

Who Knows.

BY CAROLINE W. D. RHOE.

Who knows how soon a rose will fade, How soon a birdling first will fly? Who knows how soon the dew will dry Upon the grasses in the glade? Where flickering shadows flit lie? Who knows where the thistle-down will lodge? When once by zephyrs lightly tossed; Or, how a word breathed on the air, Across the lake returns again? From echoing hills—a sweet refrain? Amid life's wear, so much is lost; Will love and truth abide? Who knows? Lewiston, Me.

THE FAIR GOD.

BOOK SEVEN.

CHAPTER IX.

OVER THE WALL—INTO THE PALACE.

The duty Hualpa had been charged with by the 'tzin was not difficult of performance; for the bridges of the capital, even those along the beautiful street, were much simpler structures than they appeared. When he had seen the balustrades and flooring and the great timbers that spanned the canal—the first one south of the old palace—born from their places, and handed off by the canoe men whom he had collected for the purpose, he returned to the temple to rejoin his master. The assault upon the palace, when he reached that point, was more furious than at any previous time. The companies in the street were fighting with marvellous courage, while the missiles from the acrotates and westward terraces of the temple, and all the houses around, literally darkened the air. Amidst the clamour Hualpa caught at intervals the cry, "The 'tzin, the 'tzin!" He listened, and all the loyal thousands seemed shouting, "The 'tzin, the 'tzin! A-la-lala!" "Has anything befallen the 'tzin?" he asked of an acquaintance. "Yes, thanks to Hualtzil!" He has broken one of Malloch's towers to pieces, and killed everybody in it. Hualpa's love quickened suddenly. "Blessed be all the gods!" he cried, and passing on, ascended the acrotates. It may have been the battle, full of innovations, as battles always are; or it may have been that he, in full enjoyment of his command, and so earnest in its performance, stimulated his ambition; or it may have been the influence of his peculiar sorrow, the haunting memories of his love, and she its star, separated from him by so little—something made him restless and feverish. He talked with the caciques and priests; he clomb the turret, and watched the smoke go up softly, and hide itself in the deep blue of the sky; with lo, he stood on the temple's verge, and witnessed the fight, at times using bow and sling; but nothing brought him relief. The opportunity he had so long desired was here calling him, and passing away. O for an hour of liberty to enact himself!

Unable to endure the excitement, he started in search of the 'tzin, knowing that, wherever he was there was action, if not opportunity. At that moment he saw a cacique in the street plant a ladder against the wall of the palace not far from the main gate. The Hualscans defending at that point tried to throw it off, but a shower of stones from the terrace of the temple deluged them, and they disappeared. Up went the cacique, up went his followers; they gained the crest; then the conflict passed from Hualpa's view. "Lo," he said, "when the 'tzin comes back, tell him I have gone to make a way for him through your wall."

"Have a care, comrades; have a care!" Hualpa put an arm around him, and replied smiling, "There is one over the wall now; if he fears no, shall I? And then he whispered low—Neneztin will despise me if I come not soon."

A dawning fell upon lo, and from that time he knew the power of love. "The gods go with you! Farewell." Hualpa set about his purpose deliberately. Near the door of the presence-chamber there was a pile of trophies, shields, arms and armour of men and horses; he made some selections from the heap, and carried them into the chamber. When he came out, under his panache there was a steel cap, and under his mantle a cuirass; and to some dead Spaniard he was further belted with a shield and a battle-axe—the latter so called, notwithstanding it had a head like a hammer, and a handle of steel pointed at the end and more than a yard in length.

Thus prepared, he went down into the street, and forced his way to the ladder planted near the gate; thence to the crest of the wall. A hundred arrows splintered against his shield, as he looked down upon the combat yet maintained by the brave cacique at the foot of the banquette.

The wall, as I think I have elsewhere said, was built of blocks of wrought stone, laid in cement only a little less hard than the stone, and consequently impervious to any battery against its base; at the same time, taken piece by piece from the top, its demolition was easy. Hualpa paused not; between the blocks he drove the pointed handle of his axe; a moment, and down fell the capping-stone; another followed, and another. Alike indifferent to the arrows of the garrison and the acclamations of the witnesses outside, looking neither here nor there, bending every faculty to the task, he did in a few minutes what seemed impossible: through a breach wide enough for the passage of a double steed, four men within and without the wall saw each other.

And there was hastening thither of detachments. Up the ladder and over the wall leaped the devoted infidels, nothing deterred by waiting swords and lances; striking or dying they shouted "The 'tzin, the 'tzin! A-la-lala!" Live or die, they strove to cover the steadfast workman in the breach.

De Glid, at the time in charge of the palace, drew nigh, attracted by the increasing uproar. "Ye fools! Out on ye! See ye not that that dog is hiding behind a Christian shield! Run, fly, bring a brace of arquebuses! Bring the reserve guns! Upon them, gentlemen! Swords and axes! The mother for us all! Christo, Christo!"

And on foot, in full armour, he pushed into the press; for, true to his training, he saw that the laborer behind the shining shield was more worthy instant notice than the hordes clambering over the wall. Still the breach widened and deepened, and every rock that tumbled from its place contributed by the roadway forming on both sides of the wall to facilitate the attack. But now the guns were coming, and the arquebuses made haste to plant their pieces, against which the good shield might not defend. Suddenly Hualpa stood up, his surcoat whitened with the dust of the mortar; without a word he descended to the street; the work was done—a way for the 'tzin was ready! Scarcely had he touched the pavement before the guns opened before the gorge was crowded with infidels rushing in. The palace, wanting the column absent with Cortes, was in danger. To the one point every Christian

was withdrawn; even the sick and wounded staggered from the hospital to repel the attack. With all his gallantry, De Olid was beaten slowly back to the house. Cursed be the infidels, prayed he the return of Cortes—still he went back. In the midst of his perplexity a messenger came to tell him the enemy was breaking through the wall of the western front.

Hualpa had not only made another breach—De Olid found him inside the enclosure, with a support already too strong for the Tlascalans.

The fight the good captain was called to witness was that of native against native; and, had the peril been less demanding, he would have enjoyed its novelty. An astonishing rattle of shields and spears, mixed with the clash of maquahuils, and a deafening outburst from the contending tribes saluted him. Over the fighting lines the air was thick with stones and flying javelins and tossing banners. Quarter was not once asked. The grim combatants engaged each other to conquer or die. Hither and thither danced the priests, heedless of the danger, now cursing the laggards, now blessing the brave. And at times so shrilly blew the conchs that where they were no thing might be heard but the shriller melody of war-cry answering war-cry.

(To be Continued.)

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