

THE FAIR GOD. BOOK FIVE.

CHAPTER III. (Continued.)

He turned from the door and was conducted to the shade of the turret of Tezcu. "I was loitering after the tall priest, the one with the bloody face and hands—what a monster he is!" said the page, crossing himself— "when a slave comes in my way, offering some flowers and making signs. I spoke to him. 'What do you want here?' 'Who is she?' 'Daughter of the great king.' 'What did she say?' 'She bade me—and an *enor capitán*, these are almost his words—she bade me give these flowers to one of the *teules*, that he might give them to *Tonatiuh*, him with the red beard.' I took the present and asked, 'What does the princess say to the *Tonatiuh*?' 'Let him read the flowers,' the fellow answered. I remembered then that it is a custom of this people to send messages in that form. I asked him where his mistress was; he told me and I went to see her. 'What of her? Is she handsome?' 'Here she is; judge thou.' 'Holy Mother! 'Tis the girl I so frightened on the street. She is the pearl of the valley, the light of the world!' exclaimed Alvarado. 'Stay thou, sir page. Interpret for me. I will speak to her.' 'Simply, then. Thou knowest I am not so good an Aztec as *Marin* in the shade of the turret. Apart several paces stood her carriage-bearers. Her garments of finest cotton, white as snow, were held close to her waist by a green sash. Her ornaments—necklace, bracelets and anklets—were of gold, enriched by *chalcuites*. Softest sandals protected her feet; and the long scarf, heavy with embroidery, and half covering her face, fell from her head to the feet of scarlet feathers upon which she was sitting. When the tall Spaniard, in full armor, except the helmet, stooped thus suddenly before her, the large eyes dilated, the blood left her cheeks, and she shrank almost to the roof. Was it not as if the dream, so strange in the coming, had vitalized its subject and sent it to her, a Fate the more irresistible because of its peculiarities—the blue eyes, the forehead womanly white, the hair long and waving, the beard dyed apparently in the extreme brightness of the sun—all so unheard of among the brown and olive children of Anahuac? And what if the Fate had come demanding? Refuse? Can the chrysalis, joyous in the beauty of wings just perfected, refuse the sun? The cavalier could not mistake the look with which she regarded him. In pity for her fear, in admiration of her beauty, in the native gallantry of his soul, he knelt and took her hand and kissed it; then, giving it back, and looking into her face with an expression as unmistakable as her own, he said: 'My beautiful princess must not be afraid. I would die sooner than harm her.' While the page interpreted as best he could, the captain smiled so winsomely that she sat up and listened with a smile in return. She was won, and shall we say 'lost'? The future comes rapidly to answer for itself. 'Here is the message,' Alvarado continued, 'which I could not read; but if it means to tell me of love, what better can I than give it back to tell the same story for me?' He kissed the flowers and laid them before her. Picking them up, she said with a laugh, 'Tonatiuh is a poet—a god and a poet.' He heard the interpretation and spoke again, relaxing his ardent gaze. 'Jesu Christo! That one so beautiful should be an infidel! This shall not be, by the holy *seculchre* she shall not be. Here, lad, take off the chain which is about my neck. It hath an iron crucifix, the very same my mother—rested by her soul!—gave me, with her blessing and prayer, what time I last bade her farewell.' Ortegulla took off the chain and crucifix and put them in the cavalier's hand. 'Will my beautiful princess deign to receive these gifts from me, her slave for ever? And in my presence will she put them on? They have God's blessing, which cannot be better bestowed.' Instead of laying them down to be taken or not, this time he held them out to her directly; and she took them, and, childlike, hung them around her neck. In the act the scarf fell, and left bare her head and face. He saw the glowing countenance and was about to speak further when Ortegulla stopped him. 'Moderate thyself, I pray thee, Don Pedro. Look at the hounds; they are closing us in. The way to the turret is already cut off. Have a care, I pray!' The tone of alarm had instant effect. 'How! Cut off, sayest thou, lad?' And Alvarado sprang up, his hand upon his sword. He swept the circle with a falcon's glance; then turning once more to the girl he said, resuming the tenderness of voice and manner, 'By what name may I know my love hereafter?' 'Nenetzin—the princess Nenetzin.' 'Then farewell, Nenetzin. Ill be the man of fortune that keepeth thee from me hereafter! May I forfeit life, and the Holy Mother's love, if I see the not again. Farewell.' He kissed his mailed hand to her, and, facing the array of scowling pages, strode to them, and through their circle, with a laugh of knightly scorn. At the door of the turret of Huitzil he said to the page, 'The love of you girl, heathen no longer, but Christian, by the cross she wears—her love, and the brightness of her presence, for the foulness and sin of this devil's den—what an exchange! *Valgame Dios!* Thou shalt have the duet. She is the glory of the world!'

king at last replied, turning his sad eyes to his brother's face.

"Hualpa!" said Cuitlahua, marvelling, as well he might, to find the great king waiting for the merchant's son, so lately a simple hunter.

"Yes. He serves me in an affair of importance. His appointment was for noon; he tarries, I fear, in the city. Next time I will choose an older messenger.

The manner of the explanation was that of one who has in mind something of which he desires to speak, but doubts the wisdom of speaking. So the caecic seemed to understand, for he relaxed into silence, while the monarch again looked upwards. Was the object he studied in the sky or in his heart? Maxtia returned, saluting, he said, "The lake is thronged with canoes, O king, but none come this way."

(To be continued.)

A Plague of Tigers in Java.

According to the administration report of Java, recently laid before the Dutch Chambers, portions of that island are being depopulated through tigers. In 1882, the population of a village in the southwest of the Bantam province was removed and transferred to an island off the coast in consequence of the trouble caused to the people by tigers. These animals have now become an intolerable pest in parts of the same province. The total population is about 600,000, and in 1887, 61 were killed by tigers, and in consequence of the dread existing among the people, it has been proposed to deport the inhabitants of the country where tigers are not so common, and where they can pursue their agricultural occupations with a greater degree of safety. At present they fear to go anywhere near the border of the forest. The people at present seem disinclined, or they lack the means and courage, to attack and destroy their enemy, although considerable rewards are offered by the government for the destruction of beasts of prey. In 1888 the reward for killing a royal tiger was raised to 200 florins. It appears also that the immunity of the tiger is in part due to superstition, for it is considered wrong to kill one unless he attacks first or otherwise does injury. Moreover, guns were always very rare in this particular district, and since a rising a few years ago, have been taken away by the authorities altogether.

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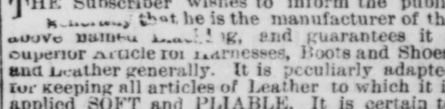
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