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The Cities of the Sun: Stories of Ancient America Founded on Historical Incidents in the Book of Mormon

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Abstract: The end justifies the means, so these stories are designed to increase interest in the Book of Mormon. Hundreds of books have been written founded on the Bible, and there are some wonderfully colorful accounts of the founding of Christianity in Judea, Alexandria, and Rome. It is surprising that more has not been done dealing with the ancient history of the western world. Several of these stories were first published in the *Improvement Era*, and acknowledgment is made to that magazine for the encouragement it extended to the author, who traveled twice to Mexico and excavated among the ruins there to gain information at first hand. If any boy or girl, after perusing these pages, is inspired to turn direct to the beautiful and simple language of the Book of Mormon itself, the purpose of "The Cities of the Sun" has been accomplished.

The Cities of the Sun

Stories of Ancient America founded
on historical incidents in the
Book of Mormon

BY

ELIZABETH RACHEL CANNON

Illustrated from paintings by Geo. M. Ottinger and
photographs by the Author

*SECOND AND ENLARGED
EDITION*

SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH
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ZARA.

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*"Builded on the ruins of dead thrones
Whose temple walls were old when Thebes was new,
On altars whose weird sacrificial stones
With ghastly offerings were crimson through,
Oblivion hides and holds thy secrets fast,
The dust of ages lies upon thy past,
All-wonderful, mysterious Mexico."*



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PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

The end justifies the means, so these stories are designed to increase interest in the Book of Mormon. Hundreds of books have been written founded on the Bible, and there are some wonderfully colorful accounts of the founding of Christianity in Judea, Alexandria, and Rome. It is surprising that more has not been done dealing with the ancient history of the western world. Several of these stories were first published in the *Improvement Era*, and acknowledgment is made to that magazine for the encouragement it extended to the author, who traveled twice to Mexico and excavated among the ruins there to gain information at first hand. If any boy or girl, after perusing these pages, is inspired to turn direct to the beautiful and simple language of the Book of Mormon itself, the purpose of "The Cities of the Sun" has been accomplished.



The Cities of the Sun.

Stories of Ancient America, Founded on Historical
Incidents in the Book of Mormon.

THE MARTYR.

I.

THE KING'S COUNCIL.

WHAT now, Amulon? Why so gloomy? Upon my word, you have not smiled for a week," and King Noah affectionately slapped his favorite's shoulder.

"I'll warrant me it's a woman," continued the king, when the other vouchsafed no reply, "for nothing else would move you."

"And what if it were?" answered the other moodily. "Would talking about it mend matters?"

"There is only one cure for a broken heart," and Noah wagged his head sagely.

"And that is—?"

"Another love."

"H'm."

"Among the thousand women of the court, are there not maids that please you? Women of all types grace the gardens of the city of Lehi-Nephi. Would you have a rose, a violet, a magnolia, a lily, a passion flower or a tulip? Pluck it." And he nodded toward the court of the women.

"Need I remind thee, O King, who art the prince of love, that when a man wants one woman—"

The king threw back his head and laughed until his fat sides shook.

“And who is the lady that dares withstand the bold Amulon?”

The king's face displayed the first interest it had worn that day, as he lolled on the crimson cushions that extended before his golden throne. He and his priests sat in the Hall of the Ambassadors, adjoining the great stone amphitheatre used for large assemblies. The hall where the king held his court was richly beautiful with its tiled floor, its ivory-tinted walls and the great gilded chairs of the thirty priests who constituted the king's council. All morning they had been attending to affairs of state, dealing principally with taxes, for the dissolute king maintained his magnificence with one-fifth of his people's produce.

The moment was propitious and Amulon hastened to explain. “The maid, O King, is Zara, the daughter of Gideon, who opposes my suit.”

“What, do you court the father? Make good with the girl.”

“I cannot. She will have none of me.”

For Amulon, who owed his title of favorite to his intrepidity and unscrupulousness, to acknowledge himself beaten was highly amusing.

“The girl has been a companion to her father and has imbibed his notions,” her lover continued. “If she were moved into another atmosphere she might change her mind. Association with the gracious Princess Otalitza would certainly mend her manners.”

“So you want—”

“Her brought to the palace.”

The king scowled. "Amulon, I can deny you nothing. Let the girl be brought. But look you," he added quickly, "she is to be in the train of the princess. Hands off, for awhile, you understand. Her father is a good soldier, and might cause trouble."

"You will send your orders?" said Amulon, following up his advantage.

"The palanquin shall fetch her today."

Both men looked up. Noises of turmoil and commotion came from the doorway. Half a dozen soldiers, dragging a limp figure, burst into the room. They were followed by a howling mob that shouted, "Away with him! Down with the prophet!"

As they hauled the man over before the dais, the twenty odd priests leaned forward with interest, while one exclaimed, "It is the Prophet Abinadi."

"Aye, Abinadi, whom I found in the plaza reviling thee, O king," exclaimed Himni, a priest, from the mob.

Noah looked down upon a tall man with straggling gray hair. In spite of his manacled hands, the buffetings of the soldiers and the jeers of the multitude, his thin lips curved in a scornful smile and his defiant face showed no sign of fear.

"What are the charges?" asked the king.

"He promises bondage and dire calamities to the people, and thy life, O King, he says, will be as a garment in a flame of fire. Who is this man that he should judge thee?"

The great, purple veins stood out on the king's forehead and he exclaimed angrily, "Take him to prison!"

The priests crowded up expectantly, for though Noah was not loved, yet he was feared; but Omner petitioned,

"Let us question this pretender that we may confound him."

"Yes, surely, the Lord must confide all wisdom to his prophets" scoffed Nehor.

So they plied him with questions, and to their astonishment he answered them boldly. "Why do you, the priests of the Lord, who are supposed to teach the people, ask these things of me? You cannot teach what you do not practice. You are wine-bibbers and revelers. You set the example of sensuousness and law-breaking, and seek not the kingdom of heaven, but the riches of the world."

The king turned wearily. "Away with this fellow," he said, "and slay him, for he is mad."

"Touch me not," commanded the prophet, "until I have delivered my message; then do with me as you will."

He spoke with such dignity and authority that they listened while he preached with the power of God. He dwelt on the law of Moses, then, a wondrous light illumining his face, he told them about the Messiah. How a new star should appear in the heavens and there should be continuous light for the space of three days, while far across the seas a child should be born in poverty, of a lowly virgin, and he should be the Son of God. The child should grow to be a man, despised and rejected of men. A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, who would suffer himself to be mocked and scourged, and cast out and disowned by his people. And after working many mighty miracles among the children of men, he would be crucified and slain. Thus would the spirit triumph over the flesh and he should bring to pass the resurrection of the dead.

“And where will you be, you priest of Satan, on that day?” he cried, working himself into a frenzy. “I tell you that the wicked shall have cause to howl, and weep, and wail, and gnash their teeth!”

Then he launched into such a fierce denunciation of the court that the priests looked at each other aghast, and the king turned a sickly green. Abinadi lashed himself into a fury as he pictured the torments of the wicked, until his body swayed with the power of his imaginings. Calming himself, finally, he commanded: “Repent ye, teach the law of Moses, also teach that it is a shadow of those things which are to come. Teach them that redemption cometh through Christ, the Lord, who is the very Eternal Father.” He ceased speaking.

“Take him away and put him to death.”

Then Alma, the sweet-spirited one among the priests, young, but wise in council, stepped forward, the sunlight glinting on his fair hair.

“This man has spoken the truth, and when, in all the reign of the just Noah, was a man put to death for speaking the truth?”

“He said that the king’s life should be as a garment in a hot furnace,” cried Himni vindictively.

Amulon, who hated Alma for reasons of his own, smiled as he mockingly exclaimed, “What! has the gentle Alma turned prophet? Presently we shall have a pair of them.”

The king motioned for the guards to remove the prisoner, and turning on his heel he leaned affectionately on the arm of Amulon and passed out, leaving Alma biting his lips with vexation and choking with humiliation.



ALMA LOITERED IN THE PERFUMED GARDENS.

II.

THE REVEL.

A solitary figure crossed the court on the pyramid, where the cluster of state buildings was located. Although he went toward the palace, he lagged like an unwelcome guest at a feast. The night was not cold but he shivered and wrapped his cloak around him. Behind him lay the great stone amphitheatre, with its tier after tier of seats, vaulted by the starlit sky. To the north loomed the great temple, surmounted by its towers. The somber blackness was relieved only by the sacred fire that burned on top. Ahead of him reposed the royal palace, resplendent as a jewel in its setting of perfumed gardens. Sounds of music and revelry issued from the casement, and the guest stopped to take a deep breath of the sweet night air before he plunged into the hot-house brilliance beyond.

As he entered the great banquet hall, many eyes turned that way. Alma had thrown off his cloak, displaying a purple tunic that enhanced the gold of his hair and the blue of his eyes. His short robe was caught in at the waist by a girdle of sapphires, and his lower limbs were bare save for the thongs of buckskin, extending from his sandals, which were strapped around them. It was not the beauty of the graceful young cavalier that attracted attention, but the whisper had gone forth that he was out of favor at court. That was what had brought him there to face it out, to show he was not afraid. For the most part, the guests whose brains were not addled with wine were absorbed in their own affairs, for the hour was late

and the diners at the banquet table, which was heavy with its gold and silver service, were on the last course. It consisted of dainty dishes of snow, brought on the backs of men from the distant volcano, delicately flavored with the grated rind of limes. Goblets brimming with odoriferous wines were constantly being refilled, but the real revelry was just begun. Before morning the great jars that stood on the buffet, that extended all around the great banquet room, would be overturned and emptied. Beside them were baskets laden with fruit—the gold of the tropics—bunches of purple grapes, pomegranates, tunas, oranges, pineapples, bananas, achuacates (the butter that grows on trees) and wild plums.

Above these, on the wall, was a fresco of naiads, while the magnificent ceiling was of green and gold. Oh, he had an eye for beauty, had King Noah;—too much for his good. A crowd of musicians played barbaric music, a troupe of acrobats performed in an ante room, while from the corridor came peals of laughter.

Alma ran his eye along the table. The king leered into the face of the ever-present Amulon, while on his left the buffoon, Omo, discoursed coarse jests. Suddenly Alma's heart stood still and then sickened. Could that be Zara, the daughter of Gideon, in the party of the princess? Yes, it was Zara, looking more radiant than ever. What was she doing in the palace of the king? From the shadow of the curtains he watched her with troubled eyes. A smile played on her expressive face and her eyes were bright with excitement. He waited impatiently until they rose from the table, but before he could get to her she was gone.

A few minutes later she appeared with the dancers.

How beautiful she looked, cream robed, with golden orchids in her hair! The intoxication of the dance set his blood to throbbing, but he noticed with rising resentment that he was not the only one interested in the new beauty. Alma wandered around the hall shunned by all, for it is not wise to flatter the one on whom the king frowns. He watched his chance, then went to speak to Zara. She rose to meet him, and there was genuine pleasure in her tone.

“Why, Alma, I’ve been looking for you so long.”

“Is that what brought you here, my lady?” he asked tensely.

“It was the king’s palanquin that brought me here,” she answered archly.

His brow lowered. “Perhaps the same conveyance will carry you back?”

“Perhaps.”

“Zara, I don’t like to see you here.”

“Why not? It is glorious! I love the magnificence of the court. It is breath to my nostrils. I have never lived before.”

“Your eyes are blinded by the gilded surface and you do not see the rottenness beneath. When you know it as well as I—” and he laughed bitterly. “I cannot understand,” he added soberly, “how your father allows you here, when he objected to me simply because I belonged to the court, though I hate everything that is connected with it.”

“My father—you might know—he did not send me here. I came by the order of the king.”

Alma looked startled. “Do you know what for?”

She shrugged her shoulders. “No one asks his reasons of the king.”

"Yes, but there is a reason. You had better go away from here, my lady. This is no place for you."

"I cannot," she said simply. "Besides, I tell you Alma, it is not the place, but the person. A pure-minded person can be good anywhere, the evil always find means to sate their appetites."

"No one is safe in the palace; you must go away."

"If I should leave, what then? I should be brought back again. You are satiated with all this. It opens a new world to me. I intend to see it," she cried, almost angrily.

She turned to talk to some young bloods who were hovering around her, and Alma was dismissed. Realizing his failure with the girl, he turned his steps toward the king. If he were not in disfavor, he might have her released. At least there was a chance to find out why she was there, he argued.

He approached the throne, bowed, and murmured, "I have a petition to make, your majesty."

The king stared coolly past him, as if he did not see him, and went on talking to Amulon, while Alma retreated, reddening to the ears, as a titter arose behind palm leaf fans. His disgrace was now complete, and he thought the next move would be assassins. "Well, Abinadi, you may have company," he muttered. He wandered aimlessly about in a daze, finally going to the gaming tables for, though he did not gamble himself, he hoped to drown his misery in the excitement of the players.

* * * * *

Zara stood in the shadow of the palms at the entrance to the patio. The revel was beginning to pall on

her with its grossness. True, the musicians had been replaced with others, and as she listened, the strains of "The Heavens for a Kiss" floated out to her. Many of the lights were out and what remained burned badly, but they were sufficient to display sights from which her whole soul shrank. Omo lay across the end of the table, his bull neck kinked so his heavy breathing could be heard all over the room. Omner had tipped over a wine jar, and lay on the floor with his head in a red pool that looked like blood. Himni was pouring cold water down the neck of a servant girl, while he explained that it would make her lips red. Mulek's domineering voice roared above all others. Some callow youths were trying to sing. Nobody knew where the king was. Most of the girls had departed, and Zara, for the first time, felt lonely and scared. She wished Alma would come. She heard a footstep behind her; then a door pulled to. She listened, thinking it was he.

"So, I have found you at last, my dove!"

She uttered a startled cry and looked up to see the great form of Amulon towering above her. His eyes glowed like fires in the dark.

"Come!" he coaxed. "How these arms have ached for you!"

"Let me go!" she cried fiercely, struggling like a frightened bird in his grasp.

"Fight away, my pretty. My, how tigerish we are! I' faith, I believe that is why I love you!"

"I shall cry for help."

"Who is there to hear you?"

"I shall expose you to the king."

"He will not believe you."

"Then Alma shall intercede in my behalf."

Amulon laughed. "Alma! he is already a doomed man."

"My father shall carry my case before the king!" she cried in a panic.

"Why did the king have you brought here? To grace the train of Otalitza, when there are a hundred women fighting for the place you occupy? Why, I say, except at my request? If you spurn me, the king will claim you. Take your choice."

Seeing the hopelessness of her case, woman's wit, which has been her chief weapon since the world began, came to her rescue. She slipped up her arms and encircled his head, kissing his handsome, bruised-looking lips.

"Amulon," she whispered, "I am not a slave to be coerced. What I do, I must do of my own free will, without force."

"You are right," he said, won by her speedy capitulation. He instantly freed her, for he was as generous as he was passionate.

"Your lips are like the desert and your brow is fevered. See, I will bathe it in the fountain." She darted forward, and as he stumbled after her and fell headlong on the pavement, she did not stop to look back, but kept right on.

* * * * *

The breeze that precedes the dawn was stirring when a white-robed figure stole out on the roof garden of the palace. She started back when, on turning a corner, she was confronted by a man muffled in a long cloak.

"Zara!"

"Oh, Alma, I am so glad!" and she wrung her hands in relief.

"Why are you here alone at this time?"

"I could not sleep. So many strange things have happened. And you?"

"I could not sleep, either. I searched for you, last night, but could not find you. Where did you go?"

"To the inner patio."

"With whom?"

"Amulon."

"Amulon! So that is why you came to the palace?"

"He said as much."

"And I have ruined myself at court through espousing the cause of the Prophet Abinadi.

"So Amulon intimated."

"Where is he?"

"Down the well, for aught I know. I fled from him, and he gave chase. He was half drunk and stumbled over the fountain curbing, but whether he pitched in or not I do not know. I didn't stop to look back."

"He didn't; trust his luck for that. And you? How did you get out?"

"Why, through the court of the lions, of course."

"They might have killed you."

"So I thought; but the king's ocelots are well fed. They did not care to get up to dine off me in the middle of the night."

The rainbow colors of the dawn of the tropics illuminated the sky to the east, and below, the hills were swathed in pearl gray mist. Alma breathed deep as he looked at Zara, fresh and radiant as the morning itself. The fleecy robe she had slipped on parted at the throat, her dark head was swathed in a pale blue gauze, broidered with silver stars, and not all the turmoil of the night

could disguise the fact that she was young and glad to be alive. As she lifted a slender, rounded, white arm to indicate the violet and orange of the horizon, Alma caught her in his arms.

"Come with me," he whispered, "away from this wicked place. Let me teach you the principles of Abinadi. Together let us live our lives as he has taught, in conformity with the will of the Lord."

"Abinadi!" she murmured. "I already believe in him, although he has taught the strange doctrine that we must return good for evil, instead of demanding an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. But you must teach me, Alma," she added fearfully, "for there are many things I do not understand. And this strange doctrine of repentance, that they talk so much about—"

"The king had better take to heart," Alma finished grimly. "Would that the scales might fall from his eyes, as they have from mine!"

"He is going to put Abinadi to death?"

"So I fear."

"And you?"

"Oh, I shall take up the work where he left off. I'm afraid his mantle will fall on unworthy shoulders. I have carefully written down all his words, and I shall teach them to the people when he is gone. I consecrate my life to the work. God grant me strength and light to do it well!"

"Does Abinadi know?"

"Yes; I go now to visit him in his cell."

"Tarry a little, Sir Prophet," she commanded, running her hand through his yellow hair.

Together they watched the sun rise. The mocking

birds sang riotously. The lavender flowers of the bougainvilæa drooped in the garden, while from the patio below the air came laden with the heavy odor of the blossom called "The Perfume of the Night." The lovers did not notice that with it was mingled the scent of the ill-omened "Flower of the Dead."

III.

THE EXECUTION.

The great market place was the heart of the city. The streets, like so many arteries, emptied into its pulsating center. There all the buying and selling went on. Here was a fruit stand from which a bronze Lamanitish goddess flicked the flies. Yonder was a clothier's, containing garments of chameleon dyes. There were cafes, candy stands, butcher shops, fish from the lake, venders of pottery, and makers of lace. The band played there in the afternoon, and lovers sought the shade of its arbors in the evening.

This morning something of unusual occurrence was about to happen. People were running hither and thither. There was a hushed murmur of excitement among the crowds, which were larger than on any market day. Four regiments of soldiers were stationed at the corners, while a fifth was keeping the people back from an open space in the middle of the square.

"Wherefore the crowd?" asked the countryman who had just brought his cart of vegetables to the city that morning, of a young man who was hurrying to the scene.

The other looked at him in surprise, "Why, they are going to burn the Prophet Abinadi."

"They're not going to burn him alive?"

"How do you think they'd burn him—dead?" he threw back over his shoulder, as he hurried on.

The crowd was impatient.

"Light the fire, and let us see if this false prophet is courageously true to his convictions."

"What are they waiting for?" called another.

There was a blare of trumpets, a blast of martial music, and then the cry, "Make way for the king!"

On a palanquin, borne aloft on the shoulders of men, surmounted by a green canopy, reclined the king. As soon as he reached the place of execution he ordered the soldiers to bring forth the prisoner. When Abinadi, sustained by the heroism of martyrdom, but very weak and trembling physically, stood before him, Noah pronounced sternly: "Abinadi, we have found an accusation against thee and thou art worthy of death; for thou hast said that God himself should come down among the children of men, and now for this cause thou shalt be put to death, unless thou wilt recall all the words thou hast spoken evil concerning me and my people."

With a hunted look in his eyes, Abinadi answered: "I will not recall the words I have spoken unto you concerning this people, for they are true. I will suffer even unto death. I will not recall my words, and they shall stand as a testimony against you. And if ye slay me, ye will shed innocent blood, and this shall stand as a testimony against you at the last day."

The words touched even the callous heart of Noah, and he was half convinced. He turned to the priests.

“Shall we release him?”

“Death to Abinadi, he has reviled the king!” was the shout.

“Death to Abinadi!”

“Let his God delay the flames!”

“He says we shall all be captives to the Lamanites!”

“Down with false prophets!”

Amid the maledictions, they bound Abinadi to the stake and lighted the faggots under his feet.

As the flames licked his quivering limbs, and he writhed in agony, he looked into the faces of the terror-stricken populace and said in accents thick, “It will come to pass that ye shall be afflicted with all manner of diseases because of your iniquities. Yea, and ye shall be smitten on every hand, and shall be driven and scattered to and fro, even as a wild flock is driven by wild and ferocious beasts. And in that day ye shall be hunted, and ye shall be taken by the hand of your enemies.”

As the flames mounted higher and higher, and the victim writhed in agony, a young man, with sunny hair, made his way out of the crowd, for he could stand it no longer. Henceforth he was the disciple of the dead prophet, and the blood of martyrdom had won its first convert in Alma.

His was not the only sick heart, for when the agonized victim looked out of his pain-dimmed eyes and said prophetically to Noah, “Ye shall suffer, as I suffer, the pains of death by fire,” the king called suddenly, “Ho, take me hence!”

IV.

THE WATERS OF MORMON.

Gloom reigned in the palace and in the heart of Zara. The death of Abinadi seemed to portend evil. Alma was condemned to death, and guards were scouting the country for him, for he had disappeared. Zara was torn with fear, for she expected daily to see him dragged there in irons. Again she thought he had been secretly murdered, and this hunting for him was a pretense.

Then a message came to her. She sent for Amulon, who came gladly, for she had locked herself up in her apartments and refused to see him for days, while he, whose will was law, chafed like a chained lion. She was peculiarly gracious, and it was with difficulty he restrained himself, for his love for this maiden, who was the first who had ever opposed him, swept him off his feet.

"I have a favor to ask of you, Amulon, as always," she began.

"Which is already granted, if it lies within my power, princess."

"Ever am I more indebted to you."

"What is my lady's latest caprice?"

"You know I am virtually a prisoner here. All of the palace is mine, but the bird is none the less barred because the cage is gilded. An aged aunt of mine is dying, and she has sent for me to soothe her last hours. I would go to her bedside. Will you not ask the king's permission that I may go?"

Amulon was touched by her earnestness, for ever are strong men weakest through their strength.

"Go, Zara, and I will be responsible to the king." He

stepped to the door and summoned Mulek. "Do you accompany this lady wherever she goes. See that no harm approaches, and return her in safety to the palace."

Mulek bowed and retreated.

Zara sallied out, accompanied by the giant soldier Mulek. They made their way to a large house with a stone front. They entered, and passed through corridor after corridor, until they came to the one that led to the death chamber.

"You will wait here for me, Mulek?"

"The Lord Amulon said I was not to let you out of my sight."

"But you can't go in there when she is dying!"

"I go where you do," he answered doggedly.

She was in despair. But everyone has his vulnerable point. She began to plead with him, using all her art, but he only shook his head. She tore a heavy gold chain from her neck. Three great emeralds hung pendant from it. The bauble was worth a fortune. She thrust it into his hand saying imperiously, "Wait here, I will soon be back."

Before he could recover himself she was gone. His first impulse was to follow her, but he distinguished the sound of a woman's voice, and it deterred him.

The giant waited a long time. He paced restlessly around the room. When the afternoon sun faded into evening he grew alarmed. He rang a bell, which no one answered. He walked through the deserted halls. He came back and went to the room of the sick woman. There was no couch there, and a new light broke in on him. He ran through the house, shouting. A Lamanitish woman, a servant, confronted him.

"Where is Zara, the daughter of Gideon?" he fairly shouted.

She eyed him calmly. "I know of no such woman."

"I brought her here," he reiterated.

"She is not here," she repeated.

He rushed through the house but found no trace of her whom he sought. His first impulse was to flee and escape the anger of Amulon. But on second thought he decided that that would look as if he had connived at her escape. If he reported at once, she might yet be found. He started on a run back to the palace.

When he presented himself before Amulon, a sweating, palpitating, trembling wretch, the courtier gave him one look and then roared, "Where is the girl?"

"Alas, I know not!" wailed the other. "I turned, m'lord, and she was gone. Some power of magic—" he dodged a heavy bronze vase that Amulon, in his rage, hurled at his head. It crashed into the door beyond and splintered it.

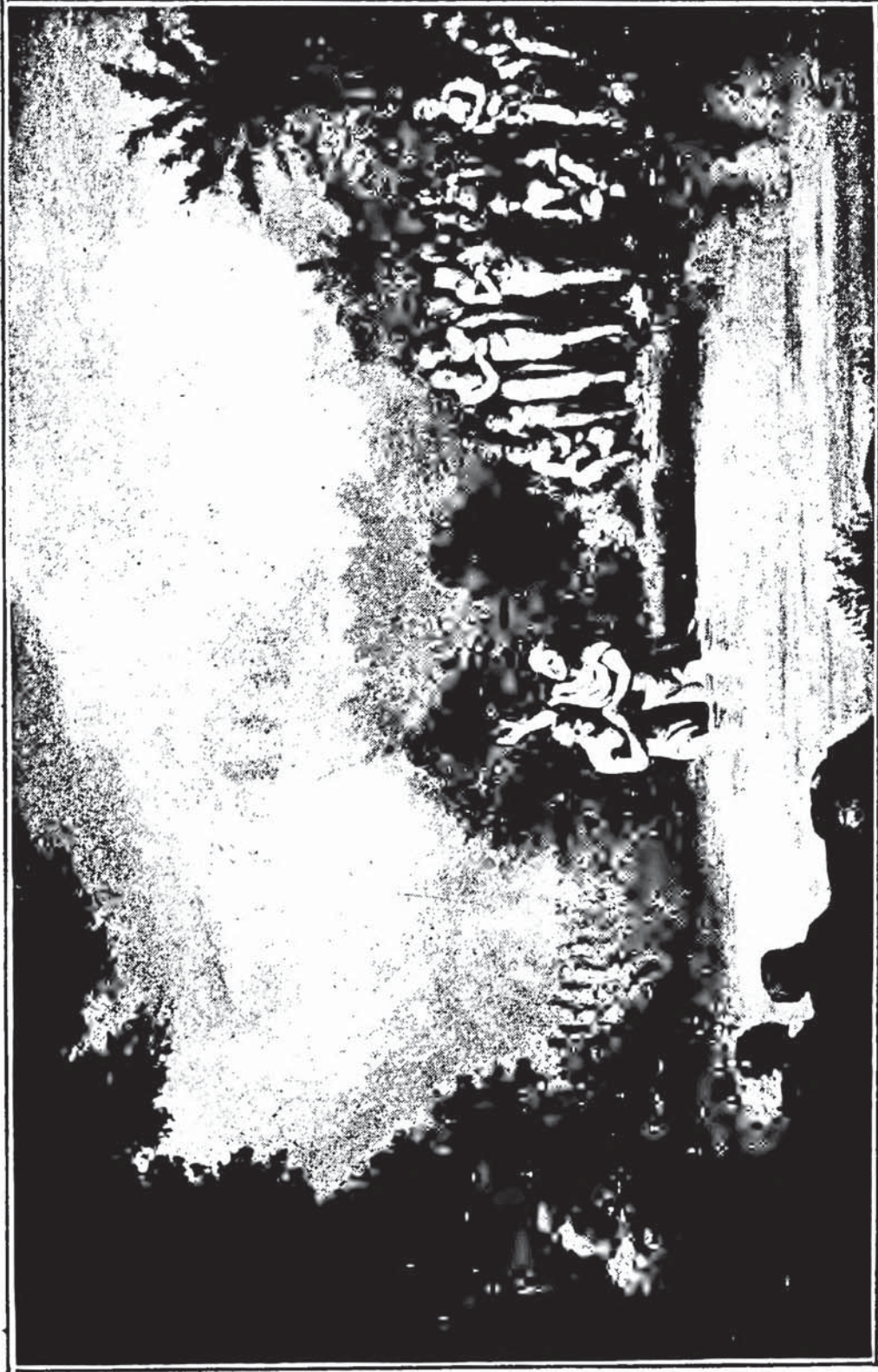
The chief priest clapped his hands. Slaves appeared.

"Take him," he commanded. "Let him be lashed. Send soldiers to search the house of Zeezrom, and arrest every one you find there."

All night Amulon paced the palace, and all night rose the shrieks of Mulek, lashed to the whipping post.

In the meantime Zara, after her escape from Mulek, was being borne through tall hedges of organ cactus on the outskirts of the city. Through fields of maguey—the large century plant—until they reached the prairie where the mesquite grew, they continued their flight.

Beyond, palm trees were gracefully silhouetted against the sky. Plantains rattled in the wind. As they



ALMA BAPTIZING IN THE WATERS OF MORMON.

neared the oasis, they felt the dread stillness of the tropic jungle, for the night was coming on. The rich velvet of the sward was flecked with the wild tulip, and long mosses cast black shadows in a pool as clear and deep as a woman's eyes.

Such were the Waters of Mormon, where Alma, the sweet-spirited, baptized believers and taught the gospel of the Savior, thus carrying on the work of Abinadi.

When the slaves stopped, and Alma saw that the white palanquin bore a woman, he came forward. Zara slipped lightly out, without assistance, and ran to meet him.

"Zara!" he exclaimed.

"It is I, Alma." Then she continued breathlessly, "They have located you. The sentence of death hangs over you and your followers. You must flee quickly."

"How did you find out?"

"Ever since you went away I have lived on the name of Alma. Every breath that concerned you my intuition has ferreted out. The armies of the king have orders to march against you now, for the king fears the stronghold you are gaining among the people."

"And you came to tell me this! If they knew it, what would they do to you?"

"I don't know; I'm not going back to find out."

"Not going back?"

"No; I'm going with you—if you will let me."

"Let you, Zara!" A look of glad surprise broke over his face, as he took her tenderly in his arms. But amid all his joyful exultation, there was a fear in his heart of hearts. He knew that behind his cherished one lay luxury and pleasure, and ahead of her was—the desert.

V.

THE FLIGHT.

Consternation reigned in the palace. The unsuccessful army returned, announcing the escape of Alma and four hundred and fifty of his followers. Amulon, in an angry mood, and the king had had words over the disappearance of Zara. Noah foresaw trouble with her father, and Gideon was one of his best generals. Nor was he mistaken, for along came the sturdy old soldier demanding to see his daughter. Noah explained that the girl was gone, that every effort had been made to locate her, but without avail.

Gideon did not believe it. He thought they were deceiving him. He poured execrations on their heads.

“There is only one fate that awaits a woman that steps inside your palace. Were there not enough, but my daughter must grace your court? She was of a different type, and that was why you coveted her. You have lied to me, for you have something to conceal. A father’s curse be on you!”

It was in vain that the king denied any knowledge of Zara’s whereabouts. He had been involved in so many intrigues that he was not believed when he spoke the truth.

“Curse you. You will tell me where she is, or I will run you through!” and Gideon drew his sword. “It would be a service to rid the Nephites of such a tyrant.”

Noah could have summoned his guards, but Gideon had challenged him as man to man. The king had been

a soldier in his youth, but years of dissipation had rendered his flesh flabby and his spirit afraid.

They crossed swords and lunged at each other. A few moments and the king was breathless. Gideon so evidently had the advantage that Noah, in sheer cowardice, turned and fled. He rushed to the temple. With drawn sword Gideon followed him. Through chamber after chamber the king ran. The rooms were superb with their mosaic and metal work, but Noah did not notice any of the decorations, for after him followed grim Nemesis. The two flying figures, one very little behind the other, reached the top of the second pyramid. Noah mounted the steps that led to the top of the tower. This was ascended by a series of ladders, and when he reached the second he kicked the first from under him. When he reached the top his face was purple, and every breath was a pain. He could go no further, and he knew that his respite was short. He looked down from the dizzy height. Then he lost himself in astonishment.

"Let me down!" he screamed. "The armies of the Lamanites are upon us!"

Gideon, deeming this but a ruse, was in no wise deterred in his pursuit.

"I tell you they are spread out in battle array on the plains below! Let me down that I may save my people!" pleaded Noah.

"Save your people? You had better save your own neck," Gideon thought grimly. He went to the parapet and looked over. The king was right, there were the Lamanite phalanxes spread out upon the plain as far as the eye could see.

"Come down and save your people," he called,

sheathing his sword. He himself went over and began to beat the alarum drum to call the men to arms. As the old king tottered down there was time for a new fear to supplant the other. None knew better than he how illy his kingdom was prepared for war. He had made his people lovers of pleasure. The standing army was small, and no match for the fierce Indians inured to hardship.

“Call the people together and tell them to bring their families and flee into the wilderness,” he commanded. “It were folly to fight them here.”

When all the people of the city congregated, Noah, like a good leader, led the flight.

The Lamanites were not slow to discover the tactics, and started out in swift pursuit. They soon overtook the Nephites and the massacre commenced. Noah, maddened by the sight of the blood, bade the heralds command all the men to flee, for they were retarded by the women and children.

“They will not murder the women in cold blood,” reasoned the valorous king, “and some of us may be saved while Gideon engages the enemy here.”

Like geese that follow their leader, on the spur of the moment many of the men turned and followed the king and his priests, who were in full flight.

After they had gone some distance into the wilderness, they began to come to their senses. One commoner voiced the sentiment of the men when he said, “If our loved ones are slain, it were better that we had perished with them.”

“But, at least, after first striking a blow in their defense,” added another.

“Let us go back and see if they are dead. And if

they are,"—here the speaker looked meaningly at Noah—"we will seek revenge."

"We are a laughing stock and a bye word," said one man who prided himself on his honor.

They were all heartily ashamed of themselves, and, as is always the case under such circumstances, they sought someone on whom to lay the blame. Whereupon, when the king commanded them not to return, it brought their anger to a head. Instead of obeying him, they turned viciously upon him as the cause of all their misfortune. They overpowered him roughly and bound him hand and foot. Amulon, who at least had the saving grace of loyalty, was the only one who drew his sword in defense of the king. He was run through the side for his pains. The other priests, for their part, seeing themselves so out-numbered, took to their heels.

Amulon, weak from loss of blood, staggered over to a brush heap, and there they let him lie. With presence of mind, he stuffed his shirt into the wound and stanching the flow of blood. He was in a raging fever, and one of the men taking pity on him as he tossed with sleepless eyes, brought him a cup of water.

When night was well advanced, he dragged himself down to a stream and drank deep of the running water. He was conscious of the fact that no one had paid any attention to him. To attempt the escape of Noah, he knew, was hopeless. He felt that the king must have help, and have it quickly. Urged on by some power beyond himself, the wounded man arose and staggered out into the jungle.

He found the priests, or rather, they found him wandering in the woods, and Amulon, by his old power of

eloquence, rallied them and brought them back. But lo, when they arrived at the place where the Nephites had camped, they were gone, and Amulon feared that in his daze he had mistaken the place. But Himni raised a shout, and they found only too ghastly evidence of the recent presence of the Nephites. The trunk of an immense tree had been partially burned. Lashed to its side was what was left of a man, under whom a fire had been built. One of the priests walked over, and from the ashes picked out the king's signet ring. They had burned Noah to death. Thus had the prophecy of Abinadi been fulfilled.

“His life was as a garment in a furnace of fire.”

VI.

THE ABDUCTION.

Like nomads the priests wandered into the forest, subsisting on berries and wild game. One day Omo, the voluptuary, came into camp with what for him was unusual speed. The men loafing around the camp began to jeer at him.

“I have seen such a sight—“ he began.

“You must have seen something to make you run. He has seen such a sight—”

“As you would all break your necks to see.”

“What have you seen?”

“Women.”

“Women!” they muttered.

“Girls—young, beautiful as gazelles.”

“He has been having visions.”

“Listen. As I lay under a willow, that I might digest my dinner out of the heat of the sun, I did hear singing and laughter—”

“He was asleep and dreamed it.”

“Very cautiously did I crawl out, and there I beheld fifty Lamanitish maidens—”

“Lamanites! Huh!”

“Fifty Lamanitish damsels, as I did start to say, wreathed with garlands and bedecked with golden circlets on their arms and ankles, making merry in the woods. Then they ceased from their sports and sat them down to picnic out of great hampers. They took out such viands! Ah me, I have not tasted cooked food in a twelve month! Who knows? I might have made myself known and been made much of among so many maidens; but I forebore, and came here to acquaint you with the fact.”

A shout of laughter arose. “Come on, boys,” volunteered one.

“But Lamanites!”

“I care not,” decided Omner. “We are outcasts among our people, and we dare not return to Lehi-Nephi. For my part, a Lamanite maid is good enough to cook my food and live in my tepee.”

“Mine, too, if she be good looking. Omner, lead out.”

As gaily as a crowd of school boys on a lark, they hurried through the woods. Others joined them on their way.

After the order of primitive man did they lie in wait for, and carry off, their mates. After the first panic, the girls, when they found the white-skinned men were inclined to be wooers, were nothing loth. So the camp

was doubled that night, for the fifty of Omo's imagination had dwindled to twenty-four.

Also like primitive man, they fought for their mates. A dispute arose as to who should have a tall, slender girl who wore great golden ornaments in her black hair. She was well worth fighting for, as most of the men seemed to think, for the riot soon developed into a free-for-all fight. It threatened to turn the camp into a hospital, when Amulon, returning from the hunt, strode in and threw a buck from his shoulders.

Without more ado he threw himself into the midst of the melee and separated the opponents. As soon as the combatants saw who it was they decided to leave the decision with him.

Amulon listened to the story of the day's conquest, and patiently heard each claim. In the meantime he had casually looked the girl over. She stood with heaving bosom and scornful lips while the parley went on. She narrowed her eyes, however, and paid attention when this big, powerful man, so evidently the master, took a hand.

Finally he announced his decision, "I shall keep her myself."

An ominous murmur arose.

"He struck not a blow, but he seizes the plunder."

Not a man there but knew Amulon would make his claim good, but where he was sure of his ground he could afford to be politic.

He had exchanged a meaning look with the dark eyed beauty, so he said magnanimously, "Come, we will let the girl herself make the choice."

As soon as she understood the import of his words, she went over and stood up straight and tall by his side.

As with primitive man, the strongest had won out. So Amulon, garbed in a leopard's skin was wed to the Indian girl in the forest. He did not know until afterwards that she was Lamona, the daughter of the king of the Lamanites.

VII.

THE REVENGE.

Alma came in and hung his sickle on the wall. Although he assumed cheerfulness, his wife, who greeted him brightly over the pile of colored wool with which she was working, knew that he was sorely troubled. The room was airy, but simple, in its appointments. The floor was carpeted with rush mats and bears' skins, while the walls bore trophies of the chase in the form of antlers and deer heads. The supper looked inviting, and Alma came to it with the hunger born of hard labor in the fields.

"I wish you would not work so hard," admonished Zara, laying her work aside. "Amulon exempted you from labor."

Alma laughed shortly. "Small satisfaction that, to rest in the shade while I see my brethren toiling in the hot sun, with hard taskmasters over them. When I refused to be king I explained that we are all equal in the sight of the Lord. Now that disaster has come upon us, I am no better than they. The drivers will not even allow our people to pray aloud any more."

"Surely Amulon has not forbidden that," gasped Zara, with dilated eyes.

The Lamanites had conquered all the southern prov-

inces of the Nephites. The latter had only saved their lives by paying tribute of one-half of their substance to their hard masters. At the time he fled from the armies of King Noah, Alma had traveled with his followers to a land of pure water where they built the beautiful city of Helem.

When Amulon and the gay priests stole the Indian girls and married them, King Laman had been wrathful. He sent out spies, located them where they were living and was getting ready to visit punishment upon them when his daughter Lamona, the wife of Amulon, came and threw herself at her father's feet and pleaded for mercy for the white men. She prevailed and the king of the Lamanites gladly welcomed his big son-in-law into favor. The head priest of King Noah rapidly resumed his old place of king's favorite. He introduced his own liberal schemes with the learning of the Nephites, and King Laman appropriated part of his kingdom for Amulon and his daughter to rule over. It so chanced that this province included the city of Helem

When Amulon, accompanied by his dusky princess, and flanked by the barbarian armies, marched in, he was much surprised to find that the inhabitants were the followers of Alma. He found them easy prey, for their leader commanded them not to shed blood. The new ruler did not make it any easier for the captives because Alma had been a fellow priest of his who had won his sweet-heart

"Something has got to be done," pronounced Alma, looking across at his wife. "The people must break this yoke of bondage, for they cannot stand it any longer. I want you to unite with me in calling on the Lord for help"

Zara acquiesced, and when she arose a new light

shone on her face as she rapidly unfolded to him her plan.

“Why don’t you reproach me for having brought you to this?” he asked, drawing her tenderly toward him, for he realized that the task she had set herself was no easy one.

“Nay, I have been happier here helping you than I ever was before, with all my luxury. I never realized what a blessing work is!”

* * * * *

Zara went and presented herself before Amulon. With mingled emotions they looked on one another. Zara noticed that the black-bearded, handsome man was more dominating than ever. The deep-eyed, dusky princess by his side was well suited to such a husband. Lamona, for her part, was curiously interested in her prince’s former love. Amulon marked that Zara had retained her beauty, and looked very little older. He wondered what this slip of a woman who had preferred a soft-voiced missionary, could have to ask of him.

“I have a petition to make, my lord,” she began, bowing low.

“And that is—”

“That you, your lady, and all your soldiery will dine with us at a banquet that we have prepared. There is much ill-feeling between the people and the soldiers. There has been a brutal quarrel or two, and we would seek to allay the trouble.”

Amulon’s eyes lighted with pleasure. It was long since he had eaten at a Nephite board, and he would like to sup with Zara. “I think I can answer for the men.

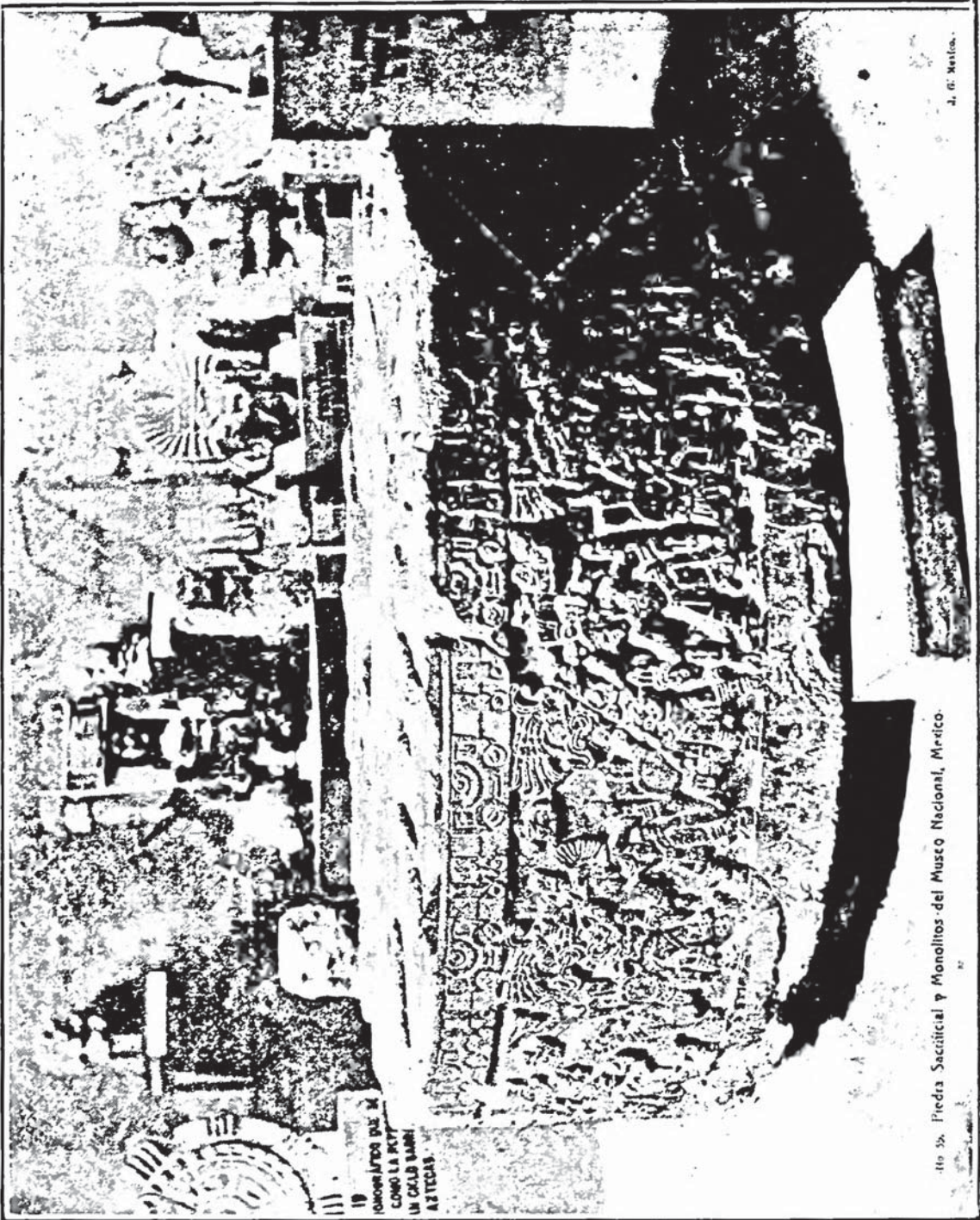
They will come, like a horse to water. What say you, my girl?" He turned to Lamona.

In thick, musical tones she graciously accepted the invitation.

On the day of the banquet Zara flitted among the wine jars, pouring into them a concoction brewed of the sleeping herb and the juice of the white poppy. Practically all of the Helemite's store would be guzzled down the throats of the thirsty horde in one night. The people of Alma would drink none. That was a part of the game.

That night at the feast, when the atmosphere was redolent with perfume and the air vibrant with music, Amulon cornered Zara and with his compelling gaze fixed on her face demanded that she drink with him the toast, "For old time's sake," while Lamona watched with jealous eyes. Fearful that this virile leader would not drink enough for her purpose, she raised the goblet with quaking hand to her lips. They were almost driven white by a new fear. What if she herself should go to sleep in this dire exigency? Already the drugged soldiers were lying in heaps about the room. Some still kept up the feast, but even these were too far gone to notice that the halls were being strangely emptied of Nephites. Already their flocks and herds were being rapidly driven into the mountains, to be speedily followed by their owners, for the Helemites were abandoning their homes to their conquerors.

Outside in the starlit night, Zara a second time faced the desert. Seated on a horse, like another Mary, she fearfully clasped her little son to her bosom. He was Alma, son of Alma, future high priest of Zarahemla.



19
Piedra Sacrificial por el
como la Piedra
en Oaxaca
Aztecas

Fig. 35. Piedra Sacrificial y Monolitos del Museo Nacional, Mexico.

J. G. Neff.

THE SACRIFICIAL STONE.

THE GADIANTONS.

"And it came to pass that the Lamanites did hunt the band of robbers of Gadianton; * * insomuch that this band of robbers was utterly destroyed from among the Lamanites."

I.

THE GOSSIPS AT THE FOUNTAIN.



THE LAMANITE GIRL WAS PRETTY.

HURRY with your trifling, and lend me your cup that I may fill my jars," admonished Abish.

"You are in a hurry, today?" queried Sara lazily. The water in the fountain was low and it had to be scooped up from the bottom. Sara was trickling the cool liquid over her fingers quite oblivious to her own empty water pitchers standing with gaping mouths on the curb.

The two women, Abish, servant in the house of Ahah, and Sara a servant of Sean-tum, often met at the

fountain to gossip. At these times the possible union between the heads of their two houses was an inexhaustible subject, for Seantum, the proud Nephite, was a suitor for the hand of Ahah, a girl of mixed blood. Possible exigencies were suggested by the fact that Ahah was believed to love Hagoth, a Lamanite soldier; on the other hand her mother, the widowed Miriam, openly encouraged the suit of Seantum.

Truly the plaza in the beautiful suburb, Antionum was a pleasant place to loiter. The fountain was the life source of the city, and sooner or later everyone came there to drink. The gorgeous flowers of the tropics were so rich that the very bees became intoxicated and produced a honey that was the original nectar. A long line of Biblical looking girls carrying water jars on their heads extended from the fountain. Alternating with oval Madonna-like faces lit with lustrous eyes was the ardent gypsy coloring that told of mixed blood, for Lamanites and Nephites mingled freely in the community.

"The servants at our house do not dawdle the day away," announced Abish severely, "Our mistress looks after her household."

Sara felt the implied sneer, for the ancient halls of Seantum languished in bachelor neglect.

"When the fair Ahah comes to preside over our household then may I have to run home heavy laden."

"If your white faced master be not so slow that he lets Hagoth the Lamanite walk off with her before his eyes. I could tell him things—"

"A Lamanite," laughed Sara derisively. "Ahah is not particular in her taste. But then, poor girl, she cannot help it, it is in her blood"—Sara stopped short, for

along the street, ringing with startling distinctness arose the cry, "Cezoram, son of Cezoram, the chief judge, is dead."

For a moment there was absolute stillness, then wild clamor broke forth. Rumor, with her thousand tongues told that Cezoram, chief judge of all the Nephites, had not risen that morning, and when an attendant went to wake him he found him lying naturally in his bed—dead. He had been struck upon the head as he slept, by an assassin who had come and gone as stealthily as the night air.

"Who killed him?" inquired Abish plucking at the arm of a man who passed with broad strides, muttering in his beard.

"Who should it be but the Gadiantons, a handful of robbers, the mention of whose very name blanches the faces of the people and shakes the government. The Nephite officials are in secret league with them else we would not be so terrorized. Two chief judges slain within a year: Cezoram the elder struck down as he sat upon the judgment seat; his son and successor most foully murdered in his room! Is there no end to our endurance?"

"The Gadiantons!" Bursting with her news Abish caught up her half-filled jars and hurried out through some deserted gardens that she might more quickly arrive home. As she picked her way through some overgrown vines she stopped suddenly. Her eyes had caught sight of a familiar crest. Across the open space was the stalwart figure of Hagoth, clothed in the tiger skin, his badge of knighthood. By his side in flaunting red petticoat walked a Lamanite girl. At the edge of the woods

he returned the basket he had been carrying and the head of the plumed chief bent low over her.

“Hagoth making love to an Indian; I wonder what Ahah will say?”

Later she heard what her mistress had to say, and the servant's tale lost nothing in the telling of it.

II.

IN THE PATIO OF MIRIAM.

A party of four sat at the supper board of Miriam. It was spread in the roofed cloisters, midway between the patio where the margherites, like Psyche, flirted with their own fair image in the fountain, and the house, where, through gold embroidered gauze curtains, an occasional glimpse was had of a vast inner apartment set with mosaics.

Before the guests, who sat on mats, were spread tempting dulces (sweets) and heaped up salvers of the strange fruits of the tropics, the butter, eggs, and custards that grow on trees.

A servant brought cups of frothing chocolate to the two women, Ahah, whose gold crowned head rose like an aureole above the sea foam green of her gown, and her mother Miriam, massive and handsome despite her years. Shem, an aged traveler from the far south, was scooping out spoonfuls of papaya, a peptonized squash, while Seantum leaned against a marble pillar, his pale face with its weak features peering luridly through clouds of tobacco smoke.

The murder of the morning was under discussion.

“Who are these Gadiantons?” asked Shem, who was a stranger in the country. “Methinks it was they who robbed a pack train of a merchant in our town. Though he carried the matter to the tribunal he could get no restitution.”

“Restitution!” Miriam smiled grimly. “How can we expect justice when the Nephite officials are in secret league with the robbers?”

“They have been a menace to our nation since their organization,” hastily interposed Seantum, anxious to change the subject.

“Indeed,” Shem thoughtfully stroked his long beard while his Jewish face bent forward with interest.

“The chief judges have been their victims ever since Kishkumen, an unscrupulous adventurer, stabbed the judge Pahoran. The good Helaman would have suffered a like fate had not a servant of his overheard the plot and killed Kishkumen first. The blackguard followers of this professional assassin were organized into a secret society by Gadianton who introduced Satan’s own machinations. After that the bandits fled to the mountain where they have subsisted ever since.”

“Cannot they be apprehended?” asked Shem astonished.

• “They hold the mountain fastnesses and rout every army sent against them. Only occasionally do they infest the valleys to drive off the cattle,” explained Seantum surprised at the other’s ignorance.

“They’d do well if they drove off only the cattle,” remarked Miriam sharply. “They swooped down upon a village when most of the men were away at the late war, and carried off the women and children.”

"The Gadianton robbers are dreadful men." Ahah shuddered. "They brought one who had been taken prisoner to fight upon the sacrificial stone before Tubaloth, king of the Lamanites. With one foot chained to the rock and armed only with sword and shield he fought and vanquished eight warriors. The king granted him his freedom."

"They will surely punish this slayer of Cezoram," suggested Shem.

"Certainly, if they can find him."

"Must a whole nation quail before those bloodthirsty barbarians," exclaimed Ahah passionately. Remembering that it was whispered that Seantum himself, like many of the officials, was helpless against the bandits, she asked suddenly: "Seantum, why don't you lead an army against them?"

"Impossible!" returned that effeminate youth. "Perhaps our friend, the husky Lamanite, will undertake the task," he added sneeringly. "They say that Tubaloth's young men are deserting the army to join the robbers. The king has sworn vengeance on them."

"When did the Nephites have to call upon their ancient enemies for help?" interposed Miriam haughtily.

The meal was finished and despite the fuming of Seantum and the open displeasure of her mother, Ahah excused herself on the plea of illness and fled to her room. Although the servants came in and lighted the torches, for the three that remained, the light had gone out.



"With one foot chained to the rock the Gadianton robber fought and vanquished eight warriors."

III.

THE BALCONY.

Ahah threw herself in the hammock on the balcony that her apartment opened on. She was shaken with rage, but the more violent the passion the sooner does it consume itself. Destruction would have descended on the head of Hagoth, if it had appeared at that moment; as it was her anger had just three hours to cool.

The stars hung low in the tropic heavens; a nearby field was illumined by the phosphorescent glow of flitting fireflies; below a tree burst into a galaxy of white stars.

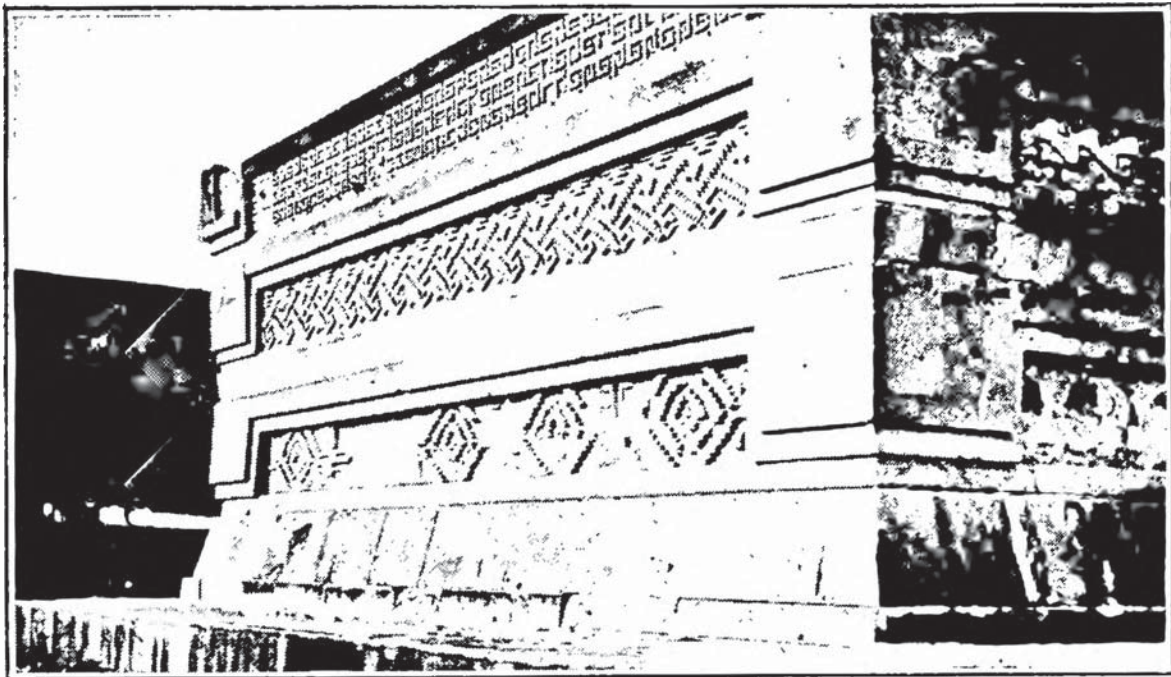
As she clenched her small hands until the nails cut the palms, Ahah was not in a mood to contemplate scenery.

"Flirting with a Lamanite frump, indeed! How do I know that Hagoth has not a dozen Indian loves among his own people?" Hitherto Ahah had been so engrossed by her condescension in loving a mere Lamanite, that the possibility of any one else loving him had never occurred to her. That Hagoth had been whole souled in his devotion to her she admitted. Nothing wins a woman quite so quick as the knowledge that a man has staked his all on her. Else why had she stooped to love him?

Slowly she lived over their acquaintance; all the details were graven on her brain. It had been romantic from the start. The horses of the Lamanite king were running away, dragging the broken chariot behind them. The driver had been hurled out in turning the corner and Tubaloth himself was reeling, when the careening animals were stopped by the impact of a lithe body hurled full at their heads. The catapult was Hagoth who there-



HALL OF THE MONOLITHS, MITLA.



PALACE RUINS AT MITLA.

after was knighted and received the order of the tiger, a distinction he valued less than the murmured thanks of a mother who caught up her little brown baby that had been playing in the road directly in the way of the runaway. Since then Ahah's every meeting with Hagoth had tightened the grip on her heart. Yet the thing that made her angriest of all was that she should care so much.

When a plumed crest of sable hue loomed up above the passion flower of the balcony she started up as if she had not been looking long for that apparition.

As Hagoth swung himself easily in front of her she faced him with the accusation, "You are late."

"I have been watching the lights below for hours. I thought you were there with Seantum."

"Did he stay so long with mother? I left them hours ago—to wait here alone, while you, forsooth, amused yourself with an Indian girl—Ugh."

"Ahah!"

"I tell you, you were seen walking in the woods with her, whispering to her, carrying her basket, and they said she was pretty," she finished with a wail.

"It is a mistake. I—"

"A mistake! Look at me," she cried fiercely, "You, a Lamanite, an associate of laboring wenches, have made me weep. I, Ahah, who do not shed tears once in five years, have wept this night over you." She laughed bitterly.

"But the girl gave me some information from a relative of hers."

"What could I expect, I who without reason, against the warnings of my friends, the opposition of my relatives, have squandered my attention on you."

“Ahah, you possess the best part of my life, but if I am bringing you such unhappiness—”

That brought her to terms. Her face shone with transcendent light.

“See, Hagoth,” she breathed earnestly, “Beautiful as this is, I lie awake nights worrying where it will end. I am too much of a coward to flee with you for I fear to fail in the new life. You must raise yourself to my station. You have youth, strength, brains and my faith in you.”

“And if I win out.”

“I will marry you.”

“I accept the challenge. In forty days I shall return to claim my own.”

Ahah looked startled. “How do you propose to do it?”

“Because of what you have promised me this night, I shall confide to you my secret, though the success of the venture itself depends on silence. At dawn I take command of a party of Lamanites that goes into the mountains to destroy the Gadiantons.”

“Oh”—Ahah reeled and she felt the world slipping from under her, such terror did the name of the dread robbers inspire.

“If I win, any favor within the gift of Tubaloth, king of the Lamanites, is mine.”

“If you should fail?”

“I fail. You will admit I shall have a splendid tomb, the snow clad summit of Mt. Misti.”

Ahah with a moan threw up her arms to shut out the torturous vision, for the Gadiantons not only murdered but mangled their victims.

He came closer; his eyes blazed with triumph; his

voice was tense with suppressed emotion. "Remember in forty days you are mine," and he was gone.

Ahah threw herself against the post. "You shall not go. I tell you I won't let you," she screamed. In her desperation she almost hurled herself over the balcony, but no answer came. Hagoth had vanished into the night whence he had come. Overwhelmed with remorse for driving him on: steeped in her own misery, she lay where she had fallen until the mocking birds began to sing and the day emerged from the night like Venus, new born, from the sea.

Rising, she dashed the crumpled bell of the passion flower under her feet and entering her apartment she threw herself upon the bed.

When Abish stole softly up to tell her young mistress that the bath water was ready she found her buried among the cushions with all her clothes on, breathing heavily. Throwing a silken shawl over her, she turned and tiptoed out.

IV.

THE TRIUMPH.

Ahah lay languidly back in the boat and dabbled her white hand in the water. Seantum opposite, equally lazy, was doing nothing more strenuous than watch the sunlight on her hair of burnished copper. The servant Abish knelt in the bottom of the boat trying to bring order out of the chaos of flowers with which the craft was loaded. It was the festival of flowers and Ahah had insisted on buying some of every kind she saw. As she had selected them for their gaudiness the effect was picturesque. The

boatman who stood in striped cotton garment with bare brown feet and broad brimmed hat drove the canoe along the sluggish canal by means of a pole.

They were enroute to the floating gardens of Miramar. Conversation languished while they looked at the panorama, for the canal was alive with graceful craft as this was a special feast day. There were boats loaded with poppies; others banked with pink rosebuds; more modest symphonies in purple and electric blues,—violets and forget-me-nots, like a demozel, left a fragrant trail behind them. They passed cargoes of green vegetables bound for the city, and houseboats which carried not only the family and their household furniture, but also the live stock, dogs, chickens and parrots.

Gayest of all were the flat bottomed boats filled with troubadours. These children of the sun lent the richness of their voices to the tinkle of their stringed instruments. Everyone seemed bent on merry-making, and as a lonely heart is never so desolate as when buried in a gay crowd, so Ahah felt more poignant misery by contrast.

Thirty days had elapsed since Hagoth's sudden departure. Since then she had had no word from him, and her veiled inquiries had elicited no news. "He is so bent on his man's enterprise, that he would not stop to consider a woman," she exclaimed petulantly, but her good sense told her it would not be wise for him to send her a message. Again, she was consumed with a wild fear that he was dead and during the long hours of the night saw him die twenty deaths in as many different ways. In the meantime she went calmly about her affairs and continued to endure Seantum as there was nothing else to do.

They had planned to spend the day in the rustic bow-

ers of a planter at Miramar, but as they wound in and out among the floating gardens,—at first nothing but patches of variegated green, it was evident that some unusual occurrence was happening on shore. Market venders had deserted their stalls and women had left their meat sizzling on the brazeros,—open air stoves of clay containing glowing charcoal.

“What’s the matter?” called Seantum to a hoary boatman.

“They say the Gadiantons are destroyed,” he answered.

Ahah was on her feet swaying in the boat, “Who did it,” she cried as if her life hung on the answer.

“A Lamanite by the name of Hagoth. One of his men stopped off here. He’s over in the square there now.” Without waiting for the boat to stop, Ahah bounded quickly to the oozy mud of the shore and was up the bank in a moment. Running swiftly she reached the excited crowd and made her way through it. In the center she recognized one of Hagoth’s lieutenants.

“You are going back to Antionum?” she queried breathlessly.

On his answer in the affirmative, she begged eagerly, “Then you will let us take you back in our boat?” She tossed him a golden seon. As if he were in his chief’s secret he gladly accepted the invitation, and Seantum was doomed to hear his rival’s praises lauded on the return trip which had begun so auspiciously for him.

While the warrior recited the story of the expedition in his crude way, Ahah hung on every word.

“When we started we had to hew our way through the underbrush; higher up it was easier climbing but the

tropical downpour descended in bucketfuls and drenched us to the skin. Under foot it was so slimy we slipped back a step for every two we advanced. The guides lost the trail and we slunk under the trees while they found the path.

“Later we spent the night in a cave. The fire went out as it was as much as a man’s life was worth to descend into the barranca for wood. The roof leaked and we woke up with our heads in a pool of water.

“The next morning the ravines were raging torrents. Advancing under these difficulties we finally descried above the tree tops the misty expanse of Lake Ticaca. Like all high waters it is sullen, cold and deep. There on the shores we found the log hut of an old Nephite whose only daughter had been carried away by the Gadiantons. He had lived there as a hermit vowing vengeance ever since. He offered to act as guide and lent us his two boats. It took many trips across the lake to get all of our party over and when we reached the bluffs on the other side Hagoth’s plans became apparent.

“The reason that the robbers’ rendezvous had never been discovered was because of the impassable ravines that hedge it in on all sides.

“Hagoth proposed to take the shortest route straight across the summit of Mt. Misti which towers eighteen thousand feet into the air. So up we climbed, up into the rarified atmosphere, among the pines and cedars. Occasionally the clouds below us parted like the veil of a Oriental beauty, affording us seductive glimpses of the tropics at reeling distances below. We passed the timber line and traveled across the lava beds, undulating hills of black ashes. Here grew a yellow daisy with frosted leaves;

somewhere below the clouds lay the world; but our goal was the snow clad peak that cut the sky in two.

“The ascent through the snow was bitterly cruel; some of the men were bleeding at the nose, others found it difficult to breathe, while some, with palpitation of the heart were crawling on their hands and knees. We were all temporarily blinded by the sun on the snow.

“At the top we skirted the sulphurous crater for a mile and a half and on the other side, slid down the snow clad peak on mats. Then we had to make quick work of it, for provisions that are carried as a man pack are light.

“Six hundred feet below us in the barranca was the camp of the Gadiantons. A gruesome spectacle they made in the light of the camp fire. Despite the cold, their lean brown limbs were bare save where they had decorated them with blood. Their loins were swathed in sheepskin and their shaven heads cockaded with feathers. Altogether, we were glad that the depth of the canyon lay between us. All night we toiled loosening the great boulders of the cliff that had been eroded into great blocks. At dawn of the second day we started several of them over the cliff by way of good morning. They cut great oak trees off from their roots, and crumbled to pieces on the ravine below. They did not do much damage but they brought the robbers out from their lair. When a side of the mountain crashed down, Zorum, the leader of the band, came out and called a truce.

“Hagoth descended to parley with him; he left instructions with us to wipe out the band in case he did not return. He offered them their choice of death or surrender. The terms were that they return to civilization and become decent citizens. It is one thing to die glor-

iously on the field of battle, and another to have the life crushed out of you like a rat in a hole. There was no possible way of escape as before they could get out, the top of the mountain would bury them alive, leaving them all like one of their men who had already been hit by a rolling boulder and whose remains were but a mangled mass in the gully. They surrendered. They didn't seem to be enjoying themselves much up there in the mountains, anyway. So Hagoth just brought them down with him."

Seantum, as he leaned back in the boat and heard of the success of his rival, watched Ahah's expressive face, now agonizing in fear, again exulting in Hagoth's triumph. He knew that he had lost.

By the time the victorious warriors entered the city Ahah was on her balcony waving her scarf. Amid strains of barbaric music and the hurrahs of the populace she beheld her chieftain borne through the streets in the gilded chariot of the Lamanite king. As he glanced in her direction Hagoth removed his sable plume and let the sun caress the glossy black head she loved so well. Behind him stalked the Gadianton robbers, frightful apparitions to the awe-struck people. The travel stained Lamanite soldiers brought up the rear.

During all the feasting that followed, when Hagoth sat on the right hand of the king, and the great of the nation assembled at the board to hear him lauded and glorified, the chief panted for the time when all this tinsel should be over and he should be alone with a girl and claim his reward.



ZORABEL.

GENERAL MORONI.

I.

THE CAPITULATION OF THE LAMANITES.

MORONI leaned back in his chair under the canopy of his tent. Another man, under the strain that the young general had passed through, would have looked wan and haggard. He possessed that inexhaustible vitality characteristic of great leaders, that can be drained heavily and still meet all emergencies.

"A messenger to see you, sir," announced a young lieutenant, pulling back the flap of the tent.

Moroni looked up to behold an Indian of powerful build. As he entered the fur mantle fell from his shoulders leaving them bare. As their eyes rested on the superb figure whose skin glittered like polished mahogany, the captains in the room ejaculated in admiration. The new comer's bold eyes scanned every face and finally rested on that of the youngest man in the room.

"I address the commander-in-chief of the Nephite forces?" he presumed.

Moroni eyed him keenly, as he inclined his head.

"Zerahemnah, leader of the Lamanites, sends greetings, and asks when he can meet you to make terms."

"Let him come at high noon to yonder eminence," replied Moroni.

The messenger bowed and silently withdrew. As his magnificent form disappeared, the captains whose com-

posure had been perfect during the interview, threw back their heads and raised a shout of triumph. To them it meant the end of the war at practically their own terms. Hostilities had ceased since the night before. The Nephite forces, though outnumbered two to one, had triumphed over their ancient enemies. The battle had been long and stubbornly fought until night closed down to stop the conflict. The captains, picturesque in their bandages, had fresh sword cuts as proof of their valor, but even they did not know that the battle would go down in history as the greatest that the Lamanites had ever fought. The Indians were ably generalled, for Zerahemnah, himself a Zoramite, a descendant of the servant of Laban, had placed the bloodthirsty Amalekites as officers among them. Little wonder that they fought like dragons.

That the Nephites had vanquished them against such odds was due to three things: they were fighting for their liberty as the Lamanites had tried to take them into bondage; they had superior arms and were protected by armor while their dusky antagonists fought almost naked; Moroni by strategy had surrounded the Lamanites by the Nephites, had penned in Zerahemnah's forces between two wings of his own, and crushed them.

With spies he had determined the line of the Lamanite march. Then he placed one of his generals, Lehi, with his command in ambush behind the hill Riplah. When Zerahemnah advanced to the banks of the river Sidon, Lehi attacked him and finally drove him across the river.

When the Lamanites emerged dripping on the other side, they were swooped down upon by the phalanxes of Moroni. Like rats in a trap, surrounded on all sides, they struggled with ferocious courage, clanging their cimeters

on the Nephite armor and in return being frightfully mangled. Sickened with the sight of gore, Moroni finally called off his troops.

Moroni's position was unique. Chosen as commander-in-chief of the Nephite army at the age of twenty-five, he yet towered so far above the other characters of his age, that older men did not dispute his place. Even the lean Amalickiah, eaten up with ambition, hid his envy.

Educated in the school of the priests, Moroni combined wisdom with the fire of youth. Disliking warfare and bloodshed, he had been forced into it in defense of his people when their freedom was threatened. To the spotless purity of his life was attributed much of his power.

As men often owe successful periods of their lives to the influence of some woman, so Moroni had known two; Hirza, clear-eyed and spiritual minded, he had met at school. Keenly intellectual she had dazzled him with her brilliancy. To her he owed much of his erudition and his wide knowledge of human nature. He was genuinely attached to this gay comrade when the handsome Zorabel came into his life. She reminded him of a full blown rose, whose fragrance gradually steals over the senses until they are steeped in delirium. He was yet to find out that she had her thorn below the soft petals. Zorabel was a sister of Amalickiah, and, like him, was ambitious.

Moroni sallied out of his tent into the brilliant sunlight to go and meet Zerahemnah at the appointed place. Behind him filed his body-guard, led by Amalickiah who walked by the side of his chief. Doubly dear to the general was this brother of Zorabel, yet he dared not give him a higher place in the army because he could not trust him. Amalickiah had done things—and yet under the

genial influence of his presence, soothed by his flattering words, Moroni was inclined to laugh at his fears.

Moroni reached the little hillock, ascended it, and let his gaze rest on the emerald expanse of the river that writhed like a green snake between the burnished gold of its banks. Below him swarmed the hordes of the Lamanites, perturbed by a spirit of unrest, as they expectantly awaited the result of the parley.

There was a commotion in the ranks and Zerahemnah moved out from among them and advanced toward Moroni. A shaggy, homely man, he seemed, yet not without a suggestion of power. A gruff leader of men, of violent temper, he had gained his position by force. When he stopped a pace from Moroni, the latter addressed him.

“Behold, Zerahemnah, we do not want to be men of blood. You know that you are in our hands, yet we do not desire to slay you.” He reminded him that the Nephites had not gone to war for power, but to defend their loved ones against the yoke of bondage. He added that they had tried to destroy his religion whereas the Lord had delivered them into his hands. He finished by demanding their weapons of war and the promise that they would go their way and come not again to battle against his people.

Zerahemnah unbuckled his sword, threw down his cimeter and handed his bow to Moroni, saying, “Here are our weapons of war. We will not suffer ourselves to take an oath unto you, which we know that we shall break, and also our children. Take our arms and suffer that we may depart into the wilderness. Otherwise we will perish or conquer. We are not of your faith, we do not believe

that it is God that has delivered us into your hands; it is your cunning that has preserved you from our swords."

Moroni handed him back his arms. "We will end the conflict," he said.

When Zerahemnah grasped the import of his words his face purpled with rage. Paying no heed to his weapons that clattered to the ground, he brandished his sword and rushed at Moroni. It would have pierced him had not the alert Amalickiah on Moroni's right smote it to the earth with a blow of such force that it shattered it at the hilt. Before the dazed Zerahemnah could realize what had happened, a second blow descended with such swiftness that it shaved off his scalp. With blood streaming in his face and a snarl like a wounded beast, Zerahemnah sprang back to his own cohorts that had surged forward at the vivid spectacle.

Amalickiah stooped and picked up the scalp by the tuft of hair. Fastening it on the point of his sword he stretched it toward them crying in a loud voice, "Even as this scalp of your chief has fallen to the earth, so shall you fall to the earth unless you deliver up your weapons of war and depart with a covenant of peace."

Visibly impressed, and quaking with fear, many of the Indians came forward, took the oath, stacked their weapons at the feet of Moroni and departed in little bands into the wilderness. But Zerahemnah, hoarse with wrath, mingling with the remaining soldiers urged them on to recommence the assault.

Angered with their stubborn resistance the Nephite leader turned his legions loose. In the frightful massacre that ensued the dark warriors were swept down.

When Zerahemnah saw that they were going to be all

wiped out, he cried mightily to Moroni, promising, if he spared the remainder of their lives, never to come against him again.

The latter ordered the battle to cease and allowed the shivering remnants of the Lamanites to leave.

Night descended on the field of horrors and obliterated many of its sights, and Moroni, weary and sick at heart, made his way back to his tent. Outside a lashing rainstorm had arisen, increasing the agony of the wounded. The soldiers were clearing the field and throwing the bodies of the unnumbered dead into the river. Dreariness enveloped the general as he threw himself disconsolately down.

"A lady to see you, sir," announced the sentry at the door. Moroni started up. Doubtless some heartbroken mother come in search of her son. Was there no end?

"Admit her," he ordered curtly.

A woman clad in a rough brown cloak entered. She threw back her hood from which her head emerged like a gorgeous poppy.

Moroni started toward her. "Zorabel," he exclaimed.

"Thank God you are safe!" she withdrew her hand from his compelling grasp to feel the massive armor on his shoulders, to assure herself that he was not hurt.

"This is no place for you. How did you come here?" he gently chided.

"Since you left I have been in torment. When I heard of a clash of arms on the other side of the river, I jumped on my swiftest steed. See how fast I rode. It shook down all my hair." She showed him her black hair streaming almost to her knees. "When I reached the

lines they said you barely escaped death today," her voice broke.

"I suppose I should have been killed if it hadn't been for Amalickiah! Your brother saved my life."

"Dear Amalickiah! You must tell me."

As he recited the incidents of the day she drank in his words with her soul in her eyes.

Strange spectacle that, of Zorabel, the charmer. She had recognized Moroni as the coming man and had deliberately set out to fascinate him. But as she entrapped him with her hundred coquetries, she found herself in the toils. The fresh young general had stirred her as no other man ever had and the proud Zorabel was now avowedly the abject slave of love.

In her sweet presence the exigencies of the camp were forgotten, the turmoil of the day faded away, and Moroni felt a calm descend on his spirit.

II.

MORONI RAISES THE STANDARD OF LIBERTY.

Moroni sat in his study bent over a message which read, "Amalickiah has stirred up an insurrection to gain the kingdom," when a young lawyer entered and accosted him. The newcomer had formerly been the general's secretary and an affectionate familiarity existed between them.

"What is it now," asked Moroni pushing his papers aside, for something in the other's air suggested matters of import.

"Only this, sir. I found out by accident that there



MORONI RAISES THE STANDARD OF LIBERTY.

was a meeting of the judges of the lower court called to which I was not bid. I took means to investigate and found that they have all pledged themselves to support Amalickiah as king on the strength of his empty promises to increase their power."

"I was afraid of this," sighed Moroni. His eye traveled to the door whence a young captain entered with angry stride.

The stern young blade was vibrant with vehemence as he saluted and announced, "There is a defection in the army, sir. The soldiers have been stirred up with tales of civil war. The men, spoiling with inaction, hail the idea of a clash with delight. Already they are taking sides. Amalickiah has won over the rougher element with promises of loot."

"What have you done?"

"Put the rebels in irons. But the insurrection is spreading, and I can't imprison the whole army."

"You have done well. Let us hear what Sherum has to say." A servant with disheveled hair, his garments almost torn from his back, and his eyes rolling wildly in his head, had rushed in and thrown himself at the feet of the general.

It was a moment before the panting wretch could get his breath. Between gasps he managed to ejaculate, "The city has gone mad. Howling mobs are blocking the streets. As I returned from the charcoal vender's I ventured to enquire what it was all about. They jeered at me and when I refused to cry, 'Long live King Amalickiah,' cuffed me from hand to hand."

Moroni knew enough about the management of men to realize that turbulent conditions require desperate rem-

edies. Unless the revolution was stopped Amalickiah would be swept into office on the flood tide of a riot.

His face darkened. "Was it for this that my people fought the bloody wars with the Lamanites? Resisted the yoke of bondage to become thralls of a Nephite king, because perchance, Amalickiah would have it so?" he muttered bitterly.

"Teancum, go back to the barracks. Order the soldiers to prepare to march and the first one who tries to desert make an example of. Let fly an arrow and shoot him in the back."

Filled with the valor of his emprise, Teancum saluted his chief in silence and strode out.

"Sherum, arise, and bid Horeb bring here my full armor. You," he continued, turning to the lawyer, "go tell the town criers to summon the people to a mass meeting at the palace of justice. Say that Moroni would speak with them."

Tearing off the white cotton mantle that hung from his shoulders he took it over to the longest spear that rested against the wall. Quickly he lashed the white flag to the pole with thongs of buckskin. Then hastily thrusting his brush into the ink pot that stood near, he wrote on the white banner in bold letters, "In memory of our God, our religion and freedom, our peace, our wives, and our children."

Before he had finished, his body servant entered, bowed under the weight of his harness. With firm, deft touch he encased his master in the glittering metal. First he adjusted the breast plate, and then fastened the heavy armor that shielded the vital organs. He handed his chief his shield dented with the fray of many battles and lastly

crowned him with the great helmet which bore on its crest the winged serpent.

He knew that one man could not quell the insurrection. He felt that he was but a weak instrument. Before he ventured out Moroni bowed himself down and prayed mightily that the Lord would pour down on the people the blessing of liberty.

Filled with the new strength that earnest prayer always imparts, he seized the title of liberty, and walked boldly out into the howling mob in the street.

When the people saw Moroni clad in martial array and read what was on his torn flag, the clamor died on their lips. Many quickly separated themselves from the crowd and followed the general.

When he reached the palace of justice and ascended the stairs to the portico, he found the square below filled with a surging multitude and from all directions others were hurrying. Men who had fought in the wars with Moroni were fastening on their armor as they ran, and women pulled children by the hand.

Moroni stepped forward and grasped the standard of liberty as he cried in a loud voice, "Behold whosoever will maintain this title upon the land, let them come forth in the strength of the Lord, and enter into a covenant that they will maintain their rights, and their religion, that the Lord God may bless them."

At this many of the people rent their garments and trampled them under foot as they cried, "So may our enemies trample us under foot if we fall into transgression."

Moroni reminded them that was what would probably happen. Then he launched into speech while the popu-

lace hung spell-bound on every word. The vast concourse stood silent while his utterance rang out. Never had such a eulogy been paid to liberty, never such a tribute to their God. In glowing words he pictured what they had endured for their religion, what they had suffered in the recent wars for their freedom. Scarcely one in that vast multitude but what had sacrificed for both. As the orator ended with the appeal, "Will you who have so bitterly resented the Lamanitish yoke bend the knee to a Nephite king?" an ominous shout arose and he knew that the populace was with him. General Moroni was still the idol of the people and Amalickiah stood impugned.

As the speaker, sucked of his strength, turned to descend, someone plucked at his arm. He recognized the big servant of Zorabel who delivered the message.

"My mistress would speak with you. She begs that you will come to her."

"Tell your mistress Zorabel that I shall come, but not yet."

With that he dismissed the messenger and made his way to the barracks where there was much that demanded the attention of the commander-in-chief for the rest of the afternoon.

It was evening when he at last made his way toward the house of Zorabel. In her apartment the oil already flamed in its brazen cruet. So vast was the room that the light did not penetrate to its further corners, but it served to illumine its magnificence. The walls were carved in grotesque designs brilliantly colored. Prominent among the engravings was the winged serpent of Moroni, and by its side the leopard of Amalickiah. On the floor, over the couches, at the door, were displayed richest blankets of

heaviest woof and rainbow hue. Nor were there lacking evidences of the personality of Moroni, for his gifts were placed with loving care. On an alabaster stand lay a book of papyrus filled with picture writing in colored inks, depicting the scenes of the conflicts Moroni had taken part in. Against the wall stood a buckskin shield won from a famous Lamanite chief. Her own divan was graced by the skin of an ocelot that Moroni had brought from one of his foraying expeditions.

Another woman would have paled in such gorgeous surroundings, but Zorabel dominated the whole. In crimson robes, the wealth of her raven hair bound in fillets of gold, she was the throbbing heart of the scene. Her own heart beat unevenly beneath the white bosom which was circled with a necklace of jade. She had placed the bangles there wondering if his man's brain would remember under what circumstances he had given them to her. She had neglected no detail that night that would help in the desperate enterprise on which she was bound.

There was a tread in the corridor and Moroni stood in the doorway. As she looked at him all her reproaches for his tardiness died on her lips and her woman's tenderness gushed forth.

"You are ill."

After the exertions of the day Moroni's features were drawn, his face pallid, and the life had gone out of him. Quickly she went to him and he enveloped her in his arms.

"Come," she said at last, "you are shaking as if you had the ague. I will give you some wine." She poured an amber liquid into a goblet and held it to his lips as he sat down weakly.

"It has been a terrible day," she moaned.

"Yes," he agreed. "Was that what you wanted to see me about?"

"I always want to see you, but I wished to talk to you, about—" she hesitated, "Amalickiah."

"I had to oppose him," said Moroni wearily.

"Yes, and defeated him. You won the people over to your side."

"He would be king."

"He is ambitious, but he cannot help it."

"But he should learn that he cannot jeopardize the liberty of a nation to gratify his vaulting ambition."

"He was dissatisfied with his position."

"He saved my life, but I could not pay my debts with the offices of the people. The trust I gave him he has betrayed."

Zorabel winced. "The first victory came to you. Promise me you will oppose my brother no longer."

"He is a menace to our freedom."

"You will cease the conflict for my sake?"

"I cannot."

"Moroni, I would give up my life for you."

"Ask me for my life, Zorabel, and it is yours. As military leader, I must defend the country against any encroachment."

"Then you will let him go his way and not molest him further."

"He is seducing the people and they will have to come back."

"At least, you will let Amalickiah go?"

"Not even that, my Zorabel. As long as he is free the Nephite republic is threatened."

"Then you will do nothing?" And her face was terrible.

"I cannot."

"Oh, God, have I come to this? What is this insensate thing that I have poured out the lavishness of my soul on? I thought it was a man." She flung up her arms despairingly.

"As I am a man I cannot do this thing you ask me. Forgive me, Zorabel," he choked.

"I have wasted my wealth of love; there is none left. What has it brought me? I have torn my heart out and it has been devoured by the God of War, but unlike the miserable victim that is sacrificed, my body shall live on and on, after the heart has gone from it."

"Zorabel, you are killing me."

"I am already dead. No man shall again thrill me with his touch nor will he put me on the rack. Henceforth, I have no master. As for you," she had worked herself into a paroxysm of fury, "never let me see your face again." In her tempestuous rage she seized the lamp and dashed it on the floor.

Darkness closed in, and out of the blackness Moroni heard a voice that ordered him to "Go." He groped blindly around but instinct told him that if he touched her he would be lost, nor would he be the first man that betrayed his country for a woman. Staggering, he turned and stumbled out. Like a drunken man he descended to the street. Even then had he known that Zorabel lay on the floor shaken with convulsive sobs he might have turned back. But destiny guided him on.

When he reached home he found a message from Hirza, congratulating him on the splendid achievement of the day. With a wan smile he thought, "At what a cost!"



AZTEC GOD OF WAR.

III.

AMALICKIAH.

Zorabel carried out her threat; having cast love out of her life she was ruled by ambition. After renouncing Moroni she proceeded to marry the aged, decrepid Lachoneous. He was the richest man in all Zarahemla, but her beauty bought him. She lived for wealth and power and outwardly was as handsome as ever. Moroni used to see her rolling resplendently in her carriage, but he never met her without a twinge of the old pain.

Amalickiah, when he saw his forces were far outnumbered by the legions of Moroni, beat a hasty retreat into the wilderness. Moroni marched against him, cut him off, and drove the insurgent soldiers back to Zarahemla. During the melee, however, Amalickiah with the chief conspirators, managed to escape. According to time honored custom they sought refuge in the city of Nephi, with the Nephites' arch enemy, the king of the Lamanites.

That august personage received the renegade Nephite with wide open arms, and when he found what a good fellow he was, heaped honors upon him. Amalickiah, with the charm of his words, won all hearts at court.

He conceived a gigantic scheme. That was to rule the Nephites through their ancient enemies, the Lamanites. To this end he began by his subtle flattery to stir up the king's anger against the white people.

"Why should you not rule over the whole continent, for you are stronger than they?" he intimated.

The idea tickled the king's fancy, for though he reigned over mighty hosts, he had a vast respect for the Nephite laws and craftsmanship.

“Seize them now, while their power is divided, and they are yours. They have no head,” urged the deserter.

The king remembered a certain General Moroni, but wisely held his counsel. “They have those liberty flags floating from the towers of every city,” he suggested.

“Yes, and you will trample every one of them in the dust beneath your chariot wheels,” prophesied Amalickiah with rising vindictiveness.

The king, dazzled by the glories pictured by this astute adviser, issued the mandate for war. Throughout the length and breadth of the land went the word that summoned the hosts.

Then a remarkable thing occurred. Many of the warriors had fought on the banks of the river Sidon and had taken an oath not to again take up arms against the Nephites, nor would they. These men fled to a place called Onidah, appointed a general and declared, “We will have peace, if we have to fight for it.”

The king suggested to Amalickiah, since he was so much interested in the campaign, that he whip the insurgents into line. The latter gladly accepted the command of the troops that were still loyal, for he had already planned to dethrone the king and he counted that one step toward the accomplishment of his design.

The rebels who refused to fight for the king, under the command of Lehonti, occupied the hill Antipus. Amalickiah pitched his camp at its base.

At night, muffled in a zerape, Amalickiah passed the guard, and with sinister stride, made his way around the side of the mountain. When he was out of sight of the sentry, he stopped abruptly. The night was fitted for deeds of darkness, as it was so black one could

not see the next step in advance. To the west the clouds were banked up and the wind was beginning to rise. The gaze of the man who stood amid the desolation was fastened on a moving object up the side of the mountain. A stone, becoming dislodged, rattled down and instinctively his hand sought his sword.

The next moment the figure accosted him.

"It is you, Tish? What does Lehonti say?"

"He returns the same answer that he has sent the past two nights. He will not come down to parley with you."

"Did you tell him it was of vital importance?"

"He said that if that was the case, you could send the message up to him."

"You told him I would assure his safe conduct."

"He answered that a man who had betrayed two masters might do no better by an enemy."

Amalickiah showed sudden magnanimity.

"Go tell the coward dog that I come alone to confer with him. Bid him bring his guards and meet me at his own gate."

Swiftly the messenger sped off and Amalickiah picked his more deliberate way up the side of the mountain. When he reached the place appointed, he found that Lehonti already awaited him and that he had taken the precaution to bring his full body guard.

"What I have to say is for your ears alone," explained Amalickiah in a low tone.

Not to be outdone in generosity, Lehonti motioned for his men to fall back.

With the bluntness his crafty soul knew so well how to assume, Amalickiah came straight to the point.

"My policy is to unite the two divisions of the La-

manite army. If we fall on each other and shed blood my very purpose will be defeated. We need all the men for the common enemy."

"I, too, am opposed to bloodshed," answered Lehonti, slowly. "It is not good for brother to fight against brother."

"I wish to put the whole Lamanite army under one head. If you bring your troops tonight and surround our camp, I will deliver it to you at daylight."

"The price? What do you want?" asked Lehonti, looking the traitor straight in the eyes.

"That you make me second in command of all the forces of the Lamanites."

The Indian mistrusted how he might get along with such a lieutenant, but the proposition seemed fair enough on its face, and he agreed.

At dawn, when the soldiers began to stir, they found that they were completely surrounded by the army of Lehonti. Then they pleaded with Amalickiah that he would let them fall in with their brethren and not be destroyed. That was what he wanted. In direct disobedience to the commands of the king, he delivered his men to Lehonti. That noble but trusting general had taken a viper to his bosom, though he had to die to prove it.

From second in command to the office of commander-in-chief, was but one step. It mattered little to the unscrupulous Amalickiah that Lehonti stood in the way. He had slow poison administered in his food. When the latter sickened the Nephite took over his duties.

As the two sat at the table at dinner, one day, Lehonti collapsed and fell on the floor. Amalickiah shrugged his shoulders and indifferently remarked that he had

taken a fit. When the physicians examined the prostrate figure and pronounced him dead, Amalickiah affected surprise. He ordered that Lehonti be buried with military honors, and that same day appointed himself to the dead man's place.

Slowly the great army began to make its way back to the capital. Runners brought word to the king that the hosts covered the plains. Thinking that Amalickiah had gathered together so great an army to go to battle against the Nephites, he, with great pomp, accompanied by his guards, sallied out to meet the victorious general. He did not know that Amalickiah would fain advance another step and that the king himself this time stood in the way.

The advance scouts, the employed hirelings of the general, went ahead of the army and bowed themselves down before the king to do him reverence. Among them was Tish, noted for his dog-like devotion to his master. It was he, it was suspected, who had administered the poison to Lehonti. Whatever his faults, he was unswerving in his loyalty to his chief. It chanced that he knelt directly in front of the monarch. When the sovereign put forth his hand to raise him in token of peace, he leaned forward and buried his dagger to the hilt in the king's heart. So quickly had it happened as the two men stood together, so sure was the stroke, that not until the king went down on his back and the red spot on his robe slowly widened, did the dazed onlookers realize what had happened. The attendants, in abject terror that they would share a like fate, swiftly fled.

An accomplice, taking his cue from the fleeing servants came up and addressed the assassin.

“So his own guards have killed the king and are running away.”

Tish, smiling sardonically down on his own blade drinking the life blood of the dying monarch, murmured, “It must be so.”

The eye lids of the victim quivered accusingly an instant and then closed forever. Tish turned away his head.

The others closed in and raised a great shout, “Behold the servants of the king have stabbed him to the heart, and he has fallen and they have fled. Come and see.”

They did not bethink themselves to pursue the refugees until Amalickiah, with the main division of the army came up.

When that doughty general had looked in silence on the king, lying in his gore, he worked himself up to a mighty wrath and ordered, “Whosoever loved the king, let him go forth and pursue his servants that they may be slain.”

At this, those who loved the king, and they were many, started in hot pursuit of the renegades, but the latter, when they saw an army coming after them, fortified with the strength born of desperation, made good their escape.

Amalickiah, having won the hearts of the people with his valorous attempt to apprehend the supposed slayers of the king, marched into the city in triumph at the head of his troops. He had already sent messages to the queen, accompanied by the corpse of her husband. In her vigil over the bier she listened to the tramp of the numberless battalions, and replied by craving mercy for the inhab-

itants of the city. She asked the general to wait upon her and bring witnesses to testify concerning the death of the king.

Amalickiah, looking very handsome in full armor, went to the palace and presented himself before the queen as she sat in state upon the throne. He was accompanied by Tish and the other conspirators, who had killed her husband. They all solemnly swore that the king had been slain by his own servants. They added, "They have fled. Does not this testify against them?" While she received the report, Amalickiah kept his dominating gaze on the queen's face. When she felt him looking at her, she dropped her eyes. After the others withdrew, Amalickiah remained to adjust affairs of state with the queen.

For three days the widow shut herself up in her chamber to mourn. During that time Amalickiah sur-



AMALICKIAH SENT THE CORPSE OF HER HUSBAND TO THE LAMANITE QUEEN.

feited her with embankments of flowers and baskets of fruit. His multiple gifts were accompanied by a glib-tongued messenger, who lost no opportunity to sound his master's praises.

The lady, overburdened with the affairs of state, came to rely more and more on the big, strong, councillor. They were thrown much together and people began to wonder if there had been another reason for the king's sending Amalickiah away to the wars. He was a Nephite with the charm and manners of his race, and the queen was but a pawn. Only, since he was to marry her to gain the throne, he gloried in the fact that she was so beautiful.

So the two were wed, and Amalickiah, seated on the throne by the queen's side, was crowned king. She salved her conscience for her undue haste by ordering a splendid tomb for the remains of her former husband. She had the funeral chamber decorated with leopards, the coat of arms of Amalickiah.

He gave himself over to the pleasures of the court, but still unsatisfied, desired to rule the earth. Slowly he began to plan the vast campaign which would again mark the clash of the two greatest generals of the age, Moroni, commander-in-chief of the Nephites, and Amalickiah, king of the Lamanites, only now the latter had the barbarian hordes behind him.

IV.

NEMESIS OVERTAKES AMALICKIAH.

Moroni again sat at his study table, while Teancum walked the floor like a caged hyena. The former was haggard-gray like a blasted tree; the latter vowed vengeance, in harsh, inarticulate sounds. Thus the two men took their sorrow differently. Word had come that day that the city of Moroni on the Atlantic coast had been sacked by Amalickiah. For certain reverses that his troops had met with at first, that worthy had sworn to drink Moroni's blood. City after city had fallen under his attack, and ruin and destruction followed in his wake. Finally Moroni's home town was captured. When Amalickiah found that he was cheated of his revenge, as Moroni had gone to Zarahemla, he had without mercy had the aged parents of Teancum and Moroni's young wife, Hirza, put to the sword. Her woman's wit had saved her boy, Moronihah, and sent him in safety to his father, but it could not save herself.

"The vampire has drunk your blood through Hirza's veins." Teancum stopped in his mad pace. "Poor Hirza, whose only fault was being loved by you."

Moroni groaned.

"It was a coward's trick," continued the other. "They are dead, my aged father and my poor old mother—Look you, Moroni, Amalickiah belongs to me. Before heaven I swear to kill him with these two hands!" He flung his powerful arms with clenched fists above his head.

"Nay, do not swear," cautioned Moroni. "Teancum,



AMALICKIAH SACKED THE COAST CITIES AND PUT HIRZA TO THE SWORD.

you have been given the command of the division that moves against the Lamanites tomorrow. Fight with the genius and tenacity you displayed on the narrow neck of land. For the rest I trust you implicitly. Now I would be alone."

* * * * *

Amalickiah marched toward the land Bountiful driving the Nephites before him. On the last day he had been much harassed by the archers of Teancum that skirted the woods. When they reached the seashore they met the forces of Teancum drawn up in martial array. A pitched battle ensued in which the Nephites had the advantage over the footsore Lamanites who had been marching and fighting for many days, while their opponents were fresh. With nightfall hostilities ceased. "If Amalickiah were dead, there would be no more war; the snake cannot strike without its head," cogitated the Nephite.

Teancum sat in his tent and by the sputtering flame of a pine torch, was engaged in coloring his skin brown by rubbing it with the juice of a wood berry. His servant, who had already gone through the same performance, and was a Lamanite to all appearances, was sorting over rather gingerly, a pile of woman's apparel.

"You are hard to please. Does nothing there suit you?" asked Teancum, with mocking irony.

"Nay, there are so many, I know not which to choose," replied the other in the same spirit.

"It need not be overly becoming in the dark. Let me warn you to make your skirts short, for you may have to run." So daring hearts make light of the gravest dangers.

The man servant replied with a vicious wrench as he got into the woman's garb.

Teancum surveyed him and laughed. "My word, you make a charming wench. Half the men in the Lamanite camp will try to flirt with you, and so defeat our adventure. Pull your scarf down more over your face, so."

The other grinned, displaying a mouth unfeminine in width. But he looked sober when Teancum handed him a battle axe with the remark, "If I fail, you may have an opportunity to finish it." Teancum himself tucked a double-edged dagger into his belt and took down his javelin. He then enveloped himself in a blanket.

As the two passed out, the servant in the yellow striped skirt of a drab, the other with the shuffling gait of a camp straggler, they attracted little attention. When they entered the camp of the Lamanites they elicited less, for the men slept with the abandonment of exhaustion. "A fellow and his girl out late," was all they thought, if they saw them at all.

As the couple picked their way among the tired soldiers one would occasionally open his eyes, see who it was, only grunt and turn over wearily. So without mishap they reached the tent of Amalickiah. Fortune was with them, for his servants were sleeping heavily. Although delay was fraught with danger, Teancum reconnoitered a moment to ascertain just where Amalickiah lay. He was asleep on a camp couch with his arms by his side. A streak of moonlight straggled in and illumined his pale face.

For a moment Teancum poised his javelin in the air. Then he struck. So powerful was the arm that drove the

weapon that it went through the sleeper's body, speared the heart, and he died without a groan.

Teancum joined his cowering companion at the entrance, and the two picked their way out of the hostile camp.

Not until morning did the Lamanite hordes raise a wail for their dead king. They had just found his corpse, stark and cold, stuck through with a javelin.



BAS-RELIEF OF ANCIENT WARRIOR.





ALLA DERIDING THE IDOLS.

AMMON'S MISSION TO THE LAMANITES.

I.

AMMON EMBARKS ON A MISSION.

AMMON was the Napoleon of the western hemisphere. One trembles to think what a man of such power might have done, had he used it for his own aggrandizement, instead of converting souls. He was a king's son, and though not the eldest, he was chief among his brothers, for his name is always mentioned first.

During a brilliant and careless youth, the whole course of his life had been metamorphosed by a miracle. Thenceforth he consecrated his life to the work of the Lord, beside which a mere earthly kingdom sank into insignificance.

When Mosiah, king of the Nephites, waxed old, there was no one to take his place as his four sons had elected to go as missionaries to the Lamanites. His death marked the beginning of the reign of the judges.

Heavily armed, the missionaries departed into the wilderness. Their weapons were not designed for their fellow man, but for wild game that they should kill for food. That they went hungry was not due to their lack of prowess, for they often chose to fast that the Spirit of the Lord would be with them. Nor was their sacrifice without effect, for the Lord promised them that if they made examples of their lives that they should be instruments in his hands unto the salvation of many souls.

It was characteristic of Ammon that he should separate from his companions and go up to the land of Ishmael alone. Here, skirting the woods, he was captured by the Lamanites, and, like every Nephite caught on their borders, was taken before their king.

Lamoni was in a good humor. He had just returned from the hunt where he had killed the silver fox. As he threw himself back on his divan, he took in the points of the prisoner with the keen eye of a connoisseur. With discriminating approval, he noted the swelling muscles beneath the loose garments of the white man, but with black suspicion, demanded, "What are you doing here?"

"I was entering your country when I was violently assaulted and bound with thongs of buckskin." Ammon looked ruefully, down at his chafed ankles.

"May I ask what you were entering the country for?"

"I came here to live."

"You came here to live!" repeated the king stupidly.

"Yes, and I may stay until I die."

"Which may be soon, judging by the fate that your last two countrymen, that encroached on my borders, met. What crime did you commit in Zarahemla that makes you an outcast?"

"None. I came here of choice, not of necessity."

"Then you are a merchant?"

"No. I am a king's son and need no money."

Lamoni looked puzzled. Clearly he could not understand this man, yet his words carried conviction.

"I am a missionary," explained Ammon simply. "I have come here to preach the gospel of righteousness."

"I know that your people have preserved some rem-

nants of the truth that we have lost. You say that you have relinquished your father's kingdom to come and live among us?" he asked incredulously, obviously flattered.

"What is that compared with the salvation of souls? Who knows but what if we come to one belief that these bloodthirsty wars between our two peoples shall cease?"

"Cut this man's bonds," ordered Lamoni, pleased with his new guest.

Like a hound loosed from leash, Ammon shook off his fetters and stood forth majestically.

Lamoni opened his mouth to speak, when suddenly his jaw dropped and the utterance died on his lips. A woman's laugh, shrill and taunting, came from the terrace and recalled his chief trouble to the king. His brow puckered. His daughter, Alla, was the trial of his life. She kept the court in a continuous uproar. Not the least of her faults was that she was an incorrigible flirt and kept the nobles in continual hot water with her coquetries. It would not have been so bad if she had confined her operations to the nobility, but she showed a democratic predilection for commoners that was at least alarming. More than once, he had tried to marry her off but his and the princess' choice had never fallen on the same person. Only three days before, she had lured two young men into an embroglio with the result that one carried his arm in a sling while the other had lost the temporary use of an eye. When openly charged with encouraging them, Alla had shamelessly confessed that she led men on to see what they would do under certain circumstances. Hers was a woman's insatiate curiosity, which, deprived of books, read people in lieu thereof.

Lamoni was seized with a sudden inspiration. "Tell Alla to come here."

The servant sped out. Ammon was not prepared for the apparition that presently appeared.

"You wanted me, father?" Of strong rather than beautiful features as she stood there in regal robes she was every inch a princess. She was dressed with the care bred of the knowledge that every detail was dear to the heart of a man. Yet Alla did not make her conquests at first sight. They were wrought out of the diabolical cunning of her brain, but once she got her grip on a man—she did not let go.

"This is Ammon, son of King Mosiah. Since he purposes to dwell among us I shall give him you for a wife," announced Lamoni. Turning to the man he continued, "That you may appreciate the honor I confer upon you, I will add that the hand of my daughter has been sought by every noble in the kingdom." He did not explain that a decision in any one's favor would probably precipitate civil war and that he was pawning her off on the newcomer to gain peace for himself.

"I do not know him," interposed Alla.

"The women of our country choose their own husbands," abetted Ammon. "Moreover, missionaries do not marry. They cannot divide their attention between their work and a woman."

"Then you refuse her," repeated the king dully. The humor of the situation burst on him. "Alla, there is one man who will not have you."

With one look at Ammon, she tossed her head and swept out.

"She will make you regret it," remarked Lamoni

with a twinkle in his eye, "No one ever offends Alla with impunity."

"I meant no offense to the princess. Under the circumstances what else could I say?"

"Since you have refused to become the king's son-in-law, may I ask what you propose to do?"

"No work is too humble for my new calling. Let me be your servant," he suggested with enthusiasm.

"The training of a king's son seldom fits a man for labor. What can you do?"

"I have herded cattle and I love the open."

"Then a cattle herder you shall be."

He clapped his hands. To the servant that appeared he ordered, "Take this man and give him a place among the herders. Provide him with all necessities." To Ammon he said, "If there is anything I can do for you let me know. I shall see you again." They were dismissed and with a sigh of relief he sank back among his cushions.

II.

THE CATTLE HERDER.

For three days Ammon rode among the cattle. A born horseman he sat well the king's mount that had been sent him. During that time he had seen no more of Princess Alla though his ears had been filled with a multitude of servant's tales about her that were both weird and startling.

It so chanced that early in the morning as the herders drove the cattle to the waters of Sebus to drink, that the robbers from the mountains had congregated there to

scatter the herds. This was not an unusual thing for the vast wealth of Lamoni in live stock was known and coveted. A rather peculiar criminal code existed, by which any servants who allowed the king's cattle to be stolen, were put to death, while the robbers retreated to their mountain fastnesses unmolested. This prevented collusion but encouraged the thieves.

As the cattle neared the river the robbers, with wild whoops, plunged in among them, scattering them in all directions. This was what they wanted so they could drive them off in bunches to their rendezvous. Ammon, who was not familiar with the conditions, viewed the scene with astonishment; but his surprise knew no bounds when he beheld the king's servants throw themselves violently to the ground and begin to weep in a paroxysm of grief.

"Look here, you will be run over," he cried heading off a frightened heifer. The chief danger was over, as the stampede was swallowed up in a cloud of dust across the plain.

"We are all dead men," wailed an old man to whom life was still sweet.

"I leave a young wife," added a youth in a lifeless monotone.

"What do you mean?" Ammon impatiently exclaimed.

"Simply this," explained a man of middle age, "when the king's cattle are stolen, the herders are put to death."

"Then they must be brought back," said Ammon with finality. "Instead of driveling here, spread out to the sides and help drive them in when I turn them this way."

The others eyed him as if paralyzed as he dug his heels into his horse and sped off across the plains like the whirlwind. As his flying figure was swallowed up by a cloud of dust, they arose and mechanically began to spread out on the prairie.

Ammon was handicapped as the cattle had the start of him. He leaned forward and swirled his lariat in the air although his poor beast was already panting with distended nostrils. Slowly he gained on the herd which was impeded by its own numbers. His horse was frothing with foam as he reached the front. He dared not plunge in to destruction but he edged along the outskirts, curving the herd to one side. His alert eyes had espied the leader, a young bull, and he made for him. Without putting himself directly in its infuriated way, he uttered a wild whoop and almost imperceptibly turned him in another direction. The cattle followed suit and traveled in a circle and by the time that the cowboys hedged them in they were able to drive them back to the waters of Sebus.

The robbers, unprepared for such tactics, had, after their first unsuccessful attempt, massed themselves together at the watering place to again scatter the herds as they came up.

Ammon called cheerily to the herders to encircle the cattle and guard the outskirts in case they again turned that way. Then he rode straight at the robbers. They were amused at this onslaught of a lone rider and thought that they could kill him at will, but when he hurtled among them and began to hew right and left with his polished blade, they took notice and heaved stones at him. He emerged from the shower unscathed and retaliated by striking down man after man. When he reached the

leader, whom he distinguished by his white crest, he stopped long enough to kill him. For the rest he was content to disarm them, for they were panic stricken. Ammon understood a trick probably learned in his fencing at court, which stood him in good stead. His opponents fought him with clubs. By a dexterous stroke he disabled their arms so that they fell limp by their side. The robbers, completely routed, fled, and Lamoni's awestruck servants crowded up and gathered together the arms of the cattle thieves. Bearing these trophies of the encounter, they hurried to tell the wonderful tale to the king.

Ammon leisurely betook himself to the courtyard where he got out the horses and began to harness them to the king's chariot, as Lamoni had given instructions that it was to be prepared. He purposed to attend a feast given by his father, a neighboring but greater king. As he led the spirited animals out, one of them reared but Ammon yanked the bridle down and forced the brute into place. A flower fell at his feet and he looked up to see Alla watching him from one of the windows.

She leaned out and called, "My father wants you to come so he can thank you for saving his cattle today."

Ammon finished fastening the straps to the gilded chariot, picked up the blossom, and went in.

III.

THE TRANCE.

The queen sent for Ammon to come to the death chamber where the body of the king had lain in state for two days and two nights. Though her husband was apparently dead and the magnificent sepulcher stood gaping for the interment, the grief-stricken wife would not have it so. As in all southern countries, it was the custom to bury a corpse within twenty-four hours after death. The servants began to go about holding their noses as they exclaimed, "He stinketh." In this dilemma, the queen sent for Ammon. She had heard of his fame through Alla.

She met him at the entrance and conducted him into the funeral chapel where she had been keeping sorrowful vigil. Coming out of the sunlight into the damp chamber, a cold chill swept over him. The vast, dimly lighted apartment, constructed entirely of stone, was bare of furnishings except for the bier in the middle where the body was laid out.

As the queen led Ammon over and removed the draperies, displaying the king garbed in his royal robes, she murmured in agonized tones, "They tell me you are a prophet of God, and have power to do mighty works in his name. See, some say that he is dead and ought to be placed in the sepulchre, but to me he is not dead."

The missionary bent low over the wax-like face still as a mask. Closely he scrutinized the veins. Looking up he announced, "He is not dead, but he sleepeth in God, and on the morrow he shall rise again; therefore bury him not. Believeth thou this?"

“I believe it will be according as you say.”

“Blessed art thou because of thy exceeding faith: I say unto thee, woman, there has not been such great faith among all the people of the Nephites.”

All through the still hours of the night the queen kept vigil over the lifeless figure. When the gray dawn stole in through the casement she welcomed it with relief. At the appointed hour when the king should rise came Ammon to give her courage.

As they watched the form stirred, then slowly arose and shook off the shroud. When the king recognized his faithful wife he stretched forth his hand and blessed her. His face shone with a transcendent light, and overcome by the spirit, he sank down by the side of the bier. The queen, in sheer weakness of joy embraced him. Ammon fell on his knees and poured forth his soul in prayer and thanksgiving.

It so chanced that Alla was hovering near. She felt strange influences in the air; also was she piqued by this Nephite prophet who ignored her. When she came into the room, beheld the trio on their knees and her father risen from his bed, she uttered shriek after shriek. The frightened servants came running, and when they saw the king risen from the dead they also fell upon their knees.

One alone, Abish, a waiting woman, who had been converted to the gospel sometime before, retained her presence of mind.

“It is the power of God,” she opined, and ran carrying the news from house to house.

A vast multitude assembled and when they beheld

the spectacle at the palace and noted the Nephite in the strange group, they began to murmur.

"A great evil has come among us," cried one.

"Nay, let it fall on the king's head for harboring the alien," interposed another.

Still others said, "The king has brought destruction on himself for killing his servants when they lost the herds at Sebus."

The friends of the men whom Ammon had slain there heaped their maledictions on the Nephite. One, whose brother had been killed, obsessed with frenzy, drew his sword, and rushed at Ammon, but as he raised his blade to strike him, he himself reeled and fell dead. Was it apoplexy, a deep seated heart trouble, or had the Lord, who promised Ammon that he should pass unscathed through perils, stricken him down? The awestruck populace did not know.

"This man is the Great Spirit," said one clinging to some vestiges of the old faith.

"He is a monster," disagreed another.

They straightway quarreled over the matter; the crowd took sides. A clash was imminent whereat Abish burst into tears. In this emergency she went over to the queen, and tenderly helped her to her feet. The latter's face was radiant as she took hold of the hand of the king. He confronted the multitude. In few words he endorsed the work of Ammon. His conversion was wrought during his trance. From that time forth he was the missionary's ablest advocate.

That night a great feast was given to celebrate the recovery of the king. The palace gardens were thrown open to the people. Bands played on the terraces, fountains

sprayed by the lurid light of the bon fires, and the moonlight kissed the lake. The whole city rejoiced in gala attire, while the attaches of the palace, relieved from the recent strain, relapsed into abandon. The queen's heart expanded toward all mankind; the king, snatched from the grave, lorded it graciously over his subjects. The nobles exchanged merry quips and the banquet was long drawn out. People treated Ammon with semi-worship. He was in an exalted frame of mind for he knew that his work was auspiciously begun.

Blinded with the lights and deafened with the noise, he felt faint, and clambered out into the open air to walk beneath the stars. Back and forth he paced when he heard his name called in a soft voice. He wheeled to behold Alla beneath the rubber plants. As he went towards her, she, in her yellow robes against the dark green of the foliage, reminded him more than ever of a gorgeous butterfly.

"I have not had a chance to thank you before for what you did for my father," she said between sips of fruit juice.

Ammon disclaimed credit, saying it was all due to the power of the Lord.

"I want you to help me tonight. Come into the garden. We will have to hurry, or Hebron, who went to fetch me an ice, will be back."

Without more ado she took hold of his arm and hastily urged him down the stairs. On reaching the garden she plucked a burning brand from the fire and led him through dark, circuitous paths beneath the umbrella trees till the roof of a round topped building loomed before them.

"Be careful of the steps," she cautioned as she started

to descend into it, but she herself jumped when a black beetle fell from one of the overhanging branches. He came to her rescue and together they entered the underground chamber. Ammon looked about him curiously. The place was lined with hewn stone. He laid his hand on a porphyry vase that contained incense.

"See," Alla held the light up to the wall. "These paintings depict the principal events in my father's life."

Ammon's eyes followed the intricate designs without grasping their meaning.

"You will notice," she continued, "that the other side of the room is blank. That space is kept for the scenes yet to come."

"But if he should die—" his gaze traveled to the middle of the room where reposed a marble sarcophagus with its maw gaping wide for the dead.

She read his thoughts, "Yes, this is my father's tomb. The lid was removed when we thought we would have to bring him here. He must not see it in this condition. I dared not bring the servants to shut it, for they talk. You are strong, will you not lift the lid back into place?"

The missionary bent his shoulders to the task. He clutched the marble slab in his arms, rocked for a moment under its weight, then closed it down on the tomb.

"So it is cheated of its occupant," he finished.

"I hope it stays sealed a long time," sighed Alla.

The torch flickered out and they stumbled out of the musty tomb into the garden scented with honey-suckle blooms. They found their way to the rose gardens whose charms Ammon had never known before. The excitement of the day had not yet worn off and the allurements of the tropics got into his blood. Seeing the city gone

wild with pleasure, gave rise to resentment that he should be cheated of it. With parched lips he thirsted to quaff this sweet cup that was held to his lips. He glanced at his companion, natural and more fair than any wild thing in the woods. Seized with moon madness the couple wandered down to the sluggish waters of the lake.

“Yonder is my chinampa,—my floating garden.” She indicated a black oasis. “When I grow weary of the world I flee to it and while the day away on the bosom of the waters. I have there a little chapel filled with the images of our Lamanite gods. Would you like to see them?”

Ammon assented, so she clambered over the rocks and shot out her canoe. They took their places in it and the man drove it across the lake with broad strokes.

Alla fell silent. What availed all her little vanities in the presence of this man who read her very soul. He was her master; already she worshiped him. The calm also gave Ammon time to think of where his folly led him. Even if he should marry, this creature of impulse was not the woman for him. Linked with his austere life she would beat her brilliant wings out and become a limp, draggled thing. He could not spoil her life. On the other hand, if he made her happy, his mission would have to be abandoned. If she were only different. Then he reflected a little sadly that if she were anything but what she was, he would not love her.

As if to make his resolve harder she broke the silence. “You remember that day when we first met, my father offered me to you?”

He inclined his head.

“You said then, ‘The women of my country choose

their own husbands.' Would it make any difference if the woman offered herself to you?"

Ammon felt a sharp twinge of pain, but he steadied his voice. "No. You remember that I said afterward that a missionary cannot marry."

"That day, smarting with hurt pride, I determined that I would make you love me. Now, I wish I hadn't." They had reached the island and she hid her confusion in landing. The garden was one bouquet of fragrant posies. Their feet sank into long moss beneath, while festoons of Spanish moss draped above. Alla led the Nephite to a grotto, whence issued the sound of running water. The sanctuary was built around a gurgling spring. Dark and dismal, it was but illy lighted by the white moonlight that streamed in.

"These are the images of the gods of the Lamanites." She indicated huge figures carved in stone that lay about the place. "This is Tlalac, god of rain; yonder the goddess of grain." Stroking the most hideous idol she added, "This is Huitzil, god of war."

Ammon's eyes were fastened on a slender white cross reared in front of the last.

"That is the symbol of your religion, for I saw a little cross hanging around your neck. I have embraced your faith and I brought the new symbol here in their own temple to deride the fallen idols."

Ammon, deeply touched, took off his own chain and fastened the pendant crucifix around the neck of the girl. She reached up to thank him. For a moment he felt his head reel. Then very gently he took hold of her arms and pushed her away from him. As they stood thus the sound of a paddle fell on their startled ears. They both started

back and then Ammon impulsively stepped out to the edge of the water. He saw Hebron, a noble who paid court to Alla, rowing alone on the lake. He hailed him. "The Princess Alla came here to show me the ancient idols. Will you not take her back."

Hebron, who was surprised to find the lady that he had missed earlier in the evening, came up with alacrity. If Ammon had a momentary flash of jealousy as he helped Alla in, it was soon dispelled, for she crouched down in the further end of the boat in a dejected heap, her poor little wreath of flowers drooping forlornly in her hair. Still as a statue he watched them speed across the lake. When they touched shore and the man arose to help her out, he turned away his eyes, for they were blinded with tears.

"It is better so," he muttered with finality. He took the other canoe and resolutely turned his back on the scene. He plowed viciously through the water until his mighty arms ached. When he had worn himself out he landed on the opposite shore of the lake.

In the shadow of the giant trees he walked. The hoary cypresses held the secrets of a thousand years, but never before had they witnessed such a struggle in the soul of a man. When the hateful dawn came stealing through the branches, wan and haggard, Ammon sought his cell. Never before had it seemed so bare, nor the hard bed more uninviting. At his order prison doors should break and kings should bow the knee, but the greatest thing that Ammon ever did was to conquer himself that night.

IV.

THE JOURNEY.

Ammon and the king had been playing totolouque, a game of ball, in the garden. Lamoni sat himself down to rest, for the heat of the day approached.

"Ammon, I would have had you for a son, but I must needs be content to keep you for a friend."

"It is an honor to be counted the friend of the king," he retorted, ignoring the first part of the remark.

"Alla takes it rather hard." An amused twinkle came into the father's eye. "She has been unbearable since you refused her."

"I have consecrated my life to the work of the Lord; Alla is too young and fair a creature to be tied to a somber personage like me."

"Your church is well started here. Let me take you to Nephi to meet my father, the emperor. He would like such a man as you."

"He is not a believer. He would seek my life. Moreover, I must journey in the opposite direction to Middoni for my elder brother Aaron and his friends, Muloki and Ammah, are in prison there. I go to deliver them."

"I know that in the strength of the Lord you can do all things, but I shall go with you. Antiomno, king of Middoni, is a friend of mine and I will flatter him that he will release your brethren from prison." He added curiously. "Who told you that they were in prison?"

"The voice of the Lord. Much of the power you attribute to me is gained through listening to the inner spirit that always prompts me aright."

Without question the king ordered his chariots and horses to be got ready for the journey. "We will travel together," he said. "Perhaps I may be able to help even you."

When a king journeyed it meant the moving of a cavalcade. That they might travel faster, Lamoni simplified his preparations. Besides his immediate servants he took only a small body guard. As he went as the guest of a neighboring king, what he lacked in number he made up in magnificence. He remarked to Ammon as they started out that they would fall an easy prey to robbers who could see their gold from afar off.

To give color to his predictions, they had not gone far when they descried a cloud of dust across the plains.

"Whoever they are, they far outnumber us." They had all been straining their eyes when Lamoni raised a shout. "It is my father, the old king himself. Only the ruler of all the Lamanites would travel with such a concourse."

The new comers bore rapidly down on them, and soon the heavy chariot of the emperor shot out and pulled up along side of them. The old man embraced his son but scowled at the white man.

"Why didn't you come to my feast?" he demanded. "And where are you going with this Nephite, who is the son of a liar?"

"I accompany him to get his brother out of prison in Middoni." He explained his absence at the feast by telling how he had lain as if dead for two days, and would probably have been buried alive had it not been for the missionary.

To his astonishment his father became furiously angry. "I am astonished that you have been caught in their toils. These Nephites have come here to rob you. Kill this man with your sword. Then turn about and come back to Ishmael with me."

His son defied him: "I will not slay Ammon, neither will I return to the land of Ishmael, but I go to Middoni that I may release the brethren of Ammon, for I know that they are just men, and holy prophets of the true God."

Enraged by his disobedience, his father raised his sword to strike him. Ammon interposed, "You shall not slay your son, though he is better prepared for death than you for he has repented. If you should kill him his blood would cry from the ground, and you might lose your soul."

The old man hesitated; his voice almost broke. "I know that if I should slay my son I should shed innocent blood. It is you that I ought to kill." He turned his blade toward Ammon, but the latter was too quick for him. He whipped out his own sword and with the stroke that had stood him in good stead at Sebus, he disabled the king's right arm. He could not use it. Realizing that the other was at his mercy, Ammon followed up his advantage. "I will smite you unless you grant that my brethren be released from prison."

Lamoni would not interfere. The retainers kept at a respectful distance. In fear of his life the emperor promised, "If you will spare me, I will give you anything you ask, even to half my kingdom."

The Nephite had the old man where he wanted him. "Release my brethren from prison. Let Lamoni retain his kingdom. Be not displeased with him; allow him to

be his own master. Then I shall spare you; otherwise I strike."

The emperor's temporary feeling of relief at being spared from this whirlwind Nephite who swept everything before him, was supplanted by wonder. Ammon had asked for nothing for himself,—only for favors for Lamoni. Should he let a stranger be more generous than he? Touched by the missionary's love for his son, he rejoined, "Because this is all you have asked, I shall have your brethren cast out of prison. My son, Lamoni, may retain his kingdom from this time and forever, and I will govern him no more."

"Come, let the mid-day meal be prepared," exclaimed Lamoni, overjoyed at the turn of affairs had taken. "We will eat together."

A hastily served meal it was, that consisted mostly of cooked meat and bread taken from leather pouches, but to the diners it was relished with the sauce of interest.

The two rulers asked each other many questions. They exchanged much news of family and national interest. The emperor asked eagerly after his granddaughter Alla. Lamoni, looking at Ammon out of the tail of his eye, explained that she was temporarily indisposed.

They took their siesta during the heat of the day while the attendants watered the animals. In the late afternoon when they arose to continue their journey, the emperor took an affecting leave of his son. Slipping off two golds bands that had encircled his left arm, he held one out to Lamoni, "Give this to Antiomno, to aid your quest. Say it is from the emperor, though, if rumor be correct, a gift from Alla might be appreciated more." He slipped the other bracelet on the arm of Ammon. "As for

you, strange man, that ask nothing for yourself, if perchance you should think of something, bring this to the king, and he will redeem his pledge. The doctrine that holds such an exponent as you cannot be wholly wrong. You and your brethren come up to me to my capitol at Nephi, for I would know you better."

With that he took his departure. As the cavalcade wound across the plains, Lamoni and Ammon continued their journey to Middoni.

The herald of their coming had preceded them, for Antiomno, accompanied by his nobles, sallied out to meet them. The two rulers hailed each other like boon companions. After the formalities of greeting had been exchanged, the young Antiomno ventured to enquire after the health of the Princess Alla.

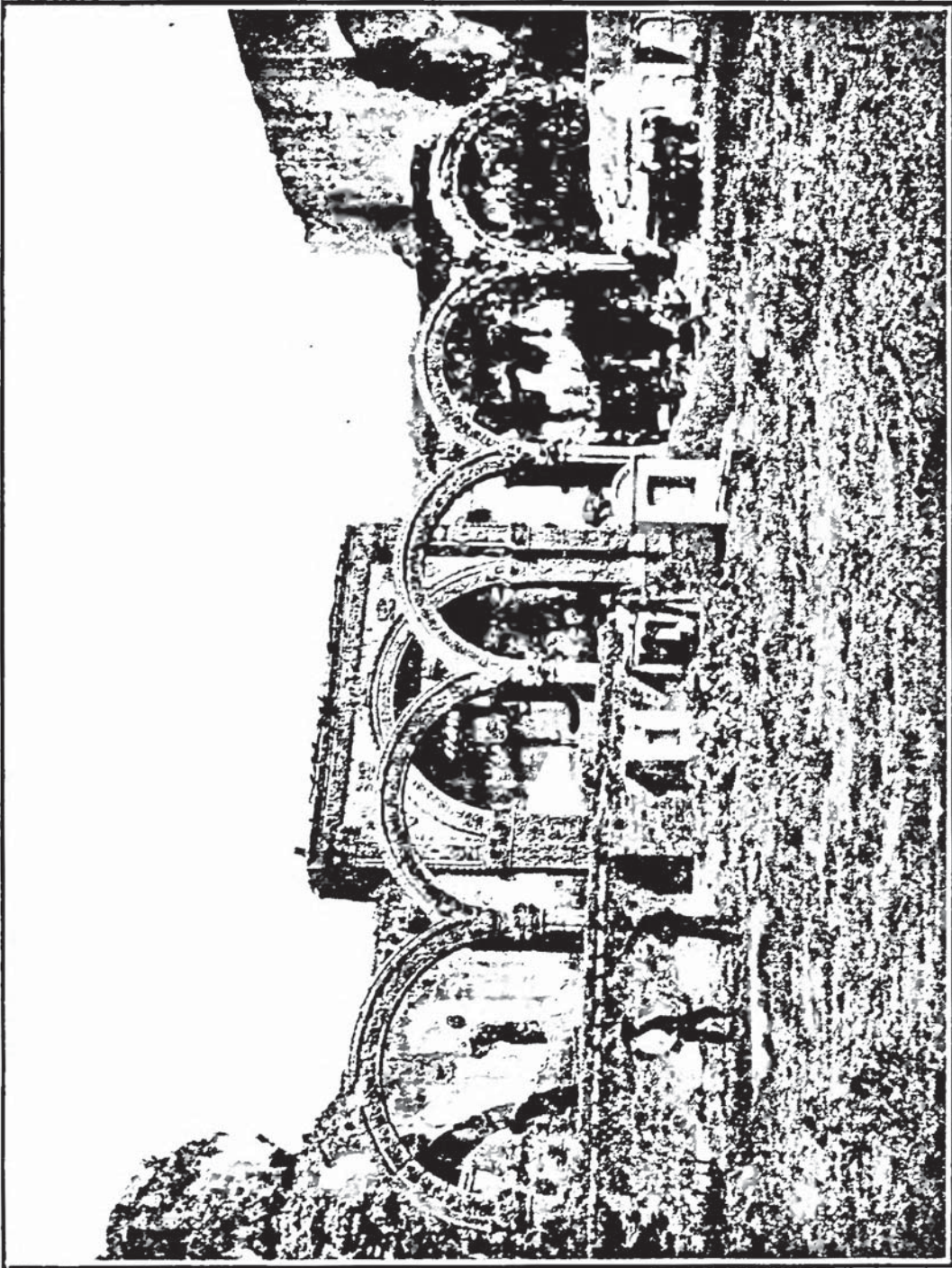
"So even when I leave her at home, I cannot get rid of the minx!" laughed Lamoni. "Take this cue from me, oh king, she is disconsolate. A sore heart is impressionable. It is ever ready to attach itself to something else. She has been disappointed."

"I will remember it," said Antiomno. "You may expect me to return your visit."

Lamoni looked relieved. There were still hopes of marrying his daughter off. After they reached the palace and had refreshed themselves from the journey, Antiomno was much astonished to learn that he owed the honor of the king's visit to some imprisoned missionaries that he had never heard of before.

"They may be here," he admitted dubiously, "I shall send and find out."

Leaving Lamoni to be entertained by his royal host, Ammon took his way toward the prison in search of his brethren.



RUINS OF THE PALACE OF THE INDIAN KING.

V.

IN PRISON.

The guard admitted Ammon on his passport. As they passed through the corridors of the jail, he eagerly scanned every group of prisoners in anticipation of recognizing a familiar form. When they reached the large sunny courtyard in the middle of the rambling buildings his hopes ran high, for the place was crowded. Here were the prisoners accused of petty thieving. In the center, in a murky looking fountain, a bronze Hercules bathed his mighty shoulders. Others fashioned sandals, wove baskets, or arranged ingenious feather work. One clever person manufactured a tiny stringed instrument out of bits of wood that he inlaid with mother of pearl. Queer sight in a jail incarcerating thieves, wrought the jewelers, tracing filigree work out of gold. Another group cooked over clay ovens filled with glowing charcoal. The attendant explained to Ammon that the trinkets were sold to defray the expenses of board. Prisoners were dependent on their own ingenuity or the bounty of their friends for their food, a condition which explained the presence of women with baskets who hovered about the jail, waiting to send in cooked delicacies to their enchained lords and masters.

Aaron was not there. The visitor was conducted through musty chambers and oozy passages very different from the breezy courtyard vaulted by the sapphire sky. So far did they go that Ammon almost began to suspect foul play. The guard threw open a door.

“The missionaries are here.”

Stumbling in the dark, he stepped in. As his eyes became accustomed to the gloom, he distinguished the forms of men almost naked.

"Is my brother Aaron, son of King Mosiah here?" he enquired.

At the sound of his voice a wretch raised himself on a pallet of straw. He staggered toward him and peered in the new-comer's face.

"Ammon!" he exclaimed.

The latter had more difficulty in recognizing in this emaciated, broken form the brother from whom he had parted in the pride of his youth and strength.

Genuine grief shook his voice. "Aaron, how did you come to this?"

"It is a long story." He sat down again wearily. "How did you know I was here."

"The Spirit of the Lord prompted me to come," he answered simply.

"You have prospered?" He contrasted the fine physique of his brother with his own gaunt frame, the other's glow of health with his parchment-like skin.

"Yes, the mission is established at Ishmael. And you?"

"Have met with little success. After I separated from you and our younger brothers I went to the city of Jerusalem. The people were hardened, and when I preached in the synagogue, they arose and disputed with me. When they saw that I had the best of the argument, they mocked me. They refused to listen. Then I heard that Muloki and Ammah here, were preaching over in the village of Ani-Anti; I went there. We could make no converts. We came to Middoni. Though we have preached

the word of God to many, few believed. Then they cast us into prison."

During this recital Ammon had noted the flayed flesh, the mark of the thongs that had bound them. Ammonah came up and greeted him with sunken eyes. Muloki was too ill to greet him except by a wan smile. There were two others there whom he did not know. Their plight was pitiable. Ammon's whole soul revolted against the squalor and foul air of the place.

"I tried to get word to Omner and Himni, but without avail. We would have starved to death had it not been for a poor shoemaker, one of the faith, who has deprived himself to bring us sustenance. It has not been so bad for us, but Muloki broke down with a disease."

A heavy tramp resounded through the outer corridor. Guards entered. They were followed by servants who carried clean raiment.

"King Antiomno says that the prisoners are to be released. They are to be fed and clothed and presented before him. You will step this way to the baths."

"It means—" cried Aaron.

"That you are free," finished Ammon. "Moreover, I shall give you a talisman that will assure you of future success in your labors. Take this bracelet to the emperor. You will convert him; with the head gained, you can win the nation to the faith."

"And you?"

"I return to Ishmael with my friend Lamoni. I may be called upon to perform a marriage ceremony there. Our missionary work is just begun."

WEST WITH THE SHIPS OF HAGOTH.



THE ISLAND CHIEF.

THE man fought with the waves, throwing out his white arms ever more feebly. At times it seemed that he must give up, and under would go the black head, only to reappear again a little nearer the shore, with eyes bent on those smiling, white sands, that seemed to mock in derision. Hawaii was half defeated by famine before he began the battle.

One of the survivors in the storm-tossed bark, he had seen two of his companions drown before his eyes, when the craft was dashed to pieces on the rocks. That sight had cost what strength yet remained in his exhausted body, for, presently, where his friends had gone down, he caught a glimpse of the glittering belly of a shark.

Remembering that he had been the best swimmer of the Panama coast, he struck out with renewed courage, although his limbs were numb, his arms had lost all sense of feeling, and his face was purple. Dazzled by the sunlight, the coast seemed ever further away, so he shut his eyes and floundered blindly on. When he reached the cove, the tide pushed him gently in, and the sea-foam bil-

lowed around him like a bed of down. When he reached the beach, half senseless, he sank down like a tired child, but the greedy waves would fain suck him back, so he crawled higher up, digging his nails into the sand, and tearing his hands till the blood came, but he gave no heed to that. He could go no further, his brain reeled, he sank into the oblivion of exhaustion.

Pallid of aspect and slender of form, he lay like a withered lily on the strand. How long he was in this damp trance he knew not, for the day was as the night to his congealing blood and dim senses.

With throbbing pulse and aching limbs he came back to consciousness. As he opened his eyes, he looked into the black eyes of a girl, whose face bent so low over him that her breath fanned his cheek. As she chafed his chilled arms, he felt the warmth of life slowly returning. She raised his faint head and poured water through his blue lips. Soft hands smoothed the black curls from his death-like forehead, and wrung his damp locks. The sun came up and warmed him into feeling. Loa, the girl who had found him on the beach, did not explain that she had tried for hours to make a fire by striking a knife with flint, as she had seen the men do. Failing in this, she threw her mantle over the slender frame, pillowed his head in her lap, and waited for the day.

Straining every muscle of her lithe, young body, she dragged him to the protecting shelter of a cave. There, with the juice of shell-fish, breadfruit, and wild strawberries from the woods, she slowly nursed him back to life. She dared not leave him very long, as she, unlike the original Eve, was afraid of the snakes that haunted the jungle. The space around the cave was bare, but, in

the midst of some foraying expedition, Loa would have a vision of a white body coiled around by a green snake, and, seized with terror, would race back to the cave, only to find her charge a little stronger and more roguish than ever. Gradually the color cept back into his alabaster check, for Hawai was young.

As soon as he was able, he took over his share of the housekeeping duties. One of the first things he did was to go to work with the flint. He made the sparks fly, and finally succeeded in getting fire. That night they had broiled fish for supper, and around the genial blaze they looked into each other's faces in the flickering light, half understandingly, half expectantly.

She approved of the poise of his head upon his bare shoulders, and he watched the firelight play on her expressive features and illumine the gold of her hair, that fell all around her like a voluminous mantle.

"Are you the princess of this island, or Mother Eve in the Garden of Eden?" he asked, quizzically.

"Neither, but a poor, ship-wrecked mariner like yourself."

He stared. "Did *you* come in one of the ships of Hagoth?"

She inclined her head.

"But the others? Where are the others from your boat?"

"The same place that your companions are, I'm afraid. There was a body washed upon the shore down there, and when I first found you, I thought you were like it,—dead!"

"Must have been Shem or Mirror. We'll go down and take a look at it."

The woman shuddered. "I believe I'd rather stay here by the fire."

"Poor little girl! So you are all alone, and have had to care for a lugger like me."

"I was alone—until I found you. That helped me; I had something to do besides think about myself."

"How long were you—alone?"

"Two days."

"And during that time you found no signs of life? There are no people living here?"

"No, I saw no evidence whatever. I was afraid to go very far inland, so stayed mostly on the beach, but I have a feeling that there is no one alive on this island except you and me."

"How do you know it is an island?" quickly.

"Because I have seen it melt into the haze of the sea on three sides, and I imagine if we climb that peak over there that we could see the blue water on the other side."

"Nonsense! There may be big cities in there. When we are better able we will reconnoiter a little. How was it that you, a girl, of all your crew was saved?" he asked curiously.

"I do not know. When the boat began to fill, and it was only a question of a few moments before it would sink, my father lashed me to a large, flat board. As an afterthought, he took out his big knife and fastened it at my waist. 'If you should be saved, you can cut yourself loose,' he explained, while his hand shook. We could see the blue outline of the land over here, and there was a chance that some of us might reach it. After that the hulk settled, and I felt a cold wave sweep over my limbs, and then I was strangling with the salt water in my nose

and throat. I was churned around, and then the plank righted itself, with me on top. When the salt water got out of my smarting eyes sufficient for me to see, I noticed that the ship was gone, with most of the passengers, only a few were floundering around like me. Nowhere could I see my father, and though I called, no one answered. I could see one man clinging to a cask that bobbed around, and the black head of another would appear, only to be submerged again. That swimmer fought hard, but he stayed under longer each time, till at last he went down and did not come up again. After that the storm broke, and the rain lashed us in sheets. I could see nothing, but the cool water was grateful to my parched throat. Something was singing in my ears, and then I must have fainted, for I knew no more until I found myself lying high and dry here on the beach, scorching under a tropical sun. Its rays warmed me back to life, and then I felt for my father's knife. It was still there, and with it I cut myself free, rose to my tottering feet and looked around. The place was pretty enough, with its white sand and glittering sea. I made my way over to some cocoanut palms and found a fresh water stream, that emptied into a little cove. I drank deeply, and bathed my hot forehead in its cool depths. Then I walked along the beach to see if any others had been saved." She hesitated.

"You found—?"

"Two corpses. When I saw that they were quite dead I went up to the jungle, but a wailing cry, like a soul in purgatory, issued from the trees. I went back to the beach, but the bodies were gone."

Hawai jumped.

"I did not know what to do, so I crawled into the

cave. Then I was afraid of snakes. I have since found out that the cries in the woods were made by the little monkeys. I do not know who carried off the bodies."

"Probably washed out by the tide," he reassured her.

"I think not," she continued slowly. "The next day was worse—when I realized that I was alone. I should have died if I had not found you. My only fear, when I saw you lying so white and still on the sand, was that you, like the others, were dead." She caught her breath with a little gasp.

He reached over and impulsively touched her hand.

"Poor little girl! You came up out of the sea and saved my life."

"I don't know what I should have done if you had eaten very much," she explained, half tearfully. "I could only gather the poor cocoanuts off the ground; but when you are strong you can climb the trees and get fresh ones. The bananas were hard to get, and there was strange fruit I was afraid to try, for fear it might poison you. See, we shall have eggs for breakfast. They are quite good."

She poked one out from among the ashes where they were roasting.

"Did you lose any other relatives besides your father on the boat?" he asked suddenly.

She shook her head sadly. "No."

"Then you were not married?"

"No; only betrothed."

His brow darkened. "Was he, to whom you were betrothed, drowned?"

"I think so." But the look of pain which flitted across her face when he spoke of her father did not return. "It was this way: when we embarked in one of the ships of

Hagoth to seek new homes in a foreign land, my father, being old, made me promise to marry Isar, when we reached the new country. I agreed, for Isar was a good man and would take care of me, though I did not love him, or even know him very well."

Hawai looked relieved, and his eyes glowed as they rested on her.

"You have my story, but you have not told me yours," she burst out.

"Mine is similar to yours. I sailed on another ship of Hagoth's only we floundered around in the waste of waters in search of land for so long, that all the crew except three died of famine before she foundered." He dismissed the subject with a shrug of the shoulders, as if unwilling to fill the night with further horrors.

"You must sleep now, and gain some rest, for tomorrow we go on a foraging expedition," he added with gentle raillery.

Loa's eyelids were already drooping, and, soothed with the grateful warmth, she lay down and was soon fast asleep. Hawai piled dry brush on the camp fire until it roared and crackled, and then, like a sentinel on guard, he sat looking moodily into the blaze for hours.

The day dawned auspiciously, and Loa led Hawai down toward the place where she had seen his companions lying. Suddenly she drew back with a little cry. At the exact spot where the mariner had lain, reclined an immense devil fish, with its tentacles wrapped around something. Hawai watched it a moment. He thought perhaps that explained the disappearance of the other two bodies. He silently led Loa away.

They went into the woods to hunt for food, and Loa

in helping him soon got back her spirits. They found raspberries and a strange apple, both of which Hawai pronounced good. The man who first tasted the tomato had more courage than did Columbus. He decried the date palm afar off, and remarked that they should soon fare like princes. The man cut sugar cane, and showed Loa how to chew the pulp and extract the sweetness thereof.

That was but the beginning of their rambles. Every day they sauntered forth to gain new strength, and came home laden with their treasures. One night they dragged in armfuls of bamboo. Another time Hawai brought a mealy root which he had found by accident. It proved a novelty in their diet, for it was the sweet potato. One day they skirted the coast and found a secluded beach where the turtles had come to lay their eggs. The latter they gathered eagerly, while Hawai jocularly remarked that when they had something to cook it in they could have turtle soup. They had gradually gone over the whole island, and on the night that completed the circuit, and proved conclusively that they were the only human beings there, despair descended on them. They had traveled far that day, and the dusk overtook them, but Hawai insisted on cutting armfuls of a tough rush that grew in a swamp.

“What do you want that for?” inquired Loa.

The man was a born woodsman, and was very clever.

“To make a net to catch shrimps with,” he answered.

“The little shrimp is better than the mussels we have been eating so long.”

Loa acquiesced. She was tired of shell fish. So she helped carry the rushes back to the cave, in the long walk through the night.

The next day Hawai spent fashioning the shrimp net. Loa amused herself making festoons of brilliant flowers and garlanding them around his neck. That gave her an idea. She gathered a large quantity of fleshy, fibrous leaves, and began weaving them together.

“Why can’t I make clothing out of these?” she queried.

Hawai glanced at her. Their clothing was rent in strips, and sadly in need of repair, and Loa had a skin averse to the sun. He watched her amusedly, until she got tired and threw them aside.

“I believe I could make better things out of feathers.” She glanced at a squawking sea-bird that sailed overhead. “I could make you a headpiece that would crown a chief.”

He smiled at the woman’s vanity that would think first of adorning the head, but humored her by saying gently, “If you will lend me some of your tresses, I shall try and snare some birds.”

She shook out her mane, for she firmly believed him capable of anything. When she went over to help him tie the net, she voiced the thought that had haunted both of them.

“If we are the only persons living on this island, how long must we stay before others come?”

“Perhaps forever.” It was no use deceiving her. She might as well know. “Some of the ships may have reached one of those bodies of land over there; for owing to the warm current all of Hagoth’s crafts came in the same direction. If some of our compatriots are alive, sooner or later they may visit this island.”

“Or you could build a boat and go to them.” Her faith in him was unlimited.

He shook his head. “I intend to keep you here, and not risk you with the treacherous sea again.” Something in his tone made her drop her eyes. “Would it then be so distasteful?”

“No,” she answered bravely, “I have been very happy here.”

“I want you to give me the right to protect you. You must marry me.”

“But there is no priest,” she subterfuged.

“Kings make their own laws. You and I, by right of possession, are joint rulers of these islands. We shall effect a union of our interests. Come, we will ask the Heavenly Father, who watches over even the outcasts, to guard and protect us.”

Kneeling, he invoked a blessing on the new life on which they were embarking. He prayed fervently that they should not die out, but live to perpetuate a new race in this paradise of the Pacific.

They arose with rapt faces, and in a spirit of exaltation wandered down to the beach. It was a glorious, starlit night, and the wind from the sea was tempered with a summer softness. They gazed upon the glittering sea, heard the wave's roar and the wind's low moan. They saw each other's dark eyes darting light into each other. In early days the heart is lava and the blood ablaze. They were alone, but no feeling of loneliness oppressed them. Around them lay the white expanse of the sand; beyond, they heard the drip in the damp caves. They clung to each other; for them there was no one else in the world.

* * * * *

The shrimp fisher flung in his net, and Loa, afraid to trust him in the water alone, went surfbathing. The catch was successful, and at last Hawai, with the consciousness of work well done, threw down his net and joined her in the sport. Loa took the flat board on which she had been rescued and rode on it on the crests of the waves, keeping well to the shallow water, for she dreaded the flitting black fins that portended the shark. It was a sunlit honeymoon, and, surrounded by gorgeous flowers and brilliant birds, they imbibed the brightness of the atmosphere. As Loa did not like the gloom of the cave, Hawai built her a summer house of bamboo, and thatched it with grass. Gradually their comforts increased. One night, after they had dined off a young roast pig, Loa remarked, "Hawai, don't you ever say that you and I are the only people on this island." She looked him straight in the eyes.

He put his arm around her tenderly, but this thing worried him more than he liked to show.

"I want you to declare war on the wild boars," she continued, "for this place must be safe for a little child to play in."

He mentally resolved to do it, although he was at a loss how to commence. After that he renewed his efforts, and toiled indefatigably to bring in every necessity his ingenuity could devise.

One night he had gone to look at some traps. One had been dragged away, and in looking for it he went farther than he intended. When he returned to the hut he was panic-stricken to find Loa gone. Wild with fear, he dashed up to the mouth of the cave whence smoke issued. Inside, guarded by the fire at the entrance, lay Loa. A thin, piping sound issued from her side.

“Come in,” she said, “and see your little son.”

“My little son!” he repeated in wonder.

With a mighty thankfulness, Hawai gathered up his family in his arms and carried it to the house, with a heartfelt prayer that he might not drop all that he held dear.

Thus Hawai and Loa founded their island kingdom and were progenitors of a new race in the South Seas.





THE CLIFF DWELLERS' DAUGHTER.

THE CITY IN THE GLOOM.

I.

THE LAST OF HIS TRIBE.

THE thing sprawled on the white stone of the Giant's Steps, in the canyon. Closer scrutiny proved it to be a man who lay on his stomach drinking out of a blue pool of water. He stood up and showed what a miserable thing he was. He had been white, and displayed the pitiable plight of the civilized man reduced to dire extremity. His thorny feet were encased in ungainly moccasins, shaggy goatskin swathed him about the middle, while his poor shoulders shivered under their covering of rabbit skins pieced together. The muscles stood out like whip cords on his emaciated limbs. The head, unkempt and shaggy, had a ferocious appearance which was enhanced by the eyes that seemed starting out of his head.

He stooped and filled a misshapen jar with water, then gathered up a leather pouch that contained wild grapes, and a haunch of venison. They were all presents for Gualzine, the woman up at the clift house in gloomy Cave Valley. The deer had cost the life of a man. When the woman sickened and could no longer munch the corn nor drink the water of the place, Ulric and his friend Izehara, had ventured forth in search of fresh meat. A rash undertaking at any time, it was particularly dangerous when the cave dwellers were expecting an attack from their inveterate enemies, the Lamanites. So the chief of the tribe told them when they left, but the remembrance of the woman moaning on her pallet lent wings to their feet.

They shot the doe on the morning of the second day out. They startled her at dawn as she grazed. Though the arrow sped true, she ran a hundred and fifty yards before she fell. They found her panting in the brush. Ulric left Izehara to carve the meat and prepare the camp while he went higher up to look at the traps.

When he found that one of them had caught an old silvertip, he wished that the other man had come along. He beat her to death with his club, and when the quivering brute lay down, the day was well advanced. "I will bring Izehara up to help me skin her. It will make a warm robe for Gualzine." Then panic seized him. What if she were already dead?

Haunted by this new fear, he hurried back to camp where new horrors awaited him. By the side of the partially dismembered deer, Izehara lay writhing in the last stages of poisoning. He had been bitten by a rattle-snake. Ulric flung himself down and applied his lips to the wound. He was too late; even as he sucked the poison out, his friend looked at him for the last time, then closed his eyes forever.

The survivor built up the fire and gnawed at the rarely broiled meat from a sense of duty, for he knew that he must keep his strength up. He devoted what daylight remained to getting in the wood. During the everlasting hours of the night he prodded himself to keep awake to watch the precious food and the corpse. The coyotes howled in the distance, but more to be feared was the mountain lion, that sends no halloo of its coming.

Though seldom seen, wherever the prey is, there will it be. As his straining ears imagined a padded footfall, he built the fire up until the flames arose and lighted the

rock walls of the canyon. Even the "cat" fears man's "red flower"—fire.

At dawn he dragged the dead body down to a gully and covered it up with leaves. He wondered how long the wolves would leave them there. He regretfully left them most of the deer, for urged on always with the thought of the woman, he must travel light. If the horrors of their surroundings palled on him, what must it be to her? A forlorn, transplanted thing she had come among these wild men and won their rude hearts.

Even Ulric, a long time before, had lived in a city. It was called Teotihuacan, which means "House of God," and was famed far and wide for its great pyramids for worship. This fair city contained many splendid houses, although Ulric did not know so much about that, as he was only one of the common people. It had been prophesied that the inhabitants would be destroyed because of their unbelief. Then the Lamanite hordes swept down upon them, and the men went out to fight them. The fields around Teotihuacan were spangled with black bits of obsidian where the opposing warriors shattered one another's spears. When the Indians began to massacre the women, they, with children clinging to their skirts, fought them back. After that Ulric didn't like to remember what happened.

He, with a few survivors had taken refuge in the subterranean city, where there were chambers just as above ground, and a black well with plenty of water. Only they had no sunlight and some of the women sickened and died. When their enemies had left, they sneaked out and made their way across the desert to the north until they reached the Sierra Madres, on the pinnacles of

whose peaks they perched their eyries built of sundried mud. They carried up handfuls of soil from the valley and plastered it on the ledges, where they raised a little stunted maize. There, in deadly fear of the marauding bands of Lamanites that were wiping out their race, they eked out a miserable existence, a little lower than the beasts.

So outnumbered were they that only by the utmost caution did they manage to live. The rooms were dark as the apertures were small and had to be crawled through by means of rope ladders that they pulled in after them. They had got so used to climbing over the rocks that they sprang among them like goats.

People who exist in daily fear of their lives do not go in for art. So the cave dwellers' implements were crude, their pottery deformed, and their necessities scant. Obsessed with the idea of keeping the life in them from one day to another, they had lost their sense of feeling, when Gualzine came among them. She was sent accompanied by two attendants, from a neighboring cliff dwelling, for safe keeping during time of war. The other cliff house was demolished, so Gualzine took up her abode in the new place. She was the daughter of the High Priest and the last of her blood. A wan, washed out thing, she took little interest in her mediocre surroundings. Time was when she had been beautiful, as her portrait on the wall of the casa of the priests at Teotihuacan could prove. They called it "Queen of Hearts." But grim circumstance will leave its impress on the fairest form.

Though she toiled not, a new impetus evinced itself in the colony. Like the queen bee, others worked for her, and comforts appeared. She showed the boys how to

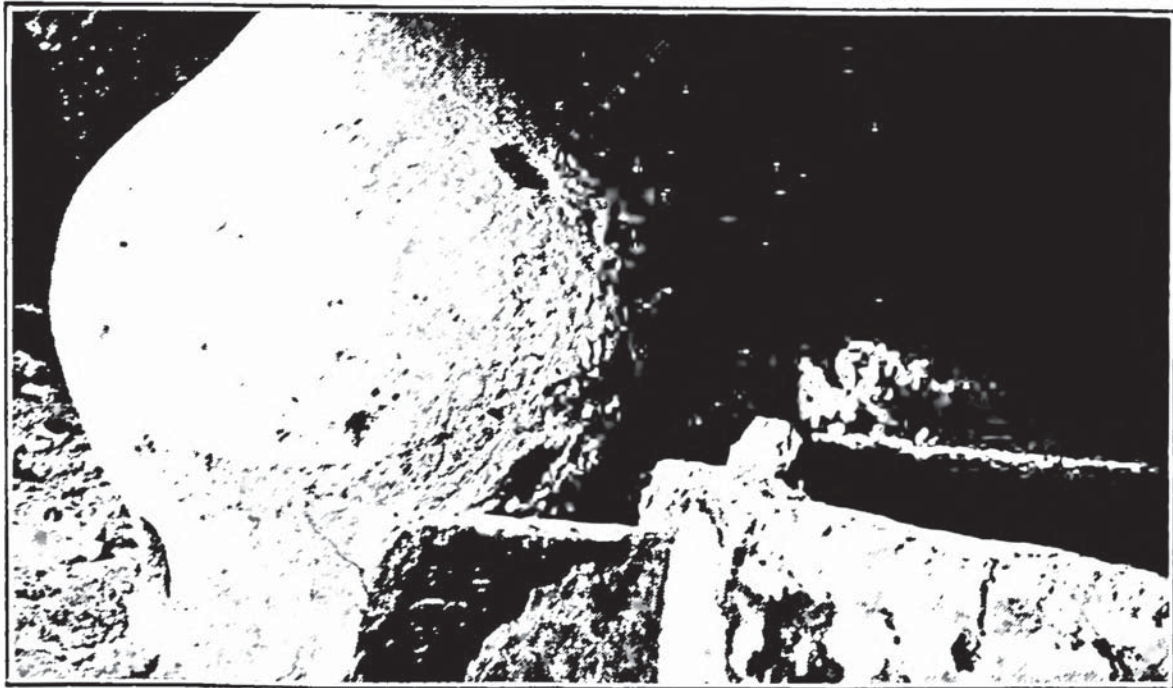
mould their pottery better, and played with the children and hushed their wails, so that their dragged out mother might be less despondent. She made ready threaded needles out of the thorns and fibers of the maguey that grows on the foothills, and taught the men how to make medicine from its juice. She was eyes to old Malcre when she sewed the skin garments in the poor light, and she cut out better patterns for their sandals. Because she would eat nothing but cooked food, the others gave up their way of eating it half raw. The men brought fresh pine boughs to sleep on, and they hunted up warmer covering because this frail thing had to be protected. When she fell sick it was a dire calamity. All the inmates loved her. Little wonder that Ulric showed such dog-like devotion.

Dropping with exhaustion, every step a pain, he approached Cave Valley. Finally he lost consciousness of his aching muscles; only one nagging instinct whipped him on. He must get to the house with his precious burden, fresh meat and grapes and good water from the Steps. That ought to put her on her feet again. The water was the hardest to carry. He was afraid that he might spill it. She would have liked the big thick bear robe. It would have been so soft while she was sick. Izehara had died and he couldn't bring it. Poor Izehara, up there in the cold. Then the old gnawing fear. What if she were gone and all of his torture were in vain? The thought spurred on his flagging strength, so he stumbled into the valley. Ulric looked towards the cliffs that he called home. In the evening haze he could not distinguish the familiar curl of smoke. Torn by uncertainty, he hurried up the side of the mountain. He stopped short. The growing feeling that something was wrong was real-

ized. What was the matter with the garden? The corn, which was almost ripe, had been trampled down. At the same instant his foot touched something soft. He reached down, then drew back. The boy Kohath lay there with an arrow in his breast, stark dead. He had been shot down while he was carrying wood. Why hadn't they picked him up and carried him in? Cold chills shook him. What if they were all dead? What if the Indians were there now, waiting for him. Where was Gualzine? Cautiously, he crept along the terrace through the maize.

He waited for what to him seemed an age, while the wolves howled in the distance. No sign of life issued from the place. He could stand it no longer. He must find out what had happened to Gualzine. Careless of his own fate, he went down.

The entrance showed signs of a conflict. Chunks of plaster had been dislodged. His people had put up a



THE CORN CRIB OF THE CITY IN THE GLOOM.

fight. As little things will often attract attention in dire extremities, so the first thing he noticed on entering, were the dead white ashes scattered on the hearth. Nearby was a broken pot of hominy, partly spilled.

The massacre had taken place the day before. One of the men lay dead by the fireplace, also the thirteen-year-old girl. The marauders would have no object in slaying her. Ulric wondered if she had killed herself. The form he sought wasn't there. He passed into the next room. To do so he had to step over the body of the chief that lay through the doorway, a hatchet cleaving his skull. In *her* chamber he found Merari decapitated. Dear old Merari, Ulric reflected, her servant, who loved her as much as he. Parts of her pallet were scattered about the room, but Gualzine was not there.

Many of the inhabitants were missing. Old Malcre was gone. She could make good corn cakes. The Indians had a use for her. The other woman with her babe was missing. They also had a use for her. Ulric hoped the child would live. He did not think that Gualzine would be carried off without a struggle, yet, search as he would, he could find no shreds of her cotton clothing. What if she had died before the cliff dwelling was attacked? In times of siege it was the custom to bury the dead beneath the floor. He hastily searched through the house but he found no sign of a recent excavation.

The next morning he renewed the hunt. He found that a number of bodies had been thrown over the cliff. Hopeful, yet dreading, he made the precipitous descent. Her remains were not there, although he felt rewarded for the climb, for there were several bodies of the Lamanites. The Nephites had clutched their antagonists and

locked in their embrace, had leaped over the cliff with them to destruction.

II.

ALONE.

At first, overwhelmed with the disaster, Ulric did not realize his condition. He spent a number of days burying the dead beneath the floor. He placed their implements of war with them, and at the head he put an olla, containing a little of the corn that was left; over all he put a layer of charcoal and covered it up with earth. Merari's head he placed upon a shelf, saying, "You stay there old fellow, and help me. You and I are great pals. You are the only friend I've got left."

In the after days he realized his utter desolation. At first he clung to life and he bounded over the rocks like a hunted thing. One night a party of Lamanite robbers passed through the valley and he watched them from the cliffs. He looked hungrily down into their camp, but dared not move, for fear that they would shoot. Later, when he got frightened of the solitude, he would have gladly given himself up. He became a perfect coward. Most scared of all was he of the stillness. The mountains made him infinitely lonely; he felt as if the peaks weighed down on his chest and he could not get his breath. He foresaw that he would go insane, which gave rise to a new fear. What would happen to him there among the hills if he lost his reason? He could not journey to his own people, for he knew not if any of them were alive.

It was not so bad when he could get out and hunt, but one day he slipped and sprained his ankle. It swelled up and pained so he could not walk. After that he crawled down to the stream to get his water. A new horror developed. The corn was almost gone. Already he could see the bottom of the big olla in which it was kept. Since he could not get out and hunt food he must surely die.

He began to prepare for the end. He would write his story on the wall in red and blue and yellow hieroglyphics. Future generations should know how he, Ulric had outlived his compeers. He picked up a chisel. As he struck the wall with it, it resounded hollow. He remembered the limestone cave back of it. Funny he hadn't thought of it before! He grasped his bludgeon, and with what was left of his remaining strength, hit the wall. It took many of his weak blows to cave it in, and he also went down with the earth. Staring straight at him was Gualzine. She sat upon a stone dais. Her body had been preserved by the peculiar atmosphere of the cave. On her shrunken form the cotton cloth hung limp.

Slowly the realization forced itself on Ulric. The queer little men of the caves, determined that the daughter of their High Priest should not fall into the hands of the enemy, had walled her up there when threatened with attack. She was alive when they took her there; perhaps she lived when he returned. He had let her be slowly asphyxiated.

Ulric threw himself at her feet with all the grief that his warped nature would allow. That marked the beginning of the fever. Starvation had prepared him for it, for he had got down to counting the kernels of corn. Per-

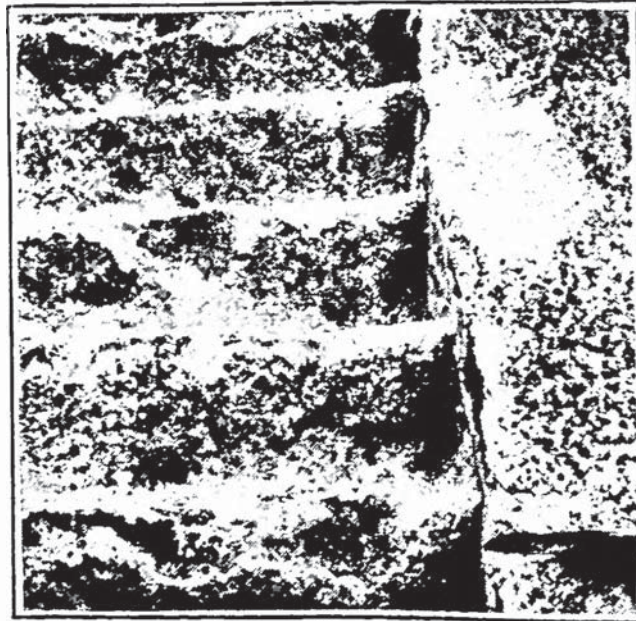
haps the rotting skull had been a friend indeed and lent its malignant aid.

Alone, with parched lips burning with thirst, with no human being to speed the parting soul, Ulric died.

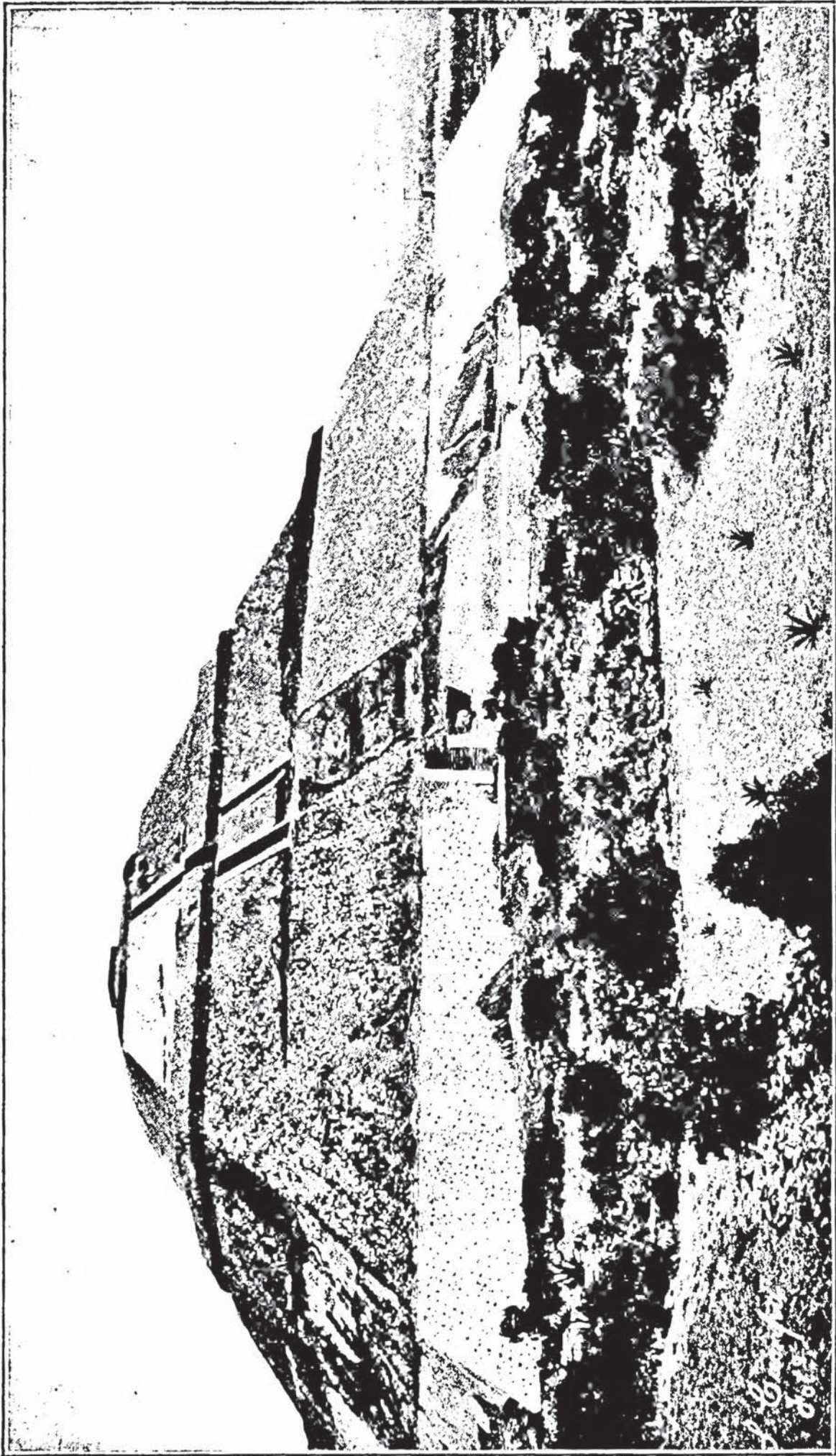
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One of an alien race, exploring the cave, found there the skeleton of a man lying along the wall, a crumbling skull on a ledge above, and a mummy seated on a dais.

He pondered, "What a tale those blackened lips might tell if they could only speak!"



STAIRS THAT LEAD TO THE SUMMIT
OF THE PYRAMID.



PYRAMID OF THE SUN, MEXICO.



JARED WAS MURDERED AS HE DESCENDED FROM HIS THRONE

THE CONQUEST OF AIDA.

I.

THE PLOT.

JARED, as he reclined on the roof-garden, looked out over the city basking in the afternoon light. Although it was yet warm, he had stumbled out into the open air from his siesta couch where he had smothered and tried in vain to sleep during the sultry afternoon. There was a discontented look in his eyes as his gaze wandered over the vast extent of the roofs, the palms silhouetted against a pastel sky, to the crystalline peaks in the distance crowned with eternal snow. The nearby stone mansions were resplendent in red-tiled roofs, sun-burnished walls, and purple shadows, while an occasional opening afforded a glimpse of a green courtyard or paved street. Nor could the beauty of his own aerial gardens, a riot of color, with subtile perfume of violets and verbenas, win him from his trouble. The laughter of girls floated up from the pool below, where his daughter Aida with her women, was disporting herself in the water. Unlike less active women, who let an indented pillow in a hammock tell the story of the afternoon's exertions, she preferred violent swimming in the humid plunge.

Wearily he leaned back, as if he found the cushions hard for his emaciated limbs. Jared had once been ruler over this vast domain, and he who has tasted power cannot soon forget the flavor. Lusting for the kingdom, he

had dispossessed his old father, King Omer, but his younger brothers had risen up and wrested it from his greedy grasp. They defeated him in open battle, took him captive, and Jared only bought his freedom with the promise that he would never go to war again. After that he found life, shorn of its glory, but a worthless thing.

Evening is unknown in the tropics, for night descends swiftly, shrouding the earth in a black pall. Tonight, for a transitory period, a crescent moon hung in a sapphire sky, a breeze sprang up from the sea, and the city shook off its lethargy. A hum arose as its inhabitants prepared for the traffic and activity of the night. Lights sprang out. A step on the stair and a rustling of the leaves made the man turn to behold the laughing face of Aida, like a lily on its stem above a bed of narcissus.

"Come here to me, daughter," he said fondly, his face lighting up.

She shook out her mane of black hair, which was still wet, and went toward him. Her shoulders and arms emerged like snow from her loose-fitting, black gown, and the dead pallor of her face was relieved only by the scarlet streak of her lips. Her gray eyes were so heavily shrouded that they appeared black. As she knelt before him, her father leaned forward and touched her forehead with his lips.

"Father," she murmured, "it is eating my heart out to see you always so sad."

"I fear I am but a broken shell from which the life has departed," he lamented.

"Can't you shake this depression off?"

"I have tried," he sighed.

"I know it. You will never be yourself again until

you are restored to your old place. The throne is yours by right. You are a younger man than Omer, and can manage the affairs of the nation better. You must be king."

"How?" he raised his eyebrows.

As she had watched her father waste away, gnawed by festering ambition, Aida had realized that something must be done or he would die. So she had evolved a plan.

"Listen," she glanced hastily around and lowered her voice. "There is only one thing between you and your lawful right to the throne."

"My father!"

"Then remove it," she hissed.

"You mean kill the king!" He started as if she had surprised his own guilty thought.

"Why not?"

"It is not for a son to spill his father's blood."

"Get someone else to do it."

"And who, in all the realm of the Jaredites would dare?"

"Only one that I know of. The dark and moody Akish could if he wanted to, for he controls the secret societies."

"True," he ruminated, "but he is a friend of Omer's."

"Every man has his price."

"What would his be?" he shrugged his shoulders. "The coffers of Akish are bursting with gold now."

"Tempt him with something else."

Jared scowled. What office in the kingdom could he offer for such a crime?

Aida broke in on his reflections. "Send for him here, and I will dance before him, and when he covets

me, say, 'Bring hither the head of Omer, the king, and I will give you my daughter for wife.' ”

Fond father that he was Jared never doubted but what Akish would want Aida, but the thoughts of bartering her shot a pang through his heart. He would sacrifice his aged father for his soul's desire, but to give up his daughter, that was another thing.

After a silence, he said gently, "Have you thought, my child, that after this is accomplished there must come a day of reckoning?"

"What of it?"

"You are willing to pay the price?"

"Certainly," then hurriedly as the color crept into her face, "I am sick of these effeminate nobles with their perfumed locks, and if I am to have a master it must be one worth obeying. Akish is such a man."

As he watched her with half-closed lids, her father thought that it must be a strong trainer indeed to hold such a splendid tigress in leash; but when he thought of the cruel Akish, his heart was full of misgiving.

II.

AIDA DANCES BEFORE AKISH.

Akish stood at the gate of the gardens of Jared on the night of the banquet. In crimson tunic he leaned a vivid patch against the gray stone arch. A nearby torch illumined his figure, lean, brown and muscular. Black-eyed, hawk-beaked and cruel-lipped, he conveyed a suggestion of power that was felt in the magnetic personality

of the man. A band of dull gold hung low over his brow, sheathing his glossy, black hair. Collar and sandals of the same material were the only ornaments he wore. As he surveyed the scene, a gleam came into his eyes for it was well calculated to stir a more sluggish soul than his.

Cruets of burning oil filled the gardens with soft radiance and changeful shade. Interspersed with these were braziers of incense whose aromatic smoke curved upwards in spirals. In the fountain the figure of a sea-nymph upheld a conch shell from which the water trickled. It ran into the swimming pool of blue-veined marble which in turn emptied itself into a miniature lake covered with lotus leaves and yellow water lilies. The lagoon was not entirely given over to white-necked swans and pink-legged flamingoes, for a dainty shallop lay moored to the shore as if inviting one to a trip to fairyland among the floating gardens of the lake. One tiny isle grew purple hyacinths, another yellow daffodils, a third flaunted gaudy tulips. In the somber green of the grove was caught the occasional gleam of the white magnolia and pomegranate blooms.

To one side was the aviary, filled with the strange and gorgeous-hued birds of the tropics; beyond, causing an instinctive shudder, were the many species of Central American snakes. The cages of the wild animals were still farther removed so the roars of their inmates would not disturb the ears of the diners. The banquet table was spread on the terrace which was gained by a magnificent sweep of stairs.

The stone glowed yellow, while the supporting columns were of marble, shot with amethyst. Even as Akish devoured the scene, the portals were thrown wide,

and the guests thronged out upon the terrace. Throwing the loose end of his tunic across his shoulder, he strode forward.

The table groaned under its golden service, many of its dishes designed in grotesque forms of birds and animals. Overhead stretched a net from which roses fell upon the board. Akish found himself seated next to Aida whose presence he felt intuitively, before he looked at her. She wore a loose-fitting, white robe from which her bare arms emerged like alabaster. No ornament marred the purity of the throat, nor the poise of the head crowned with living night. The jade bangles which dangled from her ears only heightened the pallor of her skin.

"So I have met you at last," he murmured.

"I have known Akish long, by reputation," she flattered subtly.

"Three times have I seen you before, but ever failed to make your acquaintance."

"Three times? Twice only do I remember. Once as you rode by, leading your troops to battle, I thought that your eyes rested on me for a moment. Again in a little park in Heth you passed me with a group of gray-beards."

"But first I saw you bathing one morning in the pool at Ether's house in Heth. I noticed that you were the best swimmer among the women. I went back that afternoon and enquired of their guests only to find that you had left that day. As for the night in the park—after I went to the council with the old men, I excused myself, and hurried back to the park but you had gone."

"After you had passed I went home," she confessed.

He replied with a burning glance, and she saw her

father watching them with furtive eyes from across the table.

A troupe of acrobats, assisted by deformed mountebanks, performed. A group of dancing girls, garlanded with flowers, went through a series of figures for the guests, while ever roses fell from above. Everyone did as he pleased as the banquet progressed. Some of the diners were stupid from gormandizing, others had partaken too freely of the intoxicating juice of the maguey. Aida tasted little of the rich meats before her, but Akish seemed possessed of a burning thirst which goblet after goblet of frothy mead failed to quench. His veins were on fire, and as he whispered in Aida's ear, he suddenly swooped to cool his hot lips on the clear expanse of her shoulder. But even as he clutched her she eluded his grasp and slipped away, leaving him with distended nostrils like blood-hound thwarted in pursuit.

Presently Jared, arising from his seat, announced, "My daughter has consented to dance for us." The guests crowded forward and waited expectantly, but then they were not prepared for the sight that greeted their eyes. Aida slowly made her way to the center of the terrace. As she emerged into the light, the spectators uttered an exclamation of horror, and Akish swore under his breath, for wrapped around her body were the thick coils of a snake.

A snood fastened over her brow made her head resemble that of the serpent, and her form, sheathed in green, writhed so with the monster that the watchers could scarce tell where one ended and the other began. Slowly the undulations of the snake-dance started. The onlookers watched fascinated, much as the shivering little

monkeys are hypnotized by the dance of Kaa, the rock python, before they are devoured by him. Akish, with bulging eyeballs, crept nearer under the spell. The woman and the serpent swayed together; then out darted a white arm, followed by the glistening writhe of the snake. At times it seemed almost a battle between the two, and again it seemed as if the monster would hug her to death in its embrace. Finally, at a signal, two attendants rushed forward and helped disengage the python which seemed loath to leave its fair prey. As it was coaxed off, the audience heaved a sigh of relief. As the snake sheds its skin, so Aida threw off her outer robe, and emerged in roseate gauze of dawn-like hue. The music crashed into gayer strains. First the dancer depicted the awakening of love,—joy, bliss, rising to the delirium of ecstasy,—then languor, and when it seemed that she had fairly swooned away, her muscles became taut, and she arose to show the fury of love scorned. Snatching a dagger from her belt she brandished it in the air. Wildly she struck, faster and faster resounded the music, more passionate became her motion, until she was fury incarnate. She seemed a harlequin of the desert, as she struck right and left. Akish did not realize how near he was until she plunged the blade at him and he drew back with a cold sweat on his brow. Her vengeance seemed to rise to the height of black hate. Centering her strength she drove the dagger into her imaginary enemy, and the knife went clattering down on the pavement.

The dance was ended. The spectators broke into wild applause. Aida staggered toward the shade of the orange trees, and not realizing what he did, Akish plunged after her. He reached her just as she swayed and fell, with utter exhaustion, on his outstretched arm.

III.

FRUITION.

Lured on by the bait of Aida, Akish called the secret societies together and started his diabolical machinations, but the Lord warned Omer, in a dream, of his impending danger, with the result that the old king gathered his household together and departed secretly to the land of Ablom, where he pitched his tents by the sea-shore. Jared was anointed king by the hand of wickedness, and at the same time Akish was wedded to Aida.

If Jared loved power, Akish did more so, and his vaulting ambition led to the throne itself. He fretted inwardly; and, because such a nature must be active in evil, he began to lay his subtle plans to consummate his end. He must get Jared out of the way. By reason of his control of the secret organizations, whose members were bound by dread oaths, he was already a more influential man than the king. His marriage to Jared's daughter strengthened his position. Strangely enough, the thing that should have deterred him from the murder, consideration for his wife, confirmed his dire decision. Akish loved Aida as much as a nature of his kind is capable of, but mingled with it was a desire to domineer. He derived pleasure from torturing the beloved object. During their brief married life, he had been afforded some rare flashes of her temper, and he now saw a chance to quell the rebellion in her, and crush it with one blow.

The arch conspirator sent out his band of assassins to kill King Jared as he sat upon the throne, and as they departed he called after the bullies, "That I may know

that you have done your work well, bring me a token, bring me the head of the king," and he smiled grimly to think that the same fate that Jared had decreed for his father, should now be meted out to him.

Akish did not know what fear was, but he could ill brook delay. He sat in his great stone chamber and essayed a dozen tasks only to throw them aside and listen impatiently, as the afternoon lengthened into night. When the heavy tread of his accomplices resounded in the corridor, he could have shouted with relief.

"How goes it?" he questioned sharply, as the men filed into the room.

"It is done," answered Simon.

"How?"

"With twenty wounds, Chief," broke in one of the followers.

"We went in and mingled with the people as he sat high upon his throne, and when the petitioners for justice had all gone, and he started to descend, we stabbed him. Our men watched the entrances so we would not be interrupted in our work."

"And the proof?"

"Behold, my Lord," Simon threw back his cloak and held up by the hair the ghastly trophy, but it was not this gruesome spectacle that froze the look of horror on the face of Akish.

Instinctively he looked in the other direction to behold Aida, clad in her night robes, in the doorway. Whether or not she had recognized the head of her father, in the half light of the room, they could not tell, for she turned silently, and they heard the swish of her draperies down the hall.

Confusion fell upon the retainers, and Akish, shaking as if he had the ague, said, "I did not mean for her to see that. Get out of my sight."

If they had any doubts they were soon dissipated, for Aida shut herself up in her apartments, and for three days her screams resounded through the palace. On the third day Akish commanded her to appear at a banquet, for he dared not face her alone. She came and sat stony-faced at the board.

During the coronation ceremonies which followed, when Akish sat in her father's place, and she, on his right hand, was crowned queen, neither of them ever mentioned Jared's name.

Not until her son Ether was born some months later did Aida smile again, and somehow, because Akish was his father, the little newcomer renewed the bond between them.

IV.

REAPING THE WHIRLWIND.

Beyond the initial step, Aida had taken no part in Akish's crimes. When he attained the throne, she thought that his violence must cease, but his increased power only offered him more opportunities to sate his lust for wickedness. Because his honor was bound up with his queen, as well as for her innate charm, Akish had cared more for her than he did for anybody. But, steeped with satiety, he constantly sought new sensations; and, as he grew more brutish, Aida's influence with him waned. His crimes became more vicious, and he reveled in blood-



THEY BROUGHT HER BABY BOY IN DYING UPON HIS SHIELD.

shed, until the people called him monster, and prayed for a liberator.

Their eyes turned naturally to the tyrant's eldest son, Ether, now grown to splendid manhood, who through his mother, had kingly blood in his veins. The old king saw with jealous eyes how the populace loved his son, and despised him, and his hate knew no bounds. He incarcerated Ether in prison, and gradually starved him to death.

His mother, who could stand no more, left the monster, and retired to her desert castle to mourn. Nimrah, her second son, fearful that his father's wrath would now fall on him, fled with a few followers to Omer at Ablom.

Not to please a paramour but to punish Aida for leaving him, Akish yielded to the importunities of one of his favorites, a vulgar, blase woman and flaunted her openly at the palace.

It is said that the reason the criminal always gets caught is because he stands out against organized society; nay, more than that, he is fighting the law of the universe, progression. As soon as a man impairs his own usefulness, or injures his fellow men, he becomes a clog to block her advancement, and nature is going to crush him. She has no use for weaklings, but on the useful worker she will lavish power a hundredfold.

The debased debauchee had become a menace, so the immutable laws prepared to destroy him. Grief-stricken over the death of his brother, and smarting under this latest insult offered to his mother, Gilead, the third son, arose in wrath, and declared war against his father. Thousands in the kingdom, who nursed grievances, rallied to his support. So Aida saw her own flesh and blood arrayed against their father. Deep as she had drunk of

the bitter draught of sorrow, she was destined yet to drain it to the dregs.

As befitted her mood, the queen had retired to a bleak castle, partly in ruins and surrounded for miles by barren cacti. Bats lurked in its turrets, and the wind claimed its ancient towers for its own. The nation had risen in arms, and when rumors of battle reached their retreat nothing would do but that Aida's youngest son, a boy of fifteen, must sally forth to join his brothers on the field. In vain did his mother plead; he was obdurate. Finally with trembling fingers she fastened the armor on his stripling limbs, kissed him, and let him go. After that the queen of tragedy haunted the edge of the battlefield like a vampire, until they brought her baby boy in dying upon his shield. Then her already tottering reason gave way, and she went stark mad. A few hours later, when they placed the fair, slender body in the sepulchre, his mother was a raving maniac.

All the tragedies of her life were babbled forth in the drivel of the insane. One night, under cover of a storm, she escaped from her keepers. The next morning they found her body in the well, but, whether blinded by the rain, she had stumbled over the curbing and been plunged by accident into the pit, or had sought to drown her troubles in the Lethean waters of suicide, they did not know.

Couriers carried the news of the queen's death to the king. It stirred the remnant of feeling left in him, but his last hold on life was gone. Scarce had the messengers ceased speaking when the guard from the watch tower broke in to say that the legions were advancing on the citadel. Then a captain came to report that his soldiers

had been bribed by the enemy. Hated by his own followers, with half-hearted officers who knew they were on the losing side, with fear written on every countenance, Akish realized that he had lost, before the enemy had raised a spear.

“At least we’ll die with harness on our back,” and he motioned for an attendant to get down his armor from the wall, and, as the boys’ hands shook, he kicked him for a coward, and stooped and fastened the straps himself. He ordered his chariot, and when seated on high, the gates were thrown back. Like a bull who charges the toreadors, he glanced over the plain, which, as far as the eye could see, was alive with plumed warriors. His whip sang out over the heads of the horses, and, undaunted to the end, he plunged into the maelstrom to his death.

(THE END.)

