting her to the last.

It came in thundering majesty. The tall hill sank deep as the vast crater opened and the waters poured in; and then earth, air, sky and flood were rent by an explosion that lifted a mass of liquefied stratas with a frightful upheaval. Up went hill and terrace, foundations and walls, masses of masonry and human remains, fishes and animals in one awful blending of torrential horror, falling in a mighty wreck, continued by single falling masses and great splashes whose sound lasted for some while as descending waters and stones fell far and near to sink to a level buried fathoms deep, forming the bed of a great ocean.

Waves ran in all directions and the sound of a great sigh floated over the waters stretching level and unbroken to the horizon, the only thing that broke their continuity being the Mexiah as she floated in that bright night of horror over the grave of a nation, bearing a tiny remnant of it that should go forth again and spread over all the world.

FINIS.

APPENDIX.

§ 1.—CONCERNING the existence of the semi-mythical island of Atlantis there appears to be no definite information, and it is probable that there never will be; for even could we find its whereabouts stated, the geography of the world has altered since and would render such statement of no avail. In the angelic narrative we get no information as to where it was situated, and as there was no reckoning by latitude and longitude in those days we have to content ourselves with the name, a name that we have often heard of and placed among the myths without thought or reason. We cannot locate this land by any climatic hypothesis, because we find the climate undergoing apparently a total change in its latter days, possibly even heralding the glacial epoch, (§ 6), but as to probable location see § 2.

§ 2.—All very ancient legend and the most rudimentary history, the vague allusions of Plato, Aristotle and Seneca, speak of a country in the Western Ocean, which would scarcely be likely to be the distant Americas; and I think we may accept those legends as to a land existing in what is now the Atlantic Ocean at about the period discussed in § 4, remembering that after all legend is oral history and starts with some foundations. This land, stretching from Florida, probably included above-sea portions of Europe and of Africa, the latter supposed to be the birth-place of the Adamites; (see note, end cap. xx., lib. ii). All theories as to what was land and what was water at those remote epochs must be more or less suppositious, and as geological results are not at all analogous we cannot say for certain what has been, and we may remember Darwin's words:—"I look upon the geological record as a history of the world imperfectly kept and written in a changing dialect; of this history we possess the last volume alone, relating to only two or three countries, of this volume only a short chapter here and there has been preserved, and of each page only here and there a few lines."

‡ 3.—Truly, an examination of the bed of the Atlantic Ocean does not seem to indicate a sunken land over which a sea more or less shallow flows. Indeed we learn that, from the appearance of the continuity of animal life on the Atlantic sea-bed from the Cretaceous epoch to the present time, that the great basin was practically the same as now at that far back later Secondary period; but although Sir Chas. Lyell points out the apparent fact of volcanic formation in a deep ocean, there are eminent naturalists who hold the theory that the Madeiras, Azores and Canaries are the last remaining points of a great submerged land connecting them with North Africa and the West of Europe. The earliest eruption according to Sir Chas. Lyell would have taken place in the later Miocene period, which would correspond with my theory as to the period of Atlantis (‡ 4).

‡ 4.—The theories as to the period of Atlantis, the Glacial epoch, and the evolution and creation of Man, are mutually dependent upon one another, and can hardly be separated.

I place Atlantis in the Pliocene epoch, just before that of the Glacial, by these arguments: 1. the creation of Adam; 2. the Flood.

1. The creation of Man is mentioned in two places, Gen. i. 26, and ii. 7; and in this second place he receives the breath of life and becomes *a living soul*. This man was Adam; Gen. ii. 8. But there were men before Adam; and as there is too much in the evolution theory to be overlooked, as we shall see later, (‡ 23), we may remember that Prof. Ernst Hæckel says that the period during which the evolution of the anthropoid apes into ape-like men took place was probably the last part of the Tertiary period, the Pliocene age, or perhaps the Miocene, its forerunner. Then, I think, these pre-Adamite men having sufficiently evolved from a lower form to surpass all other animals in the needful attributes, a perfect man was created, of what powers we are not fully informed: and this would be at the end of the Pliocene epoch. And, says A. W. Buckland, in full support of my theory of there being such a land of Atlantis at such a period submerged by a cataclysm of the Glacial epoch following, "the missing links between men and apes, if existent, probably lie deep down in oceanic mud, and therefore their discovery is more than improbable; for if we would trace man back to his origin, we must imagine a world geographically quite unlike that we inhabit." Then,

when the Adamites increased and multiplied and the beauty of their daughters tempted the sons of God to stray, so that all became confusion, the cold winds ushered in that tremendous change which passed over the world, and the land of the ancient legends was erased by the waters of the Flood.

2. I take this great cataclysm as one of the results of such a change as the Glacial epoch, following the Pliocene, and again I quote Buckland in support. In his "Anthropological Studies" he gives a list of French and English remains of animals found in caves, seeming to show continental conditions... and "with the exception of the mammoth, beaver, and reindeer, the whole fauna seems to show a climate warmer than the present. If then we take this fauna to represent a continental period, one of *upheaval*, we are led to a conclusion contrary to most geologists—that the Glacial period was one of subsidence, that as the land became elevated, so did the temperature rise also, so as to become suitable to the manuals of tropical climes, whilst the reindeer and beaver, which, it may be remarked, are few in number in English caves, may represent the vanishing fauna of a past era of Arctic cold.... Whether the caverns were occupied in pre- or inter-Glacial times it is difficult to decide; but it is certain that they were frequented by Pleistocene animals, and by man, before the characteristic Glacial deposits of this area were accumulated.

The natural conclusion is therefore that the caverns were occupied by an early Pleistocene fauna, and by man, anterior to the great submergence indicated by the high-level marine sands, and therefore also before the deposition of the so-called great upper boulder clay of this area. As there is no evidence against such a view, it may even be legitimately assumed that the ossiferous remains and the flint implements are of an earlier date than Glacial deposits found in this area."

§ 5.—It would appear analogous reasoning that the terrible catastrophe which would agree as to period with all that I have stated should be caused by a vast change over the world, (see note, p. 323, lib. iii). Before that we cannot tell what it was like, but it was different in many ways, climatic as well as "geographically quite unlike that we inhabit." For Buckland says—"Another curious fact which has attracted much attention of late is, that recent Arctic explorations have proved incontestably that a mild semi-tropical climate once existed within the Arctic circle, for not only have coal and coral been found

within the most northerly lands discovered, but the fossil flora of these lands is found to include plants semi-tropical in character, and which could not thrive or produce seeds with the amount of *light* now received in those regions, even if they could by increase of habit have borne a considerable increase of cold."

The Arctic regions would now indeed seem to be passing through their first Glacial epoch.

‡ 6.—Thus Buckland. And that the Flood was a very real and very terrible event is supported by Lenormant in his "Les Origines de l'Histoire", the translation of which I give: "The long review, which we have just read, warrants our affirmation that the story of the Deluge is a universal tradition in every branch of humanity, with the exception, however, of the black race. But a remembrance everywhere, so precise and so similar, cannot be that of a myth capriciously invented; no myth, religious or cosmogonic, presents this universal character. It must be the memory of a real, and terrible, event, which so powerfully impressed itself upon the mind of the ancestors of our race as never to be forgotten by their descendants. This cataclysm took place near the primal cradle of humanity. See note, end cap. xx., lib. ii.

‡ 7.—What pre-Adamite man was like we do not know, but believe him to have been a huge ape-like creature, similar to those of cap. viii., lib. ii. Of such probably was Cain afraid (Gen. vii., 14). Although of course the family of Adam by this time would by itself have comprised a great number of people—Dr. Kinns thinks 20,000 α and of such were probably the mysterious Zuzim, Rephaim, Emim, Horim, Avim and Anakim of Palestine encountered by the Israelites.

In America, too, we learn of the Quinames or giants, who occupied the valley of Mexico before the arrival of the Nohoa tribe of the Olmecs, and dwelt in the mountains around for centuries afterwards. According also to a legend La Puebla was inhabited by giants at the time of the arrival of Quetzalcohuatl, and that the pyramids of Cholullan had been built by them an unknown time back.

These being pre-Adamites would show that the Flood was no more universal than it had need to be, and was probably only for the purpose of blotting out a race whose dreadful powers overran proper limits.

α "Graven in the Rock," Vol. I., p. 86.

§ 8.—On the long and short skull theory—dolichocephalic—and brachycephalic—French anthropologists of this school hold the origin of man to be in the Pliocene or even Miocene ages to allow time for the two types; although authority for this is doubtful (and see § 16.) But Buckland tells us that implements of Man are found associated with the bones of extinct mammalia which carry back his antiquity with certainty to the close of the Glacial period, if not to its commencement. Agassiz estimates human remains found in the Florida reef to be 10,000 yrs. old; and Mr. Dowler found a skeleton beneath four buried forests in the delta near New Orleans said to be 50,000 yrs. old. Man's association with the mammoth would take him back to the Pliocene group.

§ 9.—Concerning archaic Man we read in *The Races of the Old World* that the mind is lost in astonishment in looking back on such a vast antiquity of human beings. A tribe of men in existence hundreds of thousands of years before any of the received dates of the Creation! Savages who hunted, with their flint-headed arrows, the gigantic elk of Ireland and the buffalo of Germany, or who fled from the fierce tiger of France, or who trapped the immense clumsy mammoth of northern Europe. Who were they? we ask ourselves in wonder. Was there with Man as with other forms of animal life, a long and gradual procession from the lowest condition to a higher, till at length the world was made ready for a more developed human being, and the Creator placed the first of the present family of man upon the earth? Were those European barbarians of the Drift period a primeval race, destroyed before the creation of our own race, and lower and more barbarian than the lowest of the present inhabitants of the world? Or, as seems more probable, were those mysterious beings—the hunters of the mammoth and the aurochs—the earliest progenitors of our own family, the childish fathers of the human race?

As says Sir Thomas Browne:—

The greater part must be content to be as though they had not been: to be found in the register of God, not in the records of men. The number of the dead long exceedeth all that shall live. The Night of Time far surpasseth the day, and who knoweth the Equinox?

§ 10.—Again Buckland:—“We see everywhere primitive man, a naked savage, devoid of every art except those necessary to

self-preservation, his first improvements being the manufacture of implements of war and the chase. Man in this condition would seem to have spread gradually over the whole earth, for his relics are found everywhere, and his descendants, still in the same state of utter barbarism, are found in many outlying lands which have been cut off by changes in the conformation of the land from communication with races who have gradually acquired civilization; and may also be traced in low and outcast tribes down-trodden by conquering hordes."

This is so, but we do not know what those primitive men were like, but they were not the sons of Adam with whom the angels mingled. They were probably, as is the increasing opinion, of the Australoid type, spreading from a now submerged centre, which type may be traced in many of the most ancient remains found; and of whom we read in "Adam and the Adamite" that the difference between the European and the Austral negro is such as to make the latter appear scarcely human at all. See § 14.

§ 11.—But as there were human beings before Adam, and our human race to-day is no differently constructed to any animal, except in manner consequent upon environment, we may take it, I think, that the *creation* of Adam was a moral and not physical, with a consequent immense improvement. Man, as the physical animal, is the same, and it is pointed out that the practical identity of gesture signs among races so unlike as the English and Australians indicate extreme closeness of mental similarity throughout the human species.

§ 12.—I see nothing in Man—except from a moral stand-point—to warrant any claim to an especial creation. As a primeval animal he did not equal the ant or the bee in organized intellect, and there is reason to believe that he had no speech. Adam appears to have been endowed with the gift, as also God-like perceptions, and to him was given the naming of animals.

Man is distinctly an animal, apart from his moral perceptions: in his passions and appetites and propagation he is no better than the lower orders. He has the organs of speech, but so has the parrot, and the parrot with the perceptions of Adam would speak. Man is the animal best fitted for the impress of God—as an animal he may have been as formidable as the gorilla in a long-past time that has obliterated all traces of him.

§ 13.—The great anatomist, Prof. Huxley, tells us that there “is no justification for placing man in a distinct order” from apes, and St. George Mivart says:—“By universal consent apes are placed in the highest rank of all brutes, and excepting man, are generally taken to be the most perfect animals of the mammalian class. It may be questioned, however, whether, if the animal man had never existed, this place would be assigned them by an observing intelligence. The half-apes, or Lemurs, commonly placed in the same order with them, are certainly inferior mammals; and it might be contended that the perfection of the mammalian type is rather to be found in the *Felidæ*, by reasoning analogous to that by which it might also be contended that birds (with their differentiated limbs, perfect circulating and respiratory systems, acute sense organs, complex instincts, and teachableness) are really the highest of all vertebrate animals, and represent the vertebrate type of structure carried to the highest degree of perfection yet attained.”

§ 14.—With reference to § 11 we again quote Buckland:—“If we are to maintain a belief in the unity of the human race, we must suppose them to have crept to their present position with the singular and ancient fauna and flora of that far-off land”—Australia—“from a common centre, at a period when Australia formed part of a vast continent since submerged. There are many who hold the belief that in this submerged continent was the cradle of the human race; that there, beneath a tropical or semi-tropical sky, some tribe allied to, but not identical with the present anthropoid apes, (who, it may be observed, seem all to radiate from a point of which this buried land would be the centre), gradually developed into man, at first only one step removed from the brutes, but slowly advancing in the arts which distinguish men, and that in the Australians we see the first steps of that development checked from further progress by gradual isolation, consequent upon the slow submergence of the continent of which it once formed a part.

§ 15.—I do not think there was any gradual advance in arts, any more than there is among animals of to-day; and I take it as probable that the simple evolution of life and capacities for enjoying it stop short at that which only the gift of moral perceptions to Adam could give. I fully believe in the evolution of the animal Man, and I think the peculiar idea of descent from a *totem* points to a knowledge, or theory, of such an advancement.

§ 16.—With regard to the two forms of skulls found in connection with the earliest human remains known, a curious fact is noticed by M. Hovelacque in his work entitled “Notre Ancêtre.” He writes—“a very striking fact is this, the anthropomorphic apes of Africa, (gorilla, and chimpanzee) are dolichocephalic, as are the African negroes and the Bushmen; whilst the anthropomorphics of the extreme East are brachycephalic, as are the negritos of the Andaman Isles, the inhabitants of the interior of the peninsula of Malacca, and of certain parts of Melanesia.”

Buckland thinks that this might denote some local causes, tending to the production of a dolichocephalic type in Africa, and of a brachycephalic in Asia; although he advances the fact that the strongly marked brow-ridges so prominent in the gorilla and chimpanzee, and apparently characteristic of the earliest known palæolithic races, as also of the extinct Tasmanians, and in a less degree of the Australian and Papuan of to-day, are not found in the orang-hutan of Asia, which has a broad, flat face, to a certain extent comparable with the mongol dwelling in the same land.

§ 17.—With moral perceptions and imagination man far surpassed the other animals of Earth, becoming their head, and triumphing in organized coöperation over disunited and ignorant efforts.

§ 18.—“1. It happened after the sons of man had multiplied in these days, that daughters were born to them elegant and beautiful.

“2. And when the angels, the sons of heaven, beheld them, they became enamoured of them.

“3. And they took wives, each choosing for himself; whom they began to approach, and with whom they cohabited, teaching them sorcery, incantations, and the dividing of roots and trees . . . and the women conceiving brought forth giants.” (“Bk. of Enoch,” Archbishop Lawrence, 3rd Ed. pp. 5—6).

§ 19.—Either it was that in olden times supernatural visitations were frequent, or the psychic perceptions of Man were keener; see Gen. 19, and many more examples. Certainly “the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light,” which would apparently show that one perception or the other must be paramount, but there can be no overpowering combination. This being so, our Saviour appeared in earthly form to conquer Earth, being, as the Angels of Atlantis, an

incarnated spirit. We cannot discuss here the fact, stated and legendary, of carnal conception by mental stimulation, nor argue "the adaptable life of all spirits" of cap. x., lib. i, wherein all perceptions mingle.

§ 20.—In consideration of the fact that the physical atoms of Man, the Earth, and the Planets are the same, it is not perhaps so very extraordinary that under some conditions the mind of man should conceive strange ideas of analogy. We see in ourselves the seasons of the year manifested, and our written symbols of speech probably originated in natural figures, as $\perp \perp \Gamma \Gamma$ —parts of the square of Orion,—and the mystic alphabet contained by \parallel and $=$ which, crossed, contain nine spaces \ddagger . A volume could be written upon the relation of human and world atoms, and the curious soul-perceptions of the inwardness of everything,

§ 21.—J. Muehleisen Arnold thinks the question worth considering as to whether the fall of angels did not tend to materialization of some sort, and if this is so, then Man, led by his perceptions, would move in inverse ratio, and when the superhuman had entered into his nature we may believe his destruction was necessary. And it is necessary to consider the majesty of years of the antediluvian Adamites, which, together with supernatural perceptions, would bring a vast experience that generations of ordinary men could not attain to now.

§ 22. In regard to Creation *versus* Evolution it may be well remembered that originally the word of Genesis I, "to create" meant "to carve"; which would indicate gradual perfection of form from a shapeless mass; but it is not fully considered I think that there is as much wonder in Life as in its manifestation, and in different forms evolving slowly and marvellously from one simple principle. Each form is but the same principle adapted by its shape and powers to its environment; life is discovered in snow, in hot sand, in calcined lava, in brine, in ice, in hot vapour of 210' f., and in hot water.

Agassiz says the Evolution theory is a mistake, Haeckel that the idea of Creation is wholly unscientific. He says, speaking of Darwin's doctrine:—In place of an arbitrary act of Creation, we have a necessary law of Evolution. By this the wide-spread incarnation of the divine creative power, or anthropomorphism, is done away with the false idea that the creative force shows any likeness to human method of action.

Lamarck thinks that organic species originated by the gradual variation of a few spontaneous original forms; and I believe that the consensus of opinion leans to an aquatic origin. In water Van Helmont searched for the principle of all things, and every reptile, bird and mammal, (including man,) shows, in its developmental stages, in the gill-slits perforating the throat, an aquatic ancestry.

The foetal development of mammals is stated to be a swift progress through the various adult forms of ancestry, stopping at the baby mammal, and is certainly a most curious and marvellous progress.

St. George Mivart says:—"We must suppose—and the evidence for it is extremely strong—that the group of beasts, or 'mammals,' arose or was developed from preceding reptiles.

"Reptiles are furnished with several successive series of teeth in their jaws, and if the above theory is correct it is extremely probable that the earliest forms of beasts had the same. And so 'milk' and 'permanent' teeth are a remnant of this.

"That such was their origin is confirmed by the fact that sometimes one or more of a third series of teeth become developed, while the careful observer Leche has seen traces of teeth preceding even the milk teeth,

"Thus in beasts actually of our own day, we have vestiges of four successive series of teeth, though, with the rarest exceptions, it is only the second and third of them, ('milk' and 'permanent'), which now come into existence."

Prof. H. G. Seeley says:—"There is no doubt that the mammals have lost the composite structure of the lower jaw, which is found in reptiles; and reptiles have lost the greater part of the arch of bones which in fishes intervenes between the brain case and the lower jaw, if their structures are inherited from one group to another".

There are very strong arguments for and against the theory of Evolution, and Lamarck's is one that admits the difficulty of the single form of ancestor. We take the moneron, the lowest form of life, a microscopic mass of protoplasm. The offspring by natural selection evolve into a higher form; but throughout countless centuries some must remain monera pure and simple, as they are to-day. Or are these latter beings ever evolved from something lower?

Observing clear analogies, and particularly the foetal development, I think, despite a few arguments to the contrary, that

animals certainly have evolved; but whether from one or more original forms I should not like to hazard, although I do not see why one Life-germ would not be as good to argue from as several, and up to the point of life where Adam was endowed with moral perceptions and governed by Reason, I think that survival of the fittest was the only and improving law of earth and earth-life.

I think it probable that animal life was pretty evenly distributed over all the world at one time, or that the various species moved by epochs all over the world and are not all peculiar to one spot of earth. The Kangaroo would appear to have been at one period as widespread as the primeval Trilobite, and England the home of animals now inhabiting Africa. If Australia were joined to Asia at one time, the glacial epoch might have stocked it with a few forms and cut it off from the mainland. Buckland observes that Madagascar, although lying close to the African continent, yet possesses a fauna and flora more nearly resembling S. America. Wallace, however, does not regard this as denoting that Madagascar and S. America have ever been united by direct land communication, but that both have been peopled from a common source, the intermediate links having been destroyed, or rather superseded by more modern forms; that is to say that the forms now found in S. America and Madagascar have once been very widely spread, and have since become restricted to the regions where they are now found.

§ 23.—In considering the possible manifestation of the Creator and the marvels of creation that we cannot comprehend, it always occurs to me that the tale of the Cheese-mites is one of the most inspired parables that has ever been uttered as to the incomprehensibility of the incomprehensible. As it does not seem to me to be well known, it may not be out of place to repeat it here.

There was once a colony of Cheese-mites, who after a time began to manifest a wish to know what their little world of Cheese was made of and whence it came. All sorts of ideas were advanced and explorers searched and excavated in all directions; great meetings were held, at which the latest scientific theories were expounded as to fortuitous conglomeration of atoms or instantaneous creation, while there were many dogmas concerning the platter upon which it rested. A long time they strove, and arrived at the most brilliant ideas with convincing earnestness,

yet were not satisfied. *For*, is the tremendous ending, *all their wisdom could not conceive a Cow.*

At many periods of history the line between Revelation and Imagination has been cut away, and all the records of the grandest history of earth, the Bible, have been lightly put down to the latter. It is to the modern tendency that Mr. Gladstone refers, as a state of things "peculiar and perhaps without example, in which multitudes of men call into question the foundations of our religion and the prerogatives of our sacred books, without any reference to either their capacity or their opportunities for so grave an undertaking."

Imagination could not have compiled a history that every discovery proves, and after every great attack the Bible remains the same and triumphant. J. Muehleisen Arnold, in his preference to "Genesis and Science", says respecting the theories of a number of the leading naturalists, physicists and theologians of the continent, among whom such well-known names as Cuvier, Arago, Pasteur, Agassiz, Kepler, Liebig, Humboldt, Virchow, Burmeister, and Müller appear:—"where I could not adopt their arguments or make their conclusions my own, I endeavoured to show, from what are deemed authoritative statements, how great is the confusion among themselves, and how utterly without weight and value, in consequence, must be the assertions hazarded by scientists against the book of Genesis."

"Theological ethnology" is referred to in a manner calculated to suggest to the public mind a somewhat fanciful study; and although we may perhaps agree that it is an easy way of disposing of an argument to put down to a miracle that which we cannot comprehend, yet I fancy that too little account is admitted of a divine power that was undoubtedly more exhibited in earlier times than now. Do we believe the tales of the witch of Endor, the Incarnation of our Lord, the miracle at Shinar, and the wonders of the New Testament? Why should we give to the inspired writings every meaning but the stated ones, and imagine all round the facts given us?

We are reminded that, "with the common people familiarity breeds contempt; they venerate that only which they do not understand; it is darkness and not light which moves their wonder and excites their awe;" and so many adopt different religions because each satisfies his own peculiar conceptions. An evolutionist and creationist each inversely scoff at the idea of a miracle being performed at the birth of man, or at his being the result of evolution

Dr. Schrader takes all the old cosmogonical legends as myths, and thinks the Hebrews learnt of the Flood in Ur of the Chaldees. But, says that great, accomplished scholar, Mr. Gladstone, referring to the tablets of Berosus, . . . "the Bible story, more sparing in its details, but far broader and more direct in the terrible lesson it conveys, may reasonably have been judged to have come down from the source with the smallest amount of variation in essentials from the original. It is here as everywhere. 'The wisdom of this world', the race favoured with stable institutions, and with intellectual development,"—the Chaldeans—"yet fails in the firmness of its hold, and the clearness of its view, where the appreciation of the tremendous moral lesson is concerned; while the race of wandering shepherds, who are but the 'babes and sucklings' of intelligence, yet transmit that lesson in a type so fresh and clear that our Lord has only to quote and enlarge without correcting it, and so to launch it anew into the world as a solemn chapter of His gospel teaching."

The first words of Genesis—In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth—must have been communicated to man, or he might well have imagined that they were always there. And the science of to-day, that argues by analogy, may have been—nay, probably *was*—first directed on its course by that statement.

The Bible, economic of facts, appears to be almost solely the history, not altogether, as has been stated, of the race of Adam, but of the Hebrew race; and I think that in considering archaic man, we are too prone to place undue importance on the Israelites being sprung direct from Adam without any evolution from a pre-race.

We hear nothing of the Cainites after the Flood, from which point the history runs nearly exclusively to and from Abraham. If the history of the former were continued with, it might develop—who knows—into Mongol history. Up to the Flood the Cainites took the lead in development of arts. No hint is given us of any glacial period, and indeed we find no meteorological observations save as incidental to miracle, nor mention of any great cataclysm but the Deluge. The important sect of the Essenes is not mentioned, although holding as influential a position as the Pharisees and Sadducees. Neither Moses nor the prophets make any allusion to the Negro, although the Israelites in Egypt must have been brought into contact with him. Daughters are not mentioned in the early genealogies of the Bible

except in a bare statement that they were born to the patriarchs, and with the exception of the sister of Tubal-Cain, (Gen. iv. 22.). Even the wives of Cain and Seth are not named.

Quibblers take exception to a few isolated statements of Holy Writ as inaccurate, and particularly such as deal with chronology. The well-known and oft-disputed words, "And the evening and the morning were the first day," are a most fruitful source of argument; but to me it seems to perfectly express the dimness of the embryo formation progressing onward to the accomplished event, which was "very good." It will be observed that it is always the evening and the morning, not the morning and the evening of the modern "day."

We also learn, (Mr. W. L. R. Cates,) that "before the invention of letters the memory of past transactions could not be preserved beyond a few years with any tolerable degree of accuracy. . . . The invention of the art of writing afforded the means of substituting precise and permanent records for vague and evanescent tradition. . . . but writing was practised many centuries before historians began to assign dates to the events they narrated. . . . Reckoning by cycles, as among the Chinese, the Saros of the Chaldeans, the Olympiad of the Greeks, the Indiction of the Romans" is an old form of chronology, and "it suffices, therefore, to point out that the so-called era of the world is a purely conventional and arbitrary epoch."

The systems of solar and lunar chronology and reckoning by epochs is very misleading, and the early chronology of the Bible cannot be reckoned in years of time—the evening and morning periods of Genesis are grand in their sublime idea of an uncounted time of awakening.

The Bible statements are clear. It is no accidental formation that goes on before our eyes, as some strenuous arguments would have us imagine. As Mr. Arnold says, "It will be quite as easy to imagine the English Bible to have resulted from the accidental shuffling together of type, paper, and ink, the great book coming forth self-made, after myriads of failures, in its present perfection as it can possibly be to assume that certain structures are the fortuitous production of nature or matter."

Mr. Gladstone says:—"It is doubt, and not belief, of all the things received, which ought in all cases to be put upon its defence, and to show its credentials. . . . Untested doubt, which often makes a lodgment in our minds, is a tenant without a title, a dangerous and in the main an unlawful guest.

... "Obviously, almost mathematically, the increased powers of worldly attraction disturb the balance of our condition, unless and until they are countervailed by increased powers of unworldly attraction and elevation."

On Max Müller's statement that without language there cannot be thought, the great statesman says:

... "There are in human nature a multitude of undeveloped (so to speak) embryonic forces of impressions received from without, and finding a congenial soil within, which never ripen to maturity, or make their way into articulate speech, or obtain a defined place in our consciousness; and yet these germs of thought may ripen, though not into propositions, yet into acts.

"My belief is that at this moment these unspoken and untested movements not so much of mind, as of appetite, or, to use a milder word, of propensity, pressing upon mind, these not thoughts, but rudiments of thoughts, are at work among us, and within us; and that, were they translated or expanded into words, their *sense* would be no more and no less than the old vulgar sense of those who in every age have held that after all *this world is the only world we securely know*; and that the only labour that is worth labouring, the only care worth caring, the only joy worth enjoying, are the labour, the care, and joy that begin and end with it."

The italics are mine. The meaning, in a nutshell, is what so many of us feel, that we preach God with our lips, but our careless actions betray the consciousness given by those "embryonic forces" that we *feel* the earth and nought besides.

... "The nobly candid admission of Mr. Darwin (*Analogy* part ii., chap. vii)," says Mr. Gladstone, "respecting the possible atrophy, through disuse, of the mental organs on which our higher tastes depend," would blind our eyes to things superhuman, and "Among those organs I cannot but include the organ of belief."

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