THE FAIR GOD.

BOOK SEVEN.

CHAPTER XVIII.

(Continued.)

The rough riders forced the attack, thinking it a repetition of others they had lightly turned aside on the way; but when their weapons glanced from iron-faced shields, and they recognized the thrust of steel; when their horses shrunk from the contact or staggered with mortal hurts, and some of them fell down dying, then they gave way to a torrent of exclamations so seasoned with holy names that they could be as well taken for prayers as curses. Surprised, dismayed, retreating—with scarce room for defence and none for attack, still they struggled to maintain themselves. Sharp the clangor of axes on shields, merciless the thrust of the blades—cry answered cry. Death to the horse, if he but reared; to the rider death, if his horse but stumbled. Nevertheless, step by step the patient Indian lover approached the palanquin. Then that which had been as a living wall around the girl was broken. One of her slaves fell down, struck by a stone. Her scream, though shrill with sudden fear, was faint amid the discordances of storm and fight; yet two of the combatants heard it, and rushed to the rescue. And now Hualpa's hand was on the fallen carriage—happy moment! "*Viva a Christo! Santiago, Santiago!*" thundered Alvarado. The exultant infidel looked up; right over him, hiding the leaden sky—a dark impending danger—reared Bradamante. He thrust quickly, and the blade on the lance was true; with a cry, in its excess of agony almost human, the mare reared, fell back, and died. As she fell, one foot, heavy with its silver shoe, struck him to the ground; and would that were all!

"*Ola*, comrades!" cried Alvarado, upon his feet again, to some horsemen dismounted like himself. "Look! the girl is dying! Help me! as ye hope for life, stay and help me!"

They laid hold of the mare, and rolled her away. The morning light rested upon the place feebly, as if afraid of its own revelations. On the causeway, in the lake, in the canal, were many horrors to melt a heart of stone; one fixed, Alvarado's gaze:

"Dead! she is dead!" he said, falling upon his knees, and covering his eyes with his hands, "O mother of Christ! What have I done that this should befall me?"

Under the palanquin—its roof of aromatic cedar, thin as tortoise shell, and its frame of bamboo, light as the cane of the maize, all a heap of fragments now—under the wreck lay Nenetzin. About her head the blue curtains of the carriage were wrapped in accidental folds, making the pallor of the face more pallid; the lips so given to laughter were dark with flowing blood; and the eyes had looked their love the last time; one little hand rested palm upward upon the head of a dead warrior, and in it shone the iron cross of Christ. Bradamante had crushed her to death! And this, the crowning horror of the melancholy night, was what the good mare saw on the way that her master did not—so the master ever after believed.

The pain of grief was new to the good captain; while yet it so overcame him, a man laid a hand roughly on his shoulder, and said:—

"Look thou, Senor! She is in Paradise, while of those who, at thy call, stayed to help thee save her but seven are left. If not thyself, up and help us!"

The justice of the rude appeal aroused him, and he retook his sword and shield, and joined in the fight—eight against the many. About them closed the lancers; facing whom one by one the brave men died, until only Alvarado remained. Over the clashing of arms then rang the 'tzin's voice:

"It is the *Tonatiah!* Take him, O my children, but harm him not; his life belongs to the gods!

Fortunately for Alvarado a swell of Christian war-cries and the beat of galloping horses came, about the same time, from the further side of the canal to distract the attention of his foemen. Immediately Cortes appeared, with Sandoval, Morla, Avila, and others—brave gentlemen come back from the land, which they had safely gained, to save whom they might of the rear-guard. At the dread passage all of them drew rein except Morla; down the slope of the dyke he rode, and spurring into the lake through the canoes and floating *debris*, he headed to save his friend. Useless the gallantry! The assault upon Alvarado had ceased with what purpose he knew. Never should they take him alive! Hualpa's lance of great length, was lying at his feet. Suddenly, casting away his sword and shield, he snatched up his enemy's weapon, broke the ring that girdled him, ran to the edge of the canal, and vaulted in the air. Loud the cry of the Christians, louder that of the infidels! An instant he seemed to halt in his flight; an instant more, and his famous feat was performed, the chasm was cleared, and he stood amongst his people saved.

Alas for Morla! An infidel sprang down the dyke, and by running and leaping from canoe to canoe overtook him while in the lake.

"Sword and shield, Senor Francisco! Sword and shield! Look! The foe is upon thee!"

So he was warned; but quick the action. First, a blow with a Christian axe; down sank the horse; then a blow upon the helmet, and the wave that swallowed the steed received the rider also.

"*Al-a-lala!*" shouted the victor.

"The 'tzin, the 'tzin!" answered his people; and forward they sprang, over the canoes, over the bridge of the dead—forward to get at their hated enemies again.

"Welcome art thou!" said Cortes to Alvarado. "Welcome as from the grave, whither Morla—God rest his soul—hath gone. Where is Leon?"

"With Morla," answered the captain.

"And Mesa?"

"Nay, Senor Hernan, if thou stayest here for any of the rear-guard, know that I am the last of them."

"*Bastante!*" Hear ye, gentlemen?" said Cortes. "Our duty is done. Let us to the land again. Here is my foot, here my hand: mount, captain, and quickly."

Alvarado took the seat offered behind Cortes, and the party set out in retreat again. Closely, across the third canal, along the causeway to the village of Popotla, the 'tziu kept the pursuit. From the village, and from Tlacopan the city, he drove the bleeding and bewildered fugitives. At last they took possession of a temple, from which, as from a fortress, they successfully defended themselves. Then the 'tzin gave over, and returned to the capital.

And his return was as the saviour of his country—the victorious companies behind him, the great flotillas on his right and left, and the clouds overhead rent by the sounding of conchs and tambours, and the singing and shouting of the proud and happy people.

Fast throbbed his heart, for now he knew if the crown were not indeed his, its prestige and power were; and amid the fast-coming schemes for the restoration of the empire, he thought of the noble Tula, and then—he halted suddenly.

"Where is the Lord Hualpa?" he asked.

"At the second canal," answered a captive.

"And he is——"

"Dead!"

The proud head drooped, and then the hero forgot his greatness and his dreams, he was the loving friend again, and as such sorrowing and silent, repassed the second canal, and stood upon the causeway beyond. And the people, with quick understanding of what he sought, made way for him. Over the wrecks of the battle—sword and shield, helm and breastplate, men and horses—he walked to where the lover and his beloved lay.

At sight of her face, more childlike and beautiful than ever, memory brought back to him the sad look, the low voice, and the last words of Hualpa: "If I come not with the rising sun to-morrow, Nenetzin can tell you my story." Such were the words. The iron cross was yet in her hand, and the hand yet rested on the head of a warrior lying near. The 'tzin stooped and turned the dead man over, and lo! the Lord Hualpa. From one to the other the princely mourner looked; a mist, not of the lake or the cloud, rose and hid them from his view; he turned away—she had told him all the story.

In a canoe, side by side, the two victims were borne to the city, never to be separated. At Chapultepec they were laid in the same tomb; so that one day the dust of the hunter, with that of kings, may feed the grass and color the flowers of the royal hill.

HE HAD FOUND HIS FORTUNE!

Here the chronicles of the learned Don Fernando abruptly terminate. For the satisfaction of the reader, a professional story teller would no doubt have devoted several pages to the careers of some of the characters whom he leaves surviving the catastrophe. The translator is not supposed to think his author less courteous than literators generally; on the contrary the books abound with evidences of the tender regard he had for those who might chance to occupy themselves with his pages; consequently there must have been a reason for the apparent neglect in question.

If the worthy gentleman were alive, and the objection made to him in person, he would most likely have replied: "Gentle critic, what you take for neglect was but a compliment to your intelligence. The characters with which I dealt were for the most part furnished me by history. The few of my own creation were exclusively heathen, and of them, except the lord Maxtla and, Xoli the Chalcan, disposition is made in one part or another of the story. The two survivors named, it is to be supposed, were submerged in the ruin that fell upon the country after the conquest was finally completed. The other personages being real, for perfect satisfaction as to them, permit me with the profoundest respect, to refer you to your histories again."

The translator has nothing to add to the explanation, except brief mention that the king Cuitlahua's reign lasted but two months in all. The small pox which desolated the city and valley, and contributed more than any other cause, to the ultimate overthrow of the empire, sent him to the tombs of Chapultepec. Guatamozin then took the vacant throne, and, as king, exemplified still further the qualities which had made him already the idol of his people and the hero of his race. Some time also, but whether before or after his coronation, we are not told, he married the noble Tula—an event which will leave the readers of the excellent Don Fernando in doubt whether Mualox, the paba, was not more prophet than monomaniac.

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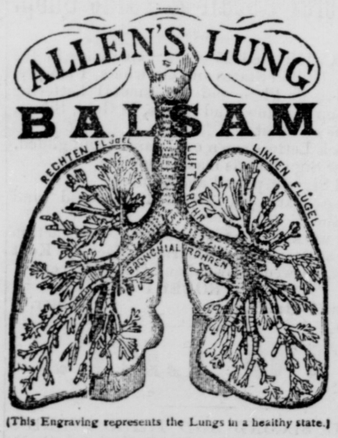

(This Engraving represents the Lungs in a healthy state.)

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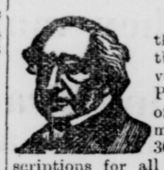

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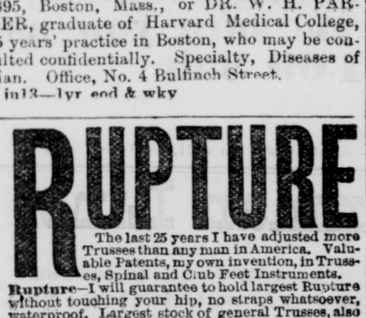

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