

Joy Doubled.

Two little girls are better than one, Two little boys can double the fun, Two little birds can build a fine nest, Two little arms can love mother best.

Two little ponies must go in a span, Two little pockets has my little man, Two little eyes to open and close, Two little ears and one little nose.

Two little elbows, dimpled and sweet, Two little shoes on two little feet, Two little lips and one little chin, Two little cheeks with roses set in.

Two little shoulders, chubby and strong, Two little legs running all day long, Two little prayers done by my darling say, Two times does she kneel by my side each day.

Two little hands folded down, Two little eyelids o'er cheeks so brown, Two little angels guarding her bed, One at the foot and one at the head.

-American Queen.

THE FAIR GOD.

BOOK SIX.

CHAPTER II. (Continued.)

And with that he re-entered his house, satisfied, but not altogether quieted; wandering restlessly from chamber to chamber, he asked himself continually, "Why so many pabas? And why do they come in the night? And what can have taken the lords away so silently, and at such a time—without breakfast—without even a draught of pulque?"

Invariably these interrogatories were followed by appeals to the great ebon jar of snuff; after sneezing, he would answer himself, "Pabas for worship, lords and soldiers for fighting; but pabas and soldiers together! Something is afoot. I will stay at home and patronize myself. And yet—and yet—they might have told me something about it."

About ten o'clock—to count the time as Christians do—the king issued from the old palace, going in state to the *teocallis*, attended by a procession of courtiers, warriors and pabas. He was borne in an open palanquin, shaded by the detached canopy, a whole presenting a spectacle of imperial splendor.

The movement was slow and stately, through masses of people on the pavements, under the gaze of other thousands on the housetops; but neither the banners nor the music, nor the pomp, nor the king himself, though fully exposed to view, amused or deceived the people; for at the right and left of the carriage walked Lugo, Alvarado, Avila and Leon; next, Olmedo, distinguishable from the native clergy by his shaven crown and the cross he carried aloft on the shaft of a lance; after him, concluding the procession, one hundred and fifty Spaniards, ready for battle. Priesthood—king—the strangers! Clearer, closer, more inevitable, in the eyes of the people, arose the curse of Quetzal.

When the monarch alighted at the foot of the first stairway of the temple, the multitude far and near knelt, and so remained until the pabas, delegated for the purpose, took him in their arms to carry him to the *cozcoas*. Four times in the passage of the terraces the cortege came in view from the side toward the palace, climbing as it were, to the Sun; dimmer the holy symbol, fainter the solemn music, and each time the people knelt. The unfortunate going to worship was still the great king.

A detachment of Christians, under De Morla, preceded the procession as an advanced guard. Greatly were they surprised at what they found on the *cozcoas*. Beinaid Tlalac, at the head of the last stairway, were a score or more of naked boys, swinging smoking censers; yet farther toward the lower or sanctuary of Huastli was an assemblage of dancing priestesses, veiled, rather than dressed, in gauzy robes and scarfs; from the steps to the door of the sanctuary a passage way had been left; elsewhere the sacred area was occupied by pabas, drawn up in ranks close and scrupulously ordered. Like their pontiff, each of them wore a gown of black; but while his head was bare, theirs were covered by hoods. Thus arranged—silent, motionless, more like phantoms than men—they both shocked and disquieted the Spaniards.

Indeed, so sensible were the latter of the danger of their position, alone and unsupported in the face of an array so dismal and solid, that many of them fell to counting their beads and muttering *Aves*.

A savage dissonance greeted the king when he was set down on the *cozcoas*, and simultaneously the pabas burst into a hymn, and from the urn over the tower a denser column of smoke arose, slow moving, but ere long visible throughout the valley. Half bending, the censor-bearers swept around him; then, too, jangling silver bells and beating calabashes, the priestesses began to dance; in the midst of the salutation, the arch-priest moving backward, conducted him slowly toward the entrance of the sanctuary. At his side strode the four cavaliers. The escort of Christians remained outside; yet the pabas knew the meaning of their presence, and their hymn dissolved into a wail; the great king had gone before his god—a prisoner!

The interior of the sanctuary was in ordinary condition; the floor and the walls black with the blood of victims; the air foul and sickening, despite the smoking censers and perfuming pans. The previous visit had prepared the cavaliers for these horrors; nevertheless, a cry broke from them upon their entrance. In a chafing-dish before the altar four human hearts were slowly burning to coals!

"*Jesu Christo!*" exclaimed Alvarado. "Did not the pagans promise there should be no sacrifice? Shrieve me never, if I toss not the contents of your dish into the god's face!"

"Stay!" cried Olmedo, seizing his arm. "Stir not! The business is mine. As thou lovest God—the true God—get thee to thy place."

The father spoke firmly, and the captain, grinding his teeth with rage, submitted. The pedestal of the idol was of stone, square in form, and placed in the centre of the sanctuary. Several broad steps, fronting the doorway—door there was not—assisted devotees up to a platform, upon which stood a table curiously carved, and resting, as it were, under the eyes of the god. The chamber, bare of furniture, was crowded with pabas, kneeling and hooded and ranked, like their brethren outside. The cavaliers took post by the entrance, with Olmedo between them and the altar. Two priests, standing on the lower step, seemed waiting to assist in the ceremonial, although at the time, apparently absorbed in prayer.

Tlalac led the monarch by the hand, up the steps. "O king," he said, "the ears of the god are open. He will hear you. And as to these companions in devotion," he pointed to the assistants as he spoke, "avoid them not; they are here to pray for you, if need be, to die for you. If they speak, be not surprised, but heed them well; what they say will concern you, and all you best love."

Thereupon the arch-infernal led the royal hand and descended the steps, moving back-

ward; upon the floor he continued his movement. Suddenly he stopped, turned, and was face to face with Olmedo; all the passions of his savage nature blazed in his countenance; in reply, the Christian priest calmly held up the cross, and smiled, and was content. Meantime the monarch kissed the altar, and, folding his hands upon his breast, was beginning to be abstracted in prayer, when he heard himself addressed. "Look not this way, O king, nor stir; but listen."

(To be continued.)

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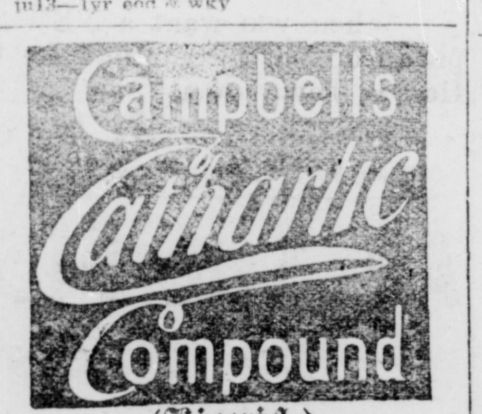
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