

THE FAIR GOD.

BOOK SEVEN.

CHAPTER XIV.

(Continued.)

The passion vein on Cortes' neck and forehead rose, and stood out like a purple cord.

"Then Olmedo spoke: 'If thou wilt hear, Senor, Montezuma affects me and the good Captain Oli tenderly; suffer us to go to him and see what we can do.'"

"So be it, so be it! If thou canst bring him, in God's name, go. If he refuse, then— I have sworn! Hearken to the hell's roar without. Let me have report quickly. I will wait thee here. Begone!"

Olmedo started. Cortes caught his sleeve, and looked at him fixedly.

"Mira!" he said, in a whisper. "As thou lovest me do this work well. If he fail—if he fall—"

"Well!" said Olmedo, in the same tone.

"Then—then get thee to prayers! Go."

The audience chamber whither Oli and the priest betook themselves, with Cortesilla to interpret, was crowded with courtiers, who made way for them to the dais upon which Montezuma sat.

"Good king," said the father, "we bring thee a message from Malinche; and as its object is to stay the bloody battle which is so grievous to us all, and the slaughter which must otherwise go on, we pray thy pardon if we make haste to speak."

The monarch's face chilled, and drawing his mantle close he said, coldly:

"I am listening."

Olmedo proceeded.

"The Senor Hernan commiserates the hard lot which compels thee to listen here to the struggle which hath lasted so many days, and always with the same result—the wasting of thy people. The contest hath become a rebellion against thee, as well as against his sovereignty and thine. Finally there will be no one left to govern—nothing, indeed, but an empty valley and a naked lake. In pity for the multitude, he is disposed to help save them from their false leaders. He hath sent us, therefore, to ask thee to join him in one more effort to that end."

"Said he how I could help him?" asked the king.

"Come and speak to the people, and disperse them, as once before thou didst. And to strengthen thy words, and as his part of the trial, he saith thou mayst pledge him to leave the city as soon as the way is open. Only let there be no delay. He is in waiting to go with thee, good king."

The monarch listened intently.

"Too late, too late!" he cried. "The ears of my people are turned from me. I am king in name only; the power is another's. I am lost—so is Malinche. I will not go. Tell him so."

There was stir in the chamber, and a groan from the bystanders; but the messengers remained looking at the poor king, as at one who had really taken a rational pledge him to leave the city as soon as the way is open.

"Why do you stay?" he continued, with a glowing face. "What more have I to do with Malinche? See the state to which my serving him has already reduced me."

"Remember thy people!" said Olmedo, solemnly.

Flashed the monarch's eyes as he answered: "My brave people! I hear them now. They are in arms to save themselves; and they will not believe me or the promises of Malinche. I have spoken."

Then Oli moved a step toward the dais, and kissing the royal hand, said, with suffused eyes:

"Thou knowest I love thee, O king; and I say, if thou carest for thyself, go."

Something there was in the words, in the utterance, probably, that drew the monarch's attention; leaning forward, he studied the cavalier curiously; over his face the while came the look of a man suddenly called by his fate. His lips parted, his eyes fixed; and but that battle has voices which only the dead may refuse to hear, his spirit would have drifted off into unseemly reverie. Recalling himself with an effort, he arose, and said, half smiling:

"A man, much less a king, is unfit to live when his friends think to move him from his resolve by appeals to his fears." And rising, and drawing himself to his full stature, he added, so as to be heard throughout the chamber, "Very soon, if not now, you will understand me when I say I do not care for myself. I desire to die. Go, my friends, and tell Malinche that I will do as he asks, and straightaway."

Oil and Olmedo kissed his hands, and withdrew; whereupon he calmly gave his orders.

Very soon the 'tzin, who was directing the battle from a point near the gate of the cotzacoatl, saw the warrior appear on the turret so lately occupied by Cortes, and wave a royal panache. He raised his shield overhead at once, and held it there until on his side the combat ceased. The Christians, glad of a breathing spell, quit almost as soon. All eyes then turned to the turret; even the combatants who had been fighting hand to hand across the crest of the parapet, ventured to look that way, when, according to the usage of the infidel court, the heralds came, and to the four quarters of the earth waved their silver wands.

Too well the 'tzin divined the meaning of the ceremony. "Peace," he seemed to hear, and then, "Lover of Anahuac, servant of the gods—choose now between king and country. Now or never!" The ecstasy of battle fled from him; his will became infirm as a child's. In the space between him and the turret the smoke of the guns curled and writhed sensuously, each moment growing fainter and weaker, as did the great purpose to which he thought he had steeled himself. When he brought the shield down, his face was that of a man whom long sickness had laid close to the gates of death. Then came the image of Tula, and then the royal permission to do what the gods enjoined—nay, more than permission, a charge which left the deed to his hand, that there might be no lingering amongst the strangers. "O sweetheart!" he said to himself, "if this duty leave me stainless, whom may I thank but you."

Then he spoke to Huapala, though with a choking voice:

"The king is coming. I must go and meet him. Get my bow, and stand by me with an arrow in place for instant use."

Huapala moved slowly away, watching the 'tzin; then he returned, and asked, in a manner as full of meaning as the words themselves:

"Is there not great need that the arrow should be very true?"

"The master's eyes met him as he answered, 'Yes,' he careful.

"Yet the hunter stayed.

"O 'tzin," he said, "his blood is not in my veins. He is only my benefactor. Four days are not numbered, like mine, and as yet you are blameless; for the sake of the peace that makes life sweet, I pray you let my hand do this service."

And the 'tzin took his intent, and replied, fervently:

"There is nothing so precious as the sight that is quick to see the sorrow of others, unless it be the heart that hurries to help them. After this, I may never doubt your love; but the duty is mine—made so by the gods—and he has asked it of me. Lo, the heralds appear!"

(To be continued.)

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WEDNESDAY AND SATURDAY—8.30, 9.30 a. m.; 2 and 4 p. m.; returning at 9 and 10 a. m.; 2.20 and 4.20 p. m.

SUNDAY—9 a. m.; 1 p. m.; returning 9.30 a. m., 1.30 p. m.

Sail Boat leaves Connolly's Wharf.— MONDAY AND THURSDAY—9 and 11 a. m.; 2, 4 and 6 p. m.; returning 8 and 10 a. m.; 12.30, 3 and 5 p. m.

TUESDAY, WEDNESDAY, FRIDAY AND SATURDAY—11 a. m.; 3 and 6 p. m.; returning 8 a. m.; 12.30 and 5 p. m.

SUNDAY—4.30 p. m., coming from Rocky Point at 3.30 p. m.

WEST RIVER. Steamer leaves Ferry Wharf for Shaw's Wharf.—

TUESDAY AND FRIDAY—4 p. m., calling at Rocky Point and Westville, coming from Shaw's Wharf same day at 7 a. m., calling at Westville and Rocky Point

SOUTHPORT. Steamer leaves Charlottetown on week days, commencing at 6 a. m., and continues until 10 p. m., running at intervals of every half hour. Returning leaves Southport first trip 6.15 a. m., and continues until 10.10 p. m., running at intervals of every half hour.

ON SUNDAY leaves Charlottetown, first trip at 7 a. m., and every hour until 10 a. m., then leaving at 10.30 and 12 noon, 12.30 and 1 from 1 to 5 p. m., then regular trips at 6.30, 7.30 and 8.30. Returning leaves Southport at 7.30, 8.15, 9.45, 10.15 and 10.45 a. m.; 12.15, 12.45, 1.15 and every hour from 2.30 until 5.30 and afterwards at 6.45, 8 and 8.45 p. m.

THE SUMMER TIME TABLE.—For the convenience of the public we condense the hours of departure and arrival of trains (local time):

FOR THE WEST. 7 and 9.45 a. m.; 4.30 p. m.

FOR THE EAST. 10.35 a. m.; 4 and 8.10 p. m.

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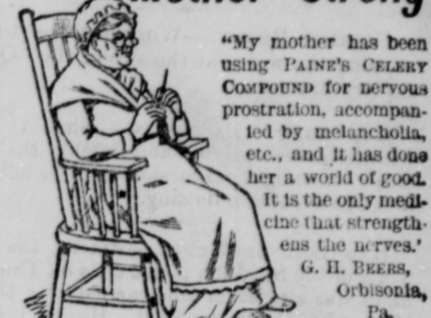
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