

THE FAIR GOD. WATERWORKS.

BOOK FOUR.

CHAPTER V.

(Continued.)

Then Mualox said grimly, "Hope not, O king. The priests and caciques go to death; the army would but swell the flow of blood."

"Montezuma clasped his hands and drooped his head. "Yet more," said Teocel, almost immediately; "another crowd comes on, a band reaching far down the street, they are naked, and come without order, bringing—"

"The *tamemes*," said Mualox, without looking from her face. "And now," she said, "the city begins to stir. I look, and on the housetops and temples hosts collect; from all the towers the smoke goes up in bluer columns; yet all is still. Those who carry the censers come near the gate below me; now they are within it; the plumed train follows them, and the square begins to fill. Back by the great door, an one of the animals, the god—"

"Quetzal," muttered Mualox. "A company, glistering, surrounds him; his face seems whiter than before, his eyes darker; a shield is on his arm, white plumes toss above his head. The censor-bearers cross the square, and the air thickens with a sweet perfume. Now he speaks to them; his voice is harsh and high; they are frightened; some kneel and begin to pray as to a god; others turn and start quickly for the gate."

"Take heed, take heed, O king!" said Mualox, his eyes aflame. "And Montezuma answered, trembling with fear and rage: "Has Analuc no gods to care for her children?"

"What can they against the supreme Quetzal? It is a trial of power. The end is at hand!"

Never man spoke more confidently than the paba. "By this time Teocel's face was flushed, and her voice faint. Mualox lifted the hollow of his hand with water and laved her forehead, and she sighed wearily and continued:

"The fair-faced god— "Mark the words, O king, mark the words!" said the paba.

"The fair-faced god quits speaking; he waves his hand, and one of his company on the steps answers with a shout. Lo! a stream of fire and a noise like the bursting of a cloud; a rising, rolling cloud of smoke veils the whole front of the house. How the smoke thickens! How the strangers rush into the square! The square itself trembles! I do not understand it, father—"

"It is battle! On, child! A king waits to see a god in battle."

"In my pictures there is nothing like this, nor have you told me of anything like it. O, it is fearful!" she said. "The crowd in the middle of the square, those who came from the city, are broken and rush here and there; at the gates they are beaten back; some climbing the walls are struck by arrows, and fall down screaming. Hark! how they call on the gods—Huitzil, Tezcatl, Quetzal. And why are they not heard? Where, father, where is the good Quetzal?"

Flashed the paba's eyes with superhuman light—other answer he deigned not; and she proceeded.

"What a change has come over the square. Where are they that awhile ago filled it with white robes and dancing plumes?"

"I look again. The pavement is covered with heaps of the fallen, and among them I see some with plumes and some with robes; even the censor-bearers lie still. What can it mean? And all the time the horror grows. When the thunder and fire and smoke burst from near the temple steps how the helpless in the square shriek with terror and run blindly about. How many are torn to pieces! Down they go; I cannot count them, they fall so fast and in such heaps! Then—ah, the pavement looks red! O, father, it is blood!"

"She stopped. Montezuma covered his face with his hands; the good heart that so loved his people sickened at their slaughter. Again Mualox bathed her face. Joy flamed in his eyes; Quetzal was consummating his vengeance, and confirming the prophecies of his servant.

"Go on; stay not!" he said sternly. "The story is not yet told."

"Still the running to and fro, and the screaming; still the fire flashing and the smoke rising, and the hissing of arrows and sound of blows; still the prayers to Huitzil," said Teocel. "I look down and under the smoke, which has a choking smell, I see the fallen Red plumes gather in the hollow places, plumes are broken, and robes are no longer white. O, the piteous looks I see, the moans I hear, the many faces, brown like oak leaves faded, turned stilly up to the sun."

"The people of the god—tell of them," said Mualox.

"I search for them—I see them on the steps and out by the walls and the gates. They are in all the places yes; yet not one of them is down; theirs the arrows and the fire and thunder."

"Does the king hear?" asked Mualox. "Only the pabas and caciques perish. Whom may presume to oppose Quetzal? Look further, child. Tell us of the city."

"Gladly, most gladly! Now, abroad over the city. The people quit the house-tops; they run from all directions to the troubled temple; they crowd the streets; about the gates, where the gods are, they struggle to get into the square, and the air thickens with their arrows. The god—"

"What god?" asked Mualox. "The white-plumed one."

"Quetzal! Go on!"

"He has— She faltered. "What?"

"In my pictures, father, there is nothing like them. Fire leaps from their mouths, and smoke, and the air and earth tremble when they speak; and see—ah, how the crowds in the streets go down before them!"

Again she shuddered and faltered.

"Hear, O king!" said Mualox, who not only recognized the cannon of the Spaniards in the description, but saw their weight at that moment as an argument. "What can the slingers and the spearmen of Chinantla and the swordsmen of Tenochtitlan against warriors of the Sun, with their lightning and thunder?"

And he looked at the monarch, sitting with his face covered, and was satisfied. With faculties sharpened by a zeal to ferret for sympathy, he saw the fears of the proud but kindly, and rejoiced in them. Yet he permitted no delay.

(To be continued.)

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