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THE KINGDOM OF THE SUN

A ROMANCE OF THE
FAR WEST COAST

A. M. STEPHEN

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INTRODUCTION

On the British Columbia Coast there exists a tradition regarding the "fair-haired" Haidas. It is said that, within the tribe, there existed until quite recently a number of natives whose hair was of a golden or reddish-brown colour. These warriors of the North Pacific are sufficiently remarkable without the added interest which might be derived from such a legend. In appearance, the Haidas are distinctly superior to the Salish and the Kwakiutls who inhabit the adjacent shores, while their language differs radically from that of their neighbours. To a student of comparative mythology they present interesting problems. Their cosmogony links them with the Aztecs, the Mayas and Quiches of Central America and, consequently, with the Egyptian, Etruscan and Pelasgian Greek civilisations, which flourished in prehistoric ages beside the Mediterranean. However, the "fair-haired" Haidas give rise to speculations upon more recent events than the beginnings of their mythology or religion. It seems highly improbable that the British Columbia Coast remained unvisited by Europeans previous to the voyages of Cook, Meares and Vancouver or to the recorded explorations of the later Spanish adventurers.

The author has had the privilege of many years of residence in British Columbia, close acquaintance with the life of the natives, personal friendships with members of the tribes, and is firmly convinced that the historian, the anthropologist and the creative artist have still much to do on the Far West Coast. Picturesque in themselves, possessed of a mythology quite as interesting as that of any European people, living in surroundings of matchless beauty and grandeur, the British Columbia Indians should furnish a background for a distinctive Canadian literature. *The Kingdom of the Sun* merely embodies a suggestion of the romantic interest attached to these strange peoples who are evidently the perishing fragments of a very ancient civilisation.

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THE KINGDOM OF THE SUN

CHAPTER I

A GENTLEMAN ADVENTURER

On the evening of 12 December, 1577, the little squadron of Sir Francis Drake, refitted and seaworthy once more, was ready to leave Plymouth Sound. For almost the space of a month the captains had fumed while they drowned their impatience in sack and malmsey at the inn on the Hoe. It was darkly hinted that Papish witchcraft and sorcery had not a little to do with the disastrous storm which had driven the fleet back upon English shores and, to Devonshire minds, this was quite acceptable, the West country being the home of warlocks, witches and pixies since the earliest times when Briton and Saxon disputed possession of the land.

Now, however, there was a tense atmosphere of expectancy and enthusiasm pervading every nook of the winding, dingy streets of old Plymouth. There were eager hands that would have let the bells of St. Andrew's peal out jubilantly had there not been the prohibiting fear of Romish spies. Besides, every townsman knew that it was the desire of their great captain that he should slip silently away to sea. Even until the hour when the last light of sunset had faded from the green slopes of Mount Edgecumbe and the rugged heights of Staddon, the waterfront was thronged by citizens old and young, who watched the *Pelican* and her sister ships with pride in their eyes and bravado in the voices which talked of her gallant crew. Finally, darkness and a gathering fog blotted the Sound and the shipping from sight. The crowd dispersed.

One man alone remained after all the others had gone. Wrapped in a thick cloak which protected him against the chilling mists, he leaned heavily upon the low wall overlooking the harbour. A few of the last stragglers turned to look questioningly at him. One old, white-haired gaffer, indeed, paused while shuffling away to point to the solitary figure with his cane. To a belated companion he whispered:

"There a' be. He'm breakin' his heart a-wishin' mun was aboard."

A slight movement of the man by the sea-wall sufficed to cut short the old man's remarks. Laying his hand upon his comrade's sleeve, the inquisitive one quickened his hobbling steps and faded into the darkness.

It may have been that the man had overheard the words of the elderly gossip, or again, it may have been that the cold had interrupted his reverie. He suddenly drew himself erect and, wrapping his cloak more closely about him, began to pace along the greensward within the line of the wall. He was apparently oblivious of the fact that his low shoes were now wet through and that the fog, gathering thickly upon his cape, had made it but a damp and soggy covering.

A scene, bright and astir with life, was in complete possession of his thoughts. He was living over the hours just passed when he had formed part of the brilliant, noisy crowd in the old inn near by. He could still feel the pressure of the iron hand of England's foremost sailor upon his shoulder and could feel the fire of the grey, dauntless eyes which had searched his soul. He could even hear the tenderness in the rough voice which had said:

"Eh, Master Anson, it's not I will have in question your right to remain where you are. If any would cast an eye, my sword would drink his blood as easily as it would that of a Don. But, lad, there are gossiping tongues and I'm tellin' 'ee it's in action we'm best to bury the past."

Under the kindly grip of that hand the voices of the drawers and the potboys, the captains and the cadets, had suddenly sounded dim and more distant until all had been stilled. In imagination, he was standing with his captain in a bower set in a "goodly and great tree," upon a green-clad spur in the Cordilleras. Below them the verdure of the tropics stretched like a wave on a shoreless sea until, to eastward and to westward, it merged into the sparkling blue reaches of two oceans. Richard Anson heard again the voice of the man beside him beseeching Almighty God of His goodness to

give him life and leave to sail once in an English ship in that sea. The ardour of adventurous youth had thrilled once more to the call of romance.

The golden lure of the Spanish Main, which was the heart's desire of all the merchant adventurers, held him in its power. To exalt the true faith and to establish the supremacy of England on the seas was to him, as to all true Englishmen in his day, the high privilege and duty of a gentleman. Yet, while his pulses bounded and his being stirred under the sea-magic of his captain's touch, there had risen within him a chilling numbness which had suddenly checked his desire to clasp Drake's hand and to risk all with him again in the great adventure.

For to Richard Anson, life bereft of love was as Dead Sea fruit. Behind his ardent patriotism, his manly love of great odds and the lure of uncharted seas, had glowed devotion to an ideal. Willingly would he have faced the embattled powers of the world, of Spain and the devil, if, returning, he could have laid his laurels at the feet of the one woman. But she, for whom he had adventured under perilous skies, was now a memory. A few short weeks ago he had walked with her through the lovely scenery of the Tamar, building fond visions of a home wherein she might reign while he was fighting England's enemies. Then, a sudden chill—"a wind from out of a cloud"—had prostrated her. The crude medicine of the day had sought without avail to check the disease. She had passed out and with her departed the light of his life. Plunged into an agony of separateness, he had been for awhile in grave danger of losing his mind. In vain his comrades of the fleet had striven to allay the darkness of his mood. He avoided them until, upon the eve of the departure of the squadron, he surprised them all by appearing at the inn. Their hopes revived. He would come with them and, in adventures on the high seas, forget the blow which Fortune had dealt him. However, they had been disappointed. He had bidden them all god-speed. When the hour for embarkation arrived Master Anson remained ashore.

The fog had cleared away somewhat and the moonlight, struggling from behind dun banks of cloud, lay in silvery patches upon the grey sea-wall and the black waters of the harbour. Richard was still engaged in his solitary pacing to and fro. Centred as he was in himself, he was unaware of a strange object approaching him. It would have been hard to ascertain whether it was the form of man or woman which, sliding from among the shadows cast by the walls of the inn, now moved silently towards him. Clothed in black it was, its steps upheld by a rude staff, while, for further support, a bony hand crept uncannily along the top of the low stone wall. When Master Anson's eyes first lighted upon the weird figure, he was for the moment undecided whether to stand or fly. In the fact there is no reflection upon his bravery. In that day superstition was part and parcel of the thinking of the most intelligent men. To meet the devil in broad daylight was what might happen to any honest gentleman. How much more likely to meet him on a dark night when there were unwonted doings afoot!

A chilliness, not to be accounted for by the night wind, took possession of Richard so that his hand trembled upon his sword-hilt. In a hoarse voice he bade the apparition stand. No answer was forthcoming from the form which glided nearer to him. Then it was that panic seized the man as it will the boldest at times. The moonlight flashed upon the blade of his drawn rapier. The cloak enveloping the head and shoulders of the spectral figure was thrown aside and Richard's blade was arrested in the act to strike.

"Kate-o'-the-Mill! Thank God who has held my hand!"

As he looked into the face of the woman so nearly his victim his superstitious fear was in no whit abated, although his sword returned to its scabbard. Since early childhood she had been a familiar figure in his dreams of evil fortune. Meeting her upon some lonely road when a boy he had oftentimes fled in terror to his mother's arms, shaken by the sight of her wild eyes and cruelly twisted features. What stroke of Satanic fate had blighted her youthful beauty and had turned her into a thing of dread was known to few and they, through fear, had held their peace. Her black eyes, filled with an unearthly fire, were holding him now. She brushed aside a damp, grey wisp of hair which had fallen across her brow.

"Aye, Kate-o'-the-Mill, young master. Nay, why should mun tremble like a leaf in the wind? Is it a woman's face would stay the swoord that should be batin' the bloody Spaniards off the seas?"

A quick spasm of pain whitened the man's lips.

"Woman—have a care! That taunt may no man fling and live to tell of it. On my own head be it to bide or go, as I will. Say—what is it to thee what Richard Anson does with the life that is his own, under God, to keep or to cast away?"

Richard could hear the throbbing of his own blood in the silence which followed. The soft lapping of the waves upon the beach sounded like the heavy surge of billows beating in time to his own heart. The harsh voice of Kate-o'-the-Mill was oddly feminine—had even something in it which stirred the man in him strangely, as she quavered:

"Aye. Iss? What is't to me, then? Down from the glens, thro' the mire, withouten sup or bite, wi' the dogs at my heels, I ha' come. Why? Wi' a message! No devil it was but the good Lord o' gloory sent her ladyship to old Kate wi' the word in mun's mouth."

Was it wild-fire caught from the eyes of the old soothsayer that glistened in Master Anson's own, as he gazed at her? His voice was low, awed by the mystery of the night, the woman and his own great love.

"Speak on—in God's name!"

"Covered wi' the gloory o' the sun, she was! A blessed angel comed to earth, and the light o' mun will guide old Kate's footsteps till she'm buried in the glen. Shinin' like the sun, she was! Iss. An' says she, 'Tell Master Richard that his love is not here. She bides in the far seas. If he be true and brave—if his love be great enough—he will find her in the Kingdom of the Sun.' Aye, master, an' mun kissed old Kate—old Kate, I'm tellin' ye—an' I minded naught else while I was paddlin' thro' mire, up hill and down dale, to find ye!"

"In the Kingdom of the Sun!..." Master Anson was rapt from the sense of the scene which the moon was lightening for his earthly eyes. On a gallant galleass, with a foaming wake behind her, he was careening over sunlit seas. Warm, spicy airs blew about him from off shores heavy with strange verdure and flowers of rainbow hue. Waves sparkled and danced away to the far horizon where the sun was setting. As he gazed into the fiery depths to westward, a wind from over the ocean's rim flowed about him, filling his being with unutterable desire. The nameless hire of a great adventure held him in its thrall. While breath was in him he would sail in unending quest of what called to him as something priceless beyond anything life had brought to his hand.

The man shook himself free from his dreaming. With gruff kindness, he pressed a purse into the hands of the old woman.

"Get thee warmed, mother. It's a chill night for thy old bones to be abroad. Nay, no thanks. There's enough therein to keep thee, if thou fend it, till God take thee in charge. There's a-plenty more where I'm bound."

The crone stood fumbling the coins in the sack which Richard had given her.

"May God keep ye, Master Richard! But—whither are ye bound, then?"

Anson placed one hand upon the shoulder of Kate-o'-the-Mill. With the other he pointed into the fog-bank screening the shipping in the Sound.

"By God's grace, where all good English hearts should be. I pray that it may not be too late."

CHAPTER II

THE SPANISH MAIN

Silence and mystery have a communicable spell not easily translated into words. All have felt the delicious, indefinable thrill preceding a storm. But it is not given to the ordinary man, in the humdrum of existence, to be shaken by the dread of the unknown or the ecstasy of great adventures. However, aboard a certain ship, on the night of Saturday, 4 April, in the year of our Lord 1578, there was cause a-plenty for the excitement incident to a new hazard. The *Pelican*, which some months previously had slipped quietly away from English shores, had become the *Golden Hind* of immortal

memory. Readers may pursue, in the quaint narrative of Hakluyt, the terrors and vicissitudes of Drake's perilous entry into the Spanish Main. They may project themselves in imagination into the limited minds of Elizabethan sailors, haunted by fear of sorcery and witchcraft, just emerging from the narrow boundaries of the world so recently enlarged by the discoveries of Columbus and Cabot. With these God-fearing and dauntless hearts they may experience the nameless horrors of the Terra Demonum, the tragedy of St. Julian's Bay, the terrible passage of the Straits of Magellan. They will then be ready to appreciate the marvellous heroism of the crew which was now sailing in seas as remote from their accustomed shores as the canals of Mars would be to a modern sailor.

Now, about a ten days' run from Aguatulco, the moonlight had discovered for them a Spanish galleon of goodly size, leisurely moving southward secure in the belief that it was safer than if resting beneath the shore batteries of Cadiz. Silently, with men concealed and decks cleared for action, the English adventurers were bearing down upon the unsuspecting vessel. In the wake of the *Hind* they were towing a frigate captured in Coronado Bay, to which they had temporarily transferred some of their cargo and heavy guns. An unwilling spectator of its country's ravishment, it was being dragged like a dog at the heels of its master.

In the black shadows of the mainmast of the *Hind* one man was standing in apparent disregard of the order for concealment. Master Anson, aloof as usual from the company of his fellow-officers, had, for reasons of his own, remained where he was after all preparations for action had been made. Wiser it would have been, indeed, to do as the others had done, for already he was a marked man among his mates. Wrapped always in his own thoughts, in the crew but not of it, by reason of his preoccupation with day-dreams, he had eventually shaken even the confidence of his beloved captain. In the confines of a ship, where personality is subjected to constant friction, likes and dislikes flourish as weeds in favourable soil. Unquestioning loyalty Richard had from several of the simple-minded men of Devon who were sailors before the mast, but, from the cadets and officers, nothing but suspicion and hatred had been his meed.

This was partially due to Master Anson's persistent refusal to share the communal life of the gentlemen adventurers. Obsessed by the idea that his personal share in the whole enterprise was something apart from the common, having to do with the fulfilment of the prophecy of Kate-o'-the-Mill, he had never shaken off the mood which possessed him on the night when the *Pelican* had sailed from Plymouth Sound. He remained at all times taciturn and silent within his own dark world of imagination, misunderstood and careless of the widening breach between himself and the others. Far-fetched as the suspicion might be, at the time when Drake had been forced to sacrifice Leicester's secretary at St. Julian's Bay there were many who held to the opinion that Richard Anson was involved in the intrigues of the Court and was secretly of Doughty's party.

State politics had sent Drake upon the voyage and the atmosphere aboard his ship was tense at times with hints of treachery. Little cause had the great captain to mistrust his old shipmate who would have died for him without question. But, since the execution of Master Doughty, he had been strangely testy in matters affecting his authority and more given to taking council with those who brought him tales. Close in his confidence reposed Vicary, "crafty lawyer of the Temple." Greedy, filled with cowardly lusts, this fellow had fallen foul of Master Anson on many occasions. Knowing well that Richard hated him and suspected him of double-dealing, he was the more willing to hide his own disloyalty to Drake by drawing suspicion towards another. Instinctively the materialist hated the dreamer. Vicary's small, legal mind was irritated by the complacent superiority and indifference of Anson, who was above boot-licking and care for his personal advancement.

Now to the man, whose imagination was turning the moonshine into the radiance of a sea where dreams are golden freight, came a faithful old salt from Bideford, minded to do him a favour. Richard started when he felt his arm plucked by the seaman.

"Get ye below, Master Richard. I'm tellin' 'ee, old John has eyes. Master Vicary is wi' the general. I see'd mun slidin' into the cabin. Best ye are there yourself."

There was no patronage in the tone of Anson's reply to the sailor. This quality had endeared him to the humbler members of the ship's company. He smiled as he said:

"Back to your place, man, before they have you by the heels. But, you are in the right. I will attend to Master Vicary."

Without hesitation or further words, Richard left his day-dreaming and went directly to the general's cabin. Needless it would be to burden the reader with a description of Drake's private quarters, furnished as chronicles tell us "with divers shows of all curious workmanship" in order to uphold the prestige and magnificence of his native England in foreign eyes. Standing at the opposite end of the cabin when Master Anson entered was the sturdy figure of the great sea-captain. As was his custom before an encounter, the general was dressed in his most elaborate finery, but the luxurious effeminacy of his costume in no way detracted from the virility and dauntless energy expressed by the square face, the thick, firm lips and the bullet-head broad-based upon shoulders uncommonly wide. Through the slashed sleeves of his crimson doublet shone the fine texture of a shirt of lawn embroidered in coloured silks, while a plumed velvet cap dangling gracefully from his shoulders was fastened by a brooch set with a brilliant emerald.

Beside him, in a neat-fitting but somewhat faded suit of black velvet, was the person of the oily Vicary. His loose, sensual lips hardly concealed by a straggling beard of straight black hair, the sallow and unhealthy skin puffed under shifting eyes of muddy brown, were true tokens of the man within.

Uncovering, Richard moved quickly forward until he stood directly before his enemy. Beside his tall, spare form and finely chiselled features, the attorney looked even more gross than usual. If truth were told, in contrast with the open countenance and blunt honesty of the square-jawed commander or the fineness of Anson, Master Vicary appeared like some fat, unwholesome spider. That he had been engaged in web-spinning was apparent, for Richard was cut by the brusqueness of Drake's greeting.

"How now, Master Anson, will you continue to strain our affection for your many good parts? Our orders were plain and easy to understand. Yet you linger upon deck in full sight of our enemies."

"I crave pardon, general. My mind may take me far afield at times but when you have need of my sword it is here."

As he spoke Richard caught a look in Vicary's eye which irritated him. He continued:

"I repeat, advisedly, my sword, general. There be some fellows more clever with a pen."

Vicary's lip curled contemptuously. There was a world of repressed hatred in his words.

"I do protest. This is a cheap argument, my general. Slitting throats may not be my trade but I am used to adjudging a case upon its merits and the evidence."

Richard had every reason to suspect that the lawyer had been carrying tales. Moreover, he was certain that Vicary was disloyal to the whole enterprise of the *Golden Hind*, but he had no proof of it. Foolishly he let his feelings master him. His hand went to his sword-hilt.

"By God, there is one throat I know were better slit for the good report of this voyage!"

Sir Francis stepped quickly between the two men. Simultaneously with his action there was heard the clattering report of a volley of small-shot and the sound of cheering upon the decks without. With blade half drawn, the general brushed past the belligerents.

"On deck! Leave this bickering! There is work to be done."

At the cabin door there occurred a temporary impasse. Vicary's bulk impeded his speedy passage of the entrance. Unceremoniously, as if he were so much useless lumber, Richard made to push past him. With a snarl the lawyer withdrew, allowing his enemy to precede him. His muttered curses pursued Master Anson as he emerged upon the main deck.

The captured frigate had been so manoeuvred as to bring her alongside the Spaniard's quarter. Already the English seamen were clambering over the rail of the doomed ship. Aboard the *Golden Hind*, every demi-cannon, cannon-perier and culverin was fully primed and manned. Drake, surrounded by his officers and gentlemen, was pacing the forward deck overlooking the scene upon the enemy's vessel, where passengers and crew, bare-headed and unarmed for the most part, were being hustled into groups while they were deprived of their side-arms. By the magnificence of his dress and

his distinguished bearing, it was easy to single out the commander of the Spanish galleon. In complete bewilderment he stood, making no show of resistance to the sailors who deprived him of his rapier and haled him towards the railing nearest to the *Hind*. In a few moments more, Francisco de Zarate was facing the renowned Drake upon an English deck.

It is an interesting commentary upon the chivalry of the Dons that in Zarate's report to his master, made at a later date, he was loud in his praises of the generous treatment accorded to him by his captor. Drake, having been assured upon the word of a gentleman that the prize carried no treasure, entertained the Spanish captain royally during the space of the next few days. It would be mean to insinuate that because the English hold was already stuffed with the spoils of the *Cacafuega* that "El Draque" was indifferent and disposed to courtesy rather than to pillage. Let us rather incline to the opinion that in Zarate he descried a man of honour and treated him as such.

But there were minds less worthy among Drake's company and, of these, Master Vicary suffered most from disappointment because no pilfering had ensued after the affair. He was even secretly disposed to cast sly aspersions upon the general's judgment whenever the matter was discussed among the crew. Trust the word of a lying Don? Not he! His experience with malefactors in the Temple had brought him wisdom. Besides, his religious zeal doubted not that all Papists were of the breed of Ananias. Thus, while Drake sat at meat with Don Zarate and discussed with him matters of common interest, Vicary went about with a lowering countenance minded, when opportunity offered, to show all concerned that it would pay well to search the ship of the Don from bowsprit to stern.

On the morning of Monday, Drake, in a fully-armed shallop, conveyed Don Zarate aboard the prize and made it over to him with all due ceremony. Besides returning to the passengers their personal effects, he distributed among them and the sailors handfuls of silver coins. Having done this, he entered into a gracious discourse with the Spanish commander preparatory to taking his leave of him. Alongside, the *Golden Hind*, gay with flags and streamers, made a gallant show while Drake and his adventurers, arrayed in their best finery, grouped themselves about the Don in leave-taking. Truly a chivalrous sight!

The scene was not less cheerful because the evil face of Master Vicary was missing from among the English company. He had come aboard the Spaniard with the others but, taking advantage of the bustle and confusion, had disappeared upon an errand of his own devising. Prowling, like a catamount, through the insides of the ship, he had indeed made a find. What it was shall now be discovered.

There had just occurred a slight flurry because Drake was determined to retain one of the prisoners as a pilot to his next watering-place. Then it was that a sudden, sharp cry drew the attention of all to the forward hatch. From it there was emerging the squat form of Master Vicary. His grimy hand, extended down into the hatchway, was grasping an arm so fair and dainty in outline that it seemed that he was engaged in drawing some white nereid into his foul clutches. To the abounding astonishment of all upon deck, there rose, following the lawyer, the most dazzling form of womanhood that had ever greeted their adventurous eyes.

For a moment she stood with her arm shielding her eyes from the glare of the sunshine upon the water. This instant sufficed to allow the assembled men to gather some faint picture of her magnificence. Her robes were of wine-coloured silk embroidered with arabesquerie of gold and silver. In a necklace and a large and curiously designed brooch which adorned her person, were displayed several jewels of remarkable size and brilliancy, but most marvellous to the sight of the company was the fact that her skin was fair, the masses of her abundant hair of a true golden colour, rich as the lustrous lining of a royal loving-cup. Her beauty did not need the adornment of artifice. Superior rank was stamped upon her every movement rather than in the emblems of it which she wore.

Silence greeted her appearance. Breathing was audible. Unwittingly the attorney drew men's hatred towards him when his coarse, thick voice broke the spell.

"My general and gentlemen all, we have here proof that there is no limit to the deviltry of Spain. 'No treasure have we but my poor plate and cup,' quoth your Don. Here, if I mistake not, are gems worth a king's ransom and the Queen of Eldorado herself."

All eyes shifted to the English commander. Like any yokel in a Devonshire lane, he was gaping in bewilderment as blank as that of the least of the bystanders. But for a moment only. His grey eyes flashed dangerously as he turned to Don

Francisco.

"How now, sirrah! Why have we had no word of this ... passenger?"

Zarate's face betrayed his confusion.

"She is not one of us, your excellency. As not touching the matter of treasure belonging to me, I saw not why she should be reported. By orders of our viceroy, the Princess Auria is being conveyed to Lima. This for divers reasons which it were a long tale to relate. Chiefly, your excellency, the lady is under restraint because of stirring up sundry rebellions and disorders among the Indians tending to the overthrow of our government. By the natives she is regarded as a mighty magician and sorceress. In the ordinary course, she would have come under the questioning of the Church by reason of her witcheries. That her death should not be upon our heads, the governor hath mercifully ordained that she be removed to another part of his Majesty's dominions. Who she is we know not, except that she was taken in the temples of the Indians. We have held her in Mexico, but under grievous fear of her evil powers, until such time as we could rid ourselves of her."

Zarate's hand, which had been playing with the knotted end of his sash, twitched nervously as he faced the anger of the incensed general. What explosion of wrath would have descended upon him is uncertain. The maiden's action forestalled Drake's speech. She wrenched her arm free from the grasp of Master Vicary. There was a storm of silken robes and a patter of flying feet. Before Master Anson she sank upon the deck, her white arms clasping him about the knees. The hot colour surged into his face as he felt himself to be the centre upon which all eyes were fixed. If the ship had parted in twain and the warm waves flowed in about him at that moment, Richard would have welcomed the relief from his embarrassment. Dimly he sensed the question in every mind about him. He saw the leer upon the face of Vicary, the amazement upon the faces of Drake and the Spanish captain. Helplessly he looked down upon the regal figure at his feet. He was powerless to unclasp the hands which clung to him, unable, too, to cope with the emotions storming through his being. He had thought himself dead to all feelings for womankind. Yet, in one blinding instant, he knew vividly that he was a man, unreasoning in his instinct to protect and possess.

As one in a dream, he was aware of the voice of the great commander inquiring courteously of the woman if it was her desire to be taken aboard the *Golden Hind*. To his amazement he heard her answer in perfect English, "If it so pleases you, my lord."

While the maiden was being lowered into the English shallop, scraps of the conversation on deck entered his mind which was dazed by the event. He could not think. He merely felt. Drake was speaking:

"She is white. Perhaps—the Almighty alone knows—she may be of our kin. Ye have heard this talk of the questioning of the Church, Mother of all iniquities! To this, by God's grace, she shall not be given over."

In the bustle and stir of leaving the Spanish ship, Master Anson was silent as usual. He noted that the general, after a short, sharp colloquy with Zarate, was the last to put foot in the boat. In the bow, with sundry chests containing her property, sat the Princess Auria.

Once aboard the *Hind*, there was more tumult and gossip. From poop and stern, dozens of eyes feasted themselves upon the beauty of the maiden, while tongues clattered and officers swore roundly when ordering the men to their places. But not until the princess had disappeared into a cabin allotted to her by Drake's orders did the work of setting sail go on apace.

At last, to a merry tune shouted by threescore lusty Devon throats, the canvas was made ready. A fair wind from the south-west filled the sails and, like a bird of paradise gay in her feathers of flags and bunting, the good ship floated smoothly over the tropic sea. Upon the poop, in gay raiment, the waits with violin, sackbut and trumpet played triumphal music while, in the general's quarters, the gentlemen adventurers gathered to drink confusion to the enemies of England.

The sun was dipping a golden rim into the ocean to larboard where the lure of the unknown called from uncharted seas. As twilight deepened, a curtain of dark clouds was hung over the sea-line which was itself plainly marked by a broad belt of deep orange colour. Against this red-gold background, the black hull of the released Spanish ship was

limned in silhouette. Above, the stars, in glittering clusters, began gradually to dim the yellow light of the lanterns swinging at the stern of the *Hind*.

Leaning over the railing of the poop deck, Richard Anson was absorbed in watching the phosphorescent gleam of the waves swirling in the wake of the vessel. The musicians near him were too intent upon their business of making melody to give heed to him. Nor did the voices of the merry-makers below, which floated up to him during the pauses in the music, serve to draw him out of his reverie. When a man is possessed of God or the devil, he is oblivious to the presence of others, and Master Anson was indeed sore pressed to know why the ice had suddenly melted from his heart and why the locks of his imprisoned mind had been as it were by magic loosed and broken. The stars in the velvety sky above him held no answer, nor the sea, nor the night wind trailing softly astern. Deep within himself he must search for the meaning of the strange thing which had befallen him.

Witchcraft it must have been, for he trembled at the recollection of a soft hand upon his knee and the soul of him was still mazed in a golden glory of hair which swept about his feet. Had the Spanish captain not mentioned sorcery and magic? Had there not been fear in the voice which told of her great power which had threatened the dominion of Spain? What, in God's name, was a white maiden doing among the dusky tribes of that land of demons and gold? Again, was not he, Richard Anson, given over to strange powers and principalities of air and water by a witch's prophecy? Not on this earth but in a Kingdom of the Sun must he seek for surcease of life that was meaningless and empty. Little these knew who were bound upon a voyage which opened up to the astonished eyes of the world a new age of freedom—little they knew, though they were the unwitting agents of the hand which writes history, of the personal quest that had kept him from joining heart and soul with them!

Back from the abyss of doubt and fear and mystery which seemed fathomless as the sea, he withdrew into a realisation of life as it was. The concrete mind of him struggled into command. Was it not a weakness—a matter of shame—that he, sworn defender of the faith, should be so easily captured by the wiles of the devil? Memory came to him of his mother, God-fearing and gently wise, who had pressed into his hands a New Testament to be a chart for him upon his first venture into unknown seas. Would that he had not left it behind him upon this voyage! It might serve him in good stead now. Leaving the stars, the sea and his dreams, he descended to the waist of the ship. There, upon the gangway, he met old John of Bideford. He halted the old man to whisper a charge into his ear:

"John, I liked not the looks which Master Vicary cast upon the maiden to-day. I am certain that he means no good to the poor lass whom God has placed under our protection. If ye would do me a favour, keep an eye on him."

CHAPTER III

A PAGAN PRINCESS

No treasure in the hold of the *Golden Hind*, neither plate, silk of Samarkand nor round doubloons dwelt so constantly in the dreams of Master Vicary as the white wonder of the girl whom he had haled to the Spaniard's deck. He had the soul of a voluptuary enchained by the mind of a Puritan and it was a combination which caused him uneasy moments. In general, it was responsible for his irritability, his lust of envy and his petty meannesses. His very physical unhealthiness of flesh and bone betrayed the nature of the inner man, where a seething cauldron of unappeased desires was lidded and confined by fear and ignorance. At the moment, he was in a vile temper with the world. With hands locked behind his back and heavy-jowled chin drawn back into his ruff, he was moodily pacing the forward deck. Master Anson would have been mightily interested in that which was passing through the lawyer's mind could he have descended to picking thoughts as one picks purses. For to Richard's undoing tended everything in Vicary's plans for the future.

Looking upon the princess as his prize (if prize she were by the code of war or piracy), he resented the fact that he had been foiled in every attempt which he had made to obtain a closer acquaintance with her in the days following her

capture. A series of incidents, trivial enough in themselves, had made him aware that she was inaccessible unless he could procure a warrant from the commander to see her. He could devise no pretext for seeking this permission. Meanwhile, he had been forced to realise that she was surrounded by a watchful surveillance of which he finally suspected Master Anson to be the cause.

Only that morning he had donned his best finery and, selecting a bottle of choice Madeira from his own store, had supplemented it with a pasty purchased from the ship's cook for a bit of silver. Laden with these offerings, Master Vicary made his way to the cabin of the Princess Auria. Six paces from her door, a sailor bending over a coil of rope had suddenly arisen, colliding violently with his person so that the pasty had been broken and the wine spilled over the front of his velvet doublet. Not stopping to offer apologies, the seaman disappeared through an open hatchway from whence, if Vicary's ears belied him not, there presently issued loud and immoderate peals of laughter.

This and more of the like had happened whenever he set foot in the vicinity of the heathen beauty. He suspected, as has been said, Master Anson because of certain words, indefinite but significant—certain liftings of the brows and fleeting smiles, grim and contemptuous, which he had noted whenever the princess had been mentioned by himself in company of the ship's officers.

Strange, indeed, are the workings of the mind fed by self-deception. Having decided upon further means to undermine Master Richard and to draw upon him the disapproval of his comrades and the captain, he next betook himself to imagining that he had a duty towards the girl. It was only fitting and right that she should be shown the error of her Papish leanings and of the heathenish superstitions surrounding her in her native country. Her soul must be saved—"a brand from the burning." By godly conversation she might be led to look kindly upon the Englishman who had guided her out of darkness into light and into ways of propriety becoming to a gentlewoman of breeding.

Having settled the matter in his own mind, Vicary sought out the ship's chaplain. Master Fletcher was a man to his own liking. The priest had been under suspicion for complicity in the intrigues against the commander but, sinuous as a serpent when grappled, had managed to avoid justice by retiring behind the cloak of his sanctity. He avoided the honest eyes of Drake and kept his person discreetly in the background. The Temple lawyer was his closest companion. Him the chaplain fed daily with the oil of flattery, easily persuading Vicary that his virtues were certain in time to bring him renown in the councils of the great.

Master Fletcher listened now with beseeming respect to his solicitude for the welfare of the princess.

"Mark you, Master Fletcher, it would ill become us who have the true faith if we were to reserve it for ourselves only. The Lord has delivered her into our hands in order that we may lead her into a knowledge of Him. Certain it is that whatever good Providence has implanted in her, the Papish perversions by which she has been surrounded will have done hurt to her soul. Here is a task to your hand. An I may, I shall accompany you while you exhort with her."

The chaplain waved a deprecatory hand.

"You do me too much honour, Master Vicary. My poor counsel could avail but little were it not for God's grace. The Scriptures will benefit by your skill in argument. Has she been baptised according to the Romish rites?"

"That I do not know. Some hint I have had from others that, in the morning hours, she engages in outlandish rites, taking the sun before we are astir, waving her arms to and fro while she chants in an unknown tongue. But she was with the Dons and must, perforce, have been soiled by their Papistry."

The priest picked up a surplice which lay over a chair at his side and adjusted it over his habit.

"It is greatly to your credit that you have thus taken thought for the lady. It is what I should have expected from your care in other things for what is of good report, Master Vicary."

Full well Fletcher knew the real reason for the lawyer's interest in the maiden. Here was material, if properly handled, which might advance his own interests considerably. He needed Vicary's crafty tongue to wipe from the mind of the commander sundry suspicions in regard to his own integrity. He continued:

"What is the nature, suppose you, of the idolatry which she practises? In these dark lands given over to Satan, it would be strange if witchcraft and sorcery were not espoused. Some danger there is in having her aboard our ship. I fear that the general took little account of this when he took her under his protection."

Vicary smiled warily.

"There are things known to us alone, Master Fletcher. If we win through to home and country again with whole skins or, indeed, alive, it will be by the better judgment of those who are not blinded by one man's mad ambition and who put England's true interests before all other things. She is a witch, I have no doubt. My sleep has of late been troubled by strange visions and, already, she has affected the crew, who accord her a worship not due to her position but to her awesome rites and to her face which is that of an angel of light. She hath an alluring manner. More reason, say I, to know that the devil lurks beneath her smile."

That Auria was the most beautiful Woman whom they had ever seen meant to Vicary and Fletcher that she was the most wicked.

"You are right, Master Vicary, you are right. We must protect our men against her charms. What disaster might not a mad infatuation work to the undoing of us all? I have heard it rumoured that Master Anson has fallen under her spell."

"It needed but this," growled the lawyer, "to complete his madness."

"Well, well, Master Vicary, we shall see—we shall see. No time must be lost. Shall we go now to her? Others will be at meat. There will be less likelihood of interruption."

Vicary disliked missing the pleasures of the table in the general's cabin, but he had too lately put forward his zeal for the things of the spirit to permit him to temporise. Inwardly he cursed the lean-visaged chaplain who ate abstemiously. His platitude was forced.

"There is no time like the present. An you will, sir."

Without, the sea was sparkling under brilliant sunshine. Gulls, like white fragments of a summer cloud, drifted about in the wake of the *Hind*, settling at times in her rigging or clamouring noisily as they fought for place on her rail. With all canvas spread, the vessel was making headway towards the unknown seas of the north.

Auria had left her cabin door ajar in order to permit the beauty of the day a readier entrance. When the lawyer and the chaplain appeared she rose from a couch upon which she had been reclining. A quick flush of annoyance heightened her colour when the men entered her apartment without more than a perfunctory bow. Uncertain of her own position and not knowing upon what business they might have been sent by the commander, she hesitated before saying:

"You come unannounced, sirs. Am I, then, a prisoner without right to courtesy?"

Vicary, in the lead, did not reply at once. His eye quickly surveyed the contents of the room. To the belongings of the princess which had been taken from the Spanish ship were added furnishings from Drake's own cabin, making it a chamber rich and beautiful enough for royalty. The couch upon which she had been resting revealed snowy linen between the vertical folds of red velvet curtains brodered with heavy cloth of gold, while near by a curiously inwrought chest of polished wood decorated with silver and mother-of-pearl formed, with its silken drapes and cushions, a comfortable divan. Over the carven back of a chair was thrown a gorgeous cloak of the famed Central American feather-work. The iridescent hues of a butterfly's wing glittered with no more brilliant sheen than the many and wonderfully patterned colours of this robe. It was of the sort which had been worn by the Mexican noblemen when they dazzled the eyes of Cortez in the court of Montezuma.

Auria herself, simply clad in a loose garment of light blue, seemed in every way a spirit of the tropic sea caged temporarily within walls. A dull warmth surged turbidly through Master Vicary's veins as his long glance devoured her beauty. He bowed again as gracefully as his heavy frame permitted. The gesture served to hold his composure which had been shaken by the cold dignity of the woman before him.

"Madam, your pardon. We come unannounced, it is true, but with all due respect. Master Fletcher, a worthy man who is known for his piety and discretion, is our chaplain. He will explain better than I the reason for our coming."

The princess looked from the uneasy Vicary to where, in his shadow, stood the gaunt form of Master Fletcher, eyes downcast and hands folded before him. Shiny beads of perspiration were gathering upon his forehead which was high and narrow, set between fringes of sparse grey hair. His thin lips were pursed disapprovingly. He disliked the move upon the lawyer's part which left him to introduce the subject in hand. From the folds of his surplice he produced a book.

"As Englishmen, whose blood you would seem to have in your veins, we cannot help feeling that there are many things pertaining to our education which you have not known. Through no fault of your own, madam! Bred in these perilous times, in parts remote from the land of your forefathers, growing up without the grace of the God of your people, we do not wonder that you took your religion from the lips nearest to you. But now, if permitted, we would hold discourse with you concerning the Scriptures and the miracle of our salvation."

It was a long speech with Auria's cool, grey eyes appraising him and he breathed as if glad to be through with it. He avoided meeting her glance but looked inquiringly at a lustrous jewel which sparkled on her bosom. The device of interlaced triangles wrought in dull gold, the serpent set with precious stones, seemed to savour of sorcery or cabbalistic talismans. A somewhat similar pendant he had once admired in a London shop. He remembered that the merchant had told him that it had been the property of a mysterious scholar to whom rumour ascribed a knowledge of alchemy and the black arts. From the contemplation of the brooch he was aroused by the quiet, level tones of the princess. Her voice was not unfriendly but, nevertheless, Master Fletcher felt that he had intruded. He was irritated by a sudden sense of inferiority. He felt most miserably small and uncomfortable.

"To whom do I owe this honour? To General Drake?"

"Nay, it seemed good to us—after holding some discourse regarding the matter. We are your kinsmen."

Auria smiled.

"And now it is true that I am thy near kinsman: howbeit, there is a kinsman nearer than I." In the depths of her eyes a ray of amusement sparkled as the priest gazed at her in astonishment.

"Methinks, madam, this hath a familiar sound. Yet I cannot recall the book and the line. Is it not from our holy Scriptures?"

"It is," replied the lady, "from your Scriptures. Since you have come to repair my lack, I felt that you would know the text. Am I to assume the role of pupil or instructress?"

Discomfited, Master Fletcher looked reproachfully at his companion.

"I was led to believe..."

"What was true, Master Fletcher," snapped the lawyer. "I have myself viewed the heathenish practices of which I told you. However, my lady may not be in the mood for your sermons at this moment. Leave her with me, I pray you. There are some matters which concern her that needs must be discussed."

"As you will, sir," answered the chaplain. "Madam, I crave your pardon if we have disturbed your rest. Yet, if it be your pleasure, I should like to go further into some discourse touching the customs of your country—but, at some more convenient hour."

"It may be arranged." Auria extended her hand to the chaplain. To his embarrassment, he felt constrained to lift the hand to his lips in courtier-like fashion. An indefinable glow flickered in the dull blue eyes of Master Fletcher as he backed out of the little cabin. The soul of the ascetic had been stirred by life.

During the conversation between the girl and the other man, Vicary's greedy gaze had roved back and forward between the wealth of the furniture and the womanly charms of the mysterious princess. He was moved, but more grossly

than Master Fletcher had been. He felt less of the awe which had silently flooded the starved soul of his colleague, but was, nevertheless, amazed and dazzled by the beauty which confronted him. Starched and stayed, beruffed and behooped, the fine ladies whom he had known had aroused his admiration but mildly as compared with the natural lure of the body untrammelled which now held him in its grip. He noted the slim grace of the arm resting upon the back of the chair, the delicacy of the mobile fingers toying with the feathers of the regal cloak thereon, but was more intent upon the flower-like poise of her head and the lines of her neck which flowed softly down into the curve of her bosom. Her clear eyes held him; played with him, drew and repelled him at will. Here was wine too strong for Master Vicary.

She might be a princess, priestess and sorceress, but she was a woman—a prize taken in war—and his, if he had been under a general less scrupulous than the Devon upstart! He stepped towards her. The girl spoke hastily:

"There are some matters of which you would speak?"

"Aye, madam." He reached forward in an attempt to lift her hand to his lips. Auria, with a startled expression, drew away from him. It was unfortunate for the lawyer that his emotion had deafened his ears so that he missed the sound of a quick footstep behind him.

In another instant he was gasping and choking in the merciless grip of hands that held his throat as in a vice. So sudden had been the attack, so overcome with terror and surprise was the man that he made no attempt at resistance other than to tear convulsively at the fingers which had shut off his breathing. Anson's face, white and pitiless, bent over him as he went down, collapsing limply in a heap upon the floor. When the hands relaxed their hold, Vicary lay motionless. Richard was only then aware of Auria, who was pleading with him, while she clung to his sleeve, to desist from killing. She still held to him as he rose to his feet.

"You will pardon me, madam. I have a score to pay with this fellow. Leave me, I pray you. He shall not be harmed until he has recovered. Nay," he stooped and laid hold of Vicary's shoulders, "it will be better done without. You will close your door when I have removed him."

The unconscious form of Vicary was dragged across her threshold. A needle's tip of flame at his throat and a weight upon his chest were the lawyer's first sensations when he opened his eyes. He was lying prone upon his back without the door of Auria's cabin while over him was standing Richard Anson, the sunshine flashing from the blade of his rapier. Vicary shuddered and closed his eyes again as he felt the increased pressure of the steel against his flesh. Anson spoke deliberately but with an intensity of pent-up passion which left no doubt as to his mood.

"I hate with all my heart to stain this sword with your swine's blood. But, look you, having crossed my path when I would have none of your spying and lying, you are not content. You must needs court death, trusting to your tongue to save your skin at need. It is death you should have." He paused. "Up, you cur, and to your quarters ere thinking changes my mind!"

Vicary felt the hot point no longer at his throat. A glance told him that there were no other eyes upon him but those of his enemy. Without attempting to draw his own weapon, he did as he was bidden.

Master Anson stood with bared head before the princess who had stepped out of her room to stand at his side. His hearing was rapt by the soft music of her voice.

"I fear that this will bring trouble upon you. But I am grateful, indeed, for your assistance. A moment ago I was ashamed of my colour. Now, I find that I am proud of my white blood."

A light breeze was whipping the pennons at the masthead of the *Golden Hind*. It tossed a tress of Auria's hair across the man's cheek. He started as if struck suddenly by a hand and, replacing his sword in its scabbard, stood stubbornly erect. Within him, his heart was beating wildly while his will sought for mastery. Witchcraft he feared as did all his countrymen and his strange awakening to the power of this woman when he had first felt the touch of her hand was fresh upon him still. Yet, if sorcery it was, it was sweet and enchanting. Never had the sunshine seemed of such dazzling brilliance. The very air which he breathed was like wine sending a delicious thrill of added strength through every atom of his body.

In this mood of buoyant exuberance it would be easy to face life as a gay adventure.

"I am overjoyed that I have been of service to you, madam."

He was bending over her hand now, marvelling, as he kissed it, at its petal-like softness. With hasty apologies for his abrupt departure, Master Anson strolled away tangled in dreams, the poet in him singing, weaving into his aery fancies the melody of murmuring waves and a voice of silvery tones, the radiance of sunlight with the gleam of a white arm and golden hair.

"Brainsick fool!" he told himself as he walked forward to the taffrail of the upper deck. With this part of his soliloquy old John of Bideford mentally agreed when Richard asked him if he knew of any proof that angels had wings, or if the Scriptures had not recorded that their raiment was sky-blue.

CHAPTER IV

IN DRAKE'S BAY

In the season of the year when the breath of thyme and primroses was blowing sweet through English lanes, the *Golden Hind* left the Spanish settlements. Undaunted by the unknown she pointed her prow towards the sunset. In her hold she carried a treasure meet to furnish a temple of a Moon-goddess or the palace of Haroun al-Raschid, and her crew, with full confidence in their brave captain's judgment, cared little whether they sailed by way of the Portuguese Indies or through the unexplored Straits of Anian, so that they reached English shores without mishap. Behind them they left panic and confusion in all the ports of Spain. In Guatemala, cathedral bells were melted into guns; messengers crossed each other in flying haste as they scoured the settlements for men and money; the defiles of the coast ranges were filled with soldiery hurrying to the seaports to defend the trembling inhabitants from "El Draque," the invincible corsair. But the higher officials together with the Mexican viceroy smiled grimly and took no part in the councils which demanded immediate action. Drake, they reasoned, would not again dare the passage of the Straits of Magellan and, not being a fool, he doubtless would make no attempt to find the North-west Passage which was still but a figment of the imagination. When food and water failed, he would be forced to seek provisions in a Spanish port. There, his ship battered by the seas and his crew reduced in courage by privation and danger, the hand of Spain at his throat would force him to disgorge his plunder.

Small hint had any Spaniard of the boundless ambition and far-sighted statesmanship guiding the movements of the man whom they deemed a lawless pirate. To found an English empire beyond the seas, to show the King of Spain that the western main was no longer his private preserve, to bid defiance to the Romish power which held a world in its thrall, were high adventures indeed, but, beyond these, Francis Drake meant that his keel should cleave a passage of discovery that would blazon his name forever with that of Magellan, Marco Polo and Columbus. So that after sailing westward some five hundred leagues, his course was shifted. Northward, leaving behind the soft sunshine of the tropics, the little ship sailed upon the fabled way which was the dream of mariners. But stronger even than the iron will of Drake were the elements which conspired, in an unprecedented manner, to defeat his purpose. In latitude 42 degrees or thereabouts, as recorded in the authorised narrative, they fell in with bitter and unbearable cold, bleak winds and icy seas. After the luxury of balmy, spice-laden breezes and relaxing warmth, it was indeed hard to keep the crew in heart when the rigging was ensheathed in ice and biting winds froze the hands that hauled the stiffened ropes. Southward they drifted through "most vile, thick and stinking fogs" along an inhospitable coast where snow-capped mountains and terraces covered with dark forests frowned upon any attempt to find a comfortable haven. It was then that the good ship sprang a leak.

In a little bay north of the now famous harbour of the Golden Gate, they were slowing to anchorage on an evening in June milder than they had experienced for many days. While the sun was setting, the *Hind* shone like a strange gem cast up by the sea. Her cordage, upon which the rain had frozen, sparkled with a thousand rainbow hues while the glamour of the light in the west wrapped her in splendour which effectually transformed her battered hull and dingy canvas. Even the

gloomy, forest-clad slopes which enclosed the harbour were brightened by the sunshine into a temporary warmth of welcome and cheer. The pointed tops of the spruce and pine were like golden islets in a sea of white mist which thinned as it flowed upward, finally merging into the solid white and gold of the snow upon the summit of the hills.

On board, the seamen were busily preparing to land the cargo and to make all ready for the establishment of a camp on shore. The captain, from his stand upon the poop deck, had been engaged for some time in directing the movements of the sailors. To him, while thus intent upon his affairs, came our Master Vicary, cap in hand, with the information that a bowl of warmed wine had just arrived from the galley and was now awaiting him in his cabin. Seeing that all was going forward in good fashion, the commander was nothing loath to leave the business to others. He laughingly laid his hand upon Vicary's shoulder.

"A little wine for the stomach's sake—eh, Master Vicary? Well, the cargo will be that much lighter if we drink her Majesty's health. And the night is chill, with more to do ahead of us."

The expression upon Vicary's face showed that his vanity was gratified by the intimacy which the general allowed him. Like all men who have lived too strenuously to leave time for the cultivation of the refinements of life, Drake had a craving for the fellowship of minds more polished than his own. Doughty had failed him. As a companion, Vicary was fast taking the place of the dead man. He was a good listener and the captain, burdened by visions and speculations upon a thousand matters of import, felt the need of the relief afforded by words.

"Aye, my general, one must needs take care of the body or the spirit will fail. There are some matters, too, touching the Princess Auria, which I should like to bring to your attention."

A frown wrinkled Drake's brow. The subject was evidently not a pleasant one. His voice was brusque and irritable.

"May it please God to rid me of this plague of a woman! Would that I had left her ashore with the Portuguese, Nuña de Silva. What now?"

"She is working mischief, I fear," went on Master Vicary, "with more than one gentleman, but with some in particular whom I could name. Yet, that is of less account than the fact that the seamen are now firm in the belief that the hardships and misadventures of these terrible days arise from her trafficking in the black arts. Being allowed the liberty of the ship she makes free to perform, at sunrise, certain heathenish rites and ceremonies, in plain sight of all. Her beauty may blind the senses of common men, as a lure of the devil to carnal minds, but cannot deceive the eye of our general which is single to bring us with good report back to English soil."

While the lawyer was speaking, the captain had listened with pursed lips and lowering brow, his hand playing absently with his sword-hilt. Before replying, he shouted an order to the ship's master who was directing the slinging of huge bales of merchandise from the hold to the main deck. Having given his command he turned shortly upon his companion.

"I have no doubt as to your care for our welfare, Master Vicary. I am too much occupied with matters pertaining to the ship's enterprise to know all that transpires beyond my sight. Yet, I would not have you judge too hastily. The maiden is white—and whence comes her perfect knowledge of our English tongue? Let us remember that there were and still are Englishmen in Darien since Master Oxenham and Hawkins sailed there. The Saviour, to whom be all power and glory, whose blood hath redeemed us, would require that we protect our own against the Inquisition of the bloody Papists. Nor is she to blame because she hath learned the arts and hath espoused the religion of the natives. To whom else, lacking the grace of a God-fearing mother, could she look for guidance? Has not Master Fletcher striven with her to bring her into the fold?"

Master Vicary raised his hands and lifted a pious eyebrow.

"Yes, but to what end? He has preached to her, reading to her the Holy Scriptures and has striven in prayer for her salvation. But a few days since he seemingly had her persuaded to partake of the Holy Sacrament which was prepared and taken to her cabin. Mark you now, she flew into a violent rage, scattering the Host upon the floor, and, indeed, Master Fletcher escaped hardily from the place without damage to himself. Incensed by the blasphemy, I hastened to

remonstrate with her when, to my amazement, I was confronted by Master Anson who, with drawn sword, barred the way to her cabin."

The lawyer lied easily by reason of long practice in the art. Drake cut short the conversation.

"A pretty tale to come so late to my ears. Below, Master Vicary! The wine is waiting."

In the general's cabin they found awaiting them the gentlemen adventurers gathered about a wassail cup of wine, spiced and warmed. But it was not the policy of Drake to allow his officers to feast while the mariners worked. After a round or two, all repaired to the deck to assist in the menial work of gathering together the ship's gear and cargo ready for transference to the beach. It would be necessary to clear the ship so that she might be overhauled. This meant time, and a permanent fort had to be built to protect the precious store.

While the blue shadows gathered in the ravines and the dusk of twilight gradually enveloped land and water, gentlemen and mariners bent to their task. The silent shores echoed to the unwonted sounds of the shouts of the toilers, the boatswain's whistles and the creaking of cordage. Presently, above the snow-capped hills the stars began to twinkle in the frosty air and, by their light and the ruddy gleam of the ship's lanthorns, a shallop plied back and forth landing implements and tents upon the site where they intended to make their encampment. Among those who toiled most strenuously Master Anson's tall, lithe figure was conspicuous. Stripped as a common sailor, he pushed, pulled and hauled with the lustiest of them, apparently intent only upon the work in hand. But while his hands toiled to one end his mind was busily engaged with the tangled skeins which Fate had woven about his pathway.

Through the perilous days since the *Hind* had sailed from Aguatulco, he had fought a desperate battle of wits against the villainous wiles of Master Vicary, whose hatred had increased the breach between Richard and his mates. In addition to these outward strivings, which were kept from breaking into open flame by the common dangers and the excitement of daily experiences that called for action, there had been waged, in the man's heart, a terrific conflict between his past and his present. His Protestantism, which at a later date would have placed him among the Ironsides of Cromwell, was assailed by a power which threatened its overthrow. A conventional marriage to a woman of his choice, a home and children, the perpetuation of the traditions of his family were dreams which had come to him and which had died. Now he was facing the disconcerting fact that, a few short months after he had buried his love, he was ravished by an infatuation for another woman. He knew now that the beauty of the Princess Auria held him a captive, bound by enchantment. The starlight upon the water which flowed past him as he pulled his oar reflected her face; when he glanced back at the black hull of the *Hind* looming against the shadows, he felt that from some hidden cranny her eyes were upon him; beneath the brusque tones about him he could hear the music of her voice, the liquid foreign accent with which she spoke the English tongue. White witch of the Cordilleras or a limb of Satan grown upon some red-fruited tropic tree she might be, but he no longer asked who she was nor from whence she came. He only knew that he loved her. Into this parlous state of mind and soul had Master Anson drifted while his captain was adventuring in unexplored seas.

When the possible limit of the day's work had been reached, a watch was set about the merchandise upon the shore and the weary crew retired to snatch some hours of sleep before the morrow. Slung in his hammock beneath the musty beams of the *Hind*, Richard should have slept if physical fatigue were a sure precursor of rest. But the dreams of the day merely merged like a sky-line into the seas of deeper fantasy. While Drake built empires over which the ensign of England waved in undisputed sway, Master Anson thrilled to some portentous fate which he felt to be a part of the night which, creeping from the hollows of the hills, had invested the little harbour in darkness. The lapping of the waves against the sides of the ship only a few feet from his ear, the rush of the night wind through the pine-clad valleys, the rustling of eerie voices in the cordage and rigging above him, all carried a message of Fate that was bearing him, as a great tide, onward to the gates of wonder and enchantment. For always now, before he lost waking consciousness, there came to him the same experience of being disembodied, winged and moving, impelled by some force over a golden sea that rippled and shone in ever-expanding splendour to where the sun dipped below the horizon. In his dream he was never alone. Invisible, beside him, felt as a Presence which guarded him from possible dangers, moved Auria whom his soul loved but his mind feared.

With the morning came renewed labours and more wonders which perplexed the simple English seamen. While they were pitching their tents, from the wooded defiles of the hills there appeared bands of the natives who approached the camp and stood watching the proceedings therein. The excitement of the Indians was evident. They were armed and in

full panoply of war-paint and feathers, but it was soon observed that they were overawed by the sight of the white men and disposed to worship rather than attack them. The piety of the crew was shocked by the demonstrations of the savages, so that the general used his art to dissuade them from their ceremonials. They thereupon retired a little distance and throughout the following night the air was filled with their howlings and wailings as they proceeded with their invocations and incantations. With the dawn of another day there was another interruption caused by the descent of a larger force of Indians. Master Fletcher, the chaplain, was requisitioned. The whole ship's company went to prayers while the minister, standing upon the mounded earthwork of the entrenchment, read many chapters from the Bible, after which psalms were sung for the edification of the benighted natives who, the chronicles relate, were greatly impressed thereby. Quietly the tribesmen came forward and restored the presents which the general had given them upon the previous day. Then, in silence, they retired to the edge of the forest and disappeared. Marvelling at the efficacy of prayer, the Englishmen resumed their labour and for a space of three days no Indians were seen upon the hills above the fortifications.

The morning of the third day was veiled in mist. Like disembodied spirits of the sea, the hosts of the fog had flowed into the bay and had advanced up the slopes of the sheltering hills until an impenetrable cloud filled every nook and crevice. The *Golden Hind*, lying imbedded in layers of white vapour, was completely isolated as if entombed in glacial drift. Men groped their way warily along the gangways while from the shores the sounds of the camp's awakening were perceived as ghostly echoes which were felt rather than heard. Gradually a faint yellow glow pervaded the grey walls of fog to landward, intimating that the sun had just topped the summits of the mountains. Motion was felt within the surrounding mists which swirled and billowed, rose and drifted in strata of varying density and colouring. From the body of the ship the curtain lifted, revealing upon the forward deck a picture which sorely agitated the minds of the good Protestant sailors. Their eyes had seen figures of gilded saints adorning the prows of Papish galleons. But such images they had not thought to see as furniture of their own vessel.

Facing the bright sunlight hardily struggling towards her through the eddying sea of fog stood the white enchantress, Auria. Her bare arms were extended in an attitude of adoration and welcome to the rising light and, in her uplifted face, there was the holy calm and ecstasy found only upon the countenance of one rapt in divine worship. Around her, as she stood motionless and absorbed in her act, soft tendrils of the mist clung and wreathed, revealing and concealing the lines of her beauty. With the increasing richness of the morning she glowed golden as a Galatea emerging full-flushed from the whiteness of imprisoning marble.

Shading his eyes against the light, Master Vicary, who stood at the farther end of the vessel, drank in the sight of her greedily. Lust of the eyes was his vicarious offering to the gods of the flesh. Probably the chilliness of the morning caused his voice to tremble as he said in the hearing of those who watched with him:

"Beauty—beauty of the devil! I have warned the general. I have warned all. Belike enough some fresh visitation of peril will follow upon this."

In the meantime the fog had risen from the water, revealing the shoreline and the lower edge of the forest which lay beyond the beach. As if in proof of Vicary's prediction, there was pouring from the dim woodland trails a motley array of painted savages who chanted a weird music to the accompaniment of swaying bodies and limbs. At their head moved the stately form of one who was apparently their chief or king. Before him there strode another hardly less noticeable figure clad in robes of fur and bearing a huge mace.

The general's voice rang like a trumpet over the heads thronging the ship's deck:

"To the boats all! Pikes and muskets! The woman must go with us—whether she will or no!"

A few moments of strain and confusion followed but, in a commendably short space of time, the company was landed and ensconced within the entrenchments. Upon the earthworks, the sailors and soldiers, armed with pikes, muskets, arquebuses and bows, made a warlike show of defence. In the centre of the little fort stood Drake and his gentlemen in full armour and, within their circle, was the Princess Auria. Still clad in the simple costume befitting her rites, she stood leaning upon the chests containing her wardrobe and belongings which, for greater safety, had been placed with other valuables within the fort.

Having advanced to within twenty paces of the outer works, the savages halted and one of their number, striding forward before the others, began a long oration which he accompanied by violent gestures. When he had ceased, apparently from exhaustion, the mace-bearer's voice was heard gently crooning an eerie melody that grew in volume and intensity as it was taken up by the tribesmen behind him. Stout English hearts quailed as the sound of the chanting, passionate, wistful, uncanny in its power to awaken awe of the mysterious, rose and fell and echoed through the forest. All of the Indians were moving now, weaving backward and forward in the mazes of a rhythmical, interpretative dance, while their mingled voices seemed to be calling down from the mist-filled ravines behind them the dim powers of earth and air. Singing still and dancing, they moved slowly closer to the breastworks of the fort. Under the strain, some of the mariners put musket to shoulder, but were restrained by the quick, low command of Drake to allow the Indians to do as they willed.

The mace-bearer or medicine man, who wound his fantastic steps in front of the procession, suddenly paused when he confronted Drake and signed to him to be seated. The general complied, motioning to his gentlemen to rank themselves in order about him. From the hands of two braves, immediately behind the chief, the medicine man then took an ornate headdress of coloured feathers and, after kneeling before the English commander, placed it upon his head. At the same instant the air was rent by a wild, triumphant yell from hundreds of savage throats.

The English were thrown into confusion by the sudden noise and the pressure of the Indians who surged tumultuously about and through their ranks. The squaws especially engaged the attention of the company by their frenzied shrieking and wailing and by the fact that, as they danced, they tore and lacerated their faces, breasts and arms until the blood ran streaming from the self-inflicted wounds. Horrified, the English strove to make them desist. The hellish din increased. To the ears of the seamen it seemed as if the fiends of the pit had been loosed and that they were unwilling partakers in a Satanic orgy which might carry them they knew not whither. Many of the Englishmen sought the shelter of their tents to escape from the mad vortex of unearthly sound in which they were swirled about like leaves on the wind. Then, as if some great hand had been raised whose power was unquestioned, there was silence. Over the earthworks the savages glided, noiselessly disappearing into the dark verdure clothing the hillside. Dumb with astonishment, the ship's company watched the last of the tribesmen fading into the shadows beneath the trees. They were roused by Master Vicary whose snarling cry, fraught with mingled terror and chagrin, rang through the camp:

"The witch Auria has gone with them! We are tricked by the devil!"

CHAPTER V

A PASSAGE-AT-ARMS

"Too much of our time hath already been taken by this woman. Touching the matter of her treasure, which you mention, it is hers. By no manner of reasoning could we lay claim to it even though it were greater than all we have stored in our hold."

General Drake unbuckled his sword-belt and laid the weapon upon a table at his side. He was standing in his cabin, clad in full armour, since he had but now returned from an expedition into the surrounding country. His clothing was somewhat soiled and the worse for wear as a result of his long marches through the mountain trails in search of the missing princess. He was irritable and none too pleased that Master Vicary, who stood before him, had again pressed for a renewal of the efforts to unearth the whereabouts of their mysterious passenger. The lawyer, however, failed to see that he was precipitating a storm.

"Ah, truly, if the letter of certain unwritten laws be maintained, we have but little right to anything more than the gear with which we sailed from Plymouth. A Spanish court would hardly confirm our title to the plate and gold which we hope to bring safely to port. One knows scarcely where the line may be drawn. In time of war, civil law is in abeyance. Yet, far be it from me to suggest..."

Vicary paused as Drake swung sharply upon him.

"Suggestions and counsel enough I have had, indeed. There is one law on this ship, sir, and that is my will under my orders from my sovereign. We have grandam's talk enough, too, about witchcraft, but no sensible explanation of how the woman was taken from under our eyes. That the cunning of these ragged savages should be greater than that of brains trained in the Temple speaks not well for English law. Here is a mystery or crime for your unravelling, Master Vicary."

Taken aback by the commander's brusqueness, the lawyer stammered incoherently. His ruff seemed too tight for the choler which he could barely suppress.

"There be wiles of Satan, my general, and ways past our understanding. I have spoken, at times, a word of warning regarding her sorceries which were playing havoc with our men. I feared, not for myself, but for our enterprise and the greater issue of the ship's success. There are others, however, who have had the lady's ear who might cast a light, an they would, upon her disappearance."

"How mean you? Whom would you mention?"

Drake's directness, the clear question in his eyes, permitted no evasion.

"Master Anson, I believe, would not relish too close inquiry into his dealings with the woman. I much dislike to throw suspicion upon any, but your own remembrance will assure you of my truth. He has never taken part with others in consultation for the welfare of the voyage. His manner of joining the ship was strange and caused suspicion in my mind at the time. Truly I cannot point to open acts of rebellion but always he has kept his own counsel and none have known what lay under his darkness."

"You think, then, that he was in league with the woman to disaffect our company?"

"I do not doubt it," replied Vicary. "Look you, I would have had her baptised. I have already told of the grievous happenings at the time. That he has frequented her cabin secretly is known to many. He encouraged her in the open performance of her heathenish rites, whereat our seamen trembled and were so dismayed that they believed the ship given over to the powers of evil against which it were useless to contend. But for her arts, aided and abetted by Master Anson, might we not, even now, be sailing through the Straits of Anian winning fame and immortal glory for ourselves and her Majesty?"

The general was tired and in an ill humour, having been without sleep during the previous two days. The small English force which had scoured the adjacent hills for sign of the Princess Auria had met with no success, although they had been entertained hospitably enough by the natives of the villages which they had visited. The Indians could not or would not understand the inquiries addressed to them. Some interesting data for the ship's chronicles had been gathered regarding the character of the country, the flora and fauna, the habits of the people, but the noisy demonstrations of the savages which lasted throughout the nights had made sleep impossible for the Englishmen. Drake's nerves were still tingling from the steady throbbing of drums and the din of the dusky tribesmen who had surrounded his lodge with offerings for their newly elected chief. In his present mood, he was for peremptory measures and short speeches.

"Bring me this man. I would speak with him."

Though not to his liking, Vicary performed his errand and presently the tall form of Master Anson stood in the doorway of the general's quarters. The tense lines about Richard's eyes and mouth, the pallor of his face, showed that he, too, had been under a strain. He had not accompanied the expedition when it went inland, but had preferred to hide his anxiety from his immediate companions. Little had been seen of him since the morning when Auria had disappeared. While to Drake her recovery was of little moment beyond the fact that he had a passing interest in her as being of English blood and a possible victim of the Inquisition, to Master Anson she had become the centre of his universe, the one who gave meaning and reason to his existence. From the depths of his despair and the numbness of apathy she had aroused him to life. He knew that he loved her—how, he questioned not nor to what extent. Now when she had thus suddenly been rapt from him, he felt that little mattered, least of all his personal well-being.

Something in Anson's eyes, which were cold and indifferent, nettled the commander. Without intending to do so,

Richard quite often ruffled the sensibilities of his acquaintances who imagined him to be arrogant and self-centred.

"Your cap, sirrah!"

Drake's voice was harsh and commanding. Anson flushed while he removed his Milanese bonnet and stood quietly before the general. His glance did not fall before the angry eyes of his leader who, for no reason which he could have stated, felt his indignation rising until he was assured of the fact that Anson was antagonistic to him. He continued:

"I shall not waste your time or my own, Master Anson. You know my way. You were in the confidence of this woman whom we know as the Princess Auria. Are we right in our surmise?"

There was a pause before Richard replied:

"I am not sure that I have your meaning, General Drake. She had honoured me, on occasions, by a certain friendliness. I doubt if she told me more than she would have told you or any other gentleman of our company had you cared to make her acquaintance." Then, as he caught the suspicion of a contemptuous smile upon Vicary's face, the man's hand involuntarily moved towards his sword-hilt.

"A truce with these doubts. My meaning is clear enough," thundered Drake. "The woman disappeared like a ghost through a wall. Was it witchery or arranged beforehand? Some messages there must have been between her and the savages. How much do you know of all this?"

"Nothing. She hath, indeed, a strange power..." Anson checked himself. After all, it would ill become a man to complain because flowers had fragrance or colour was agreeable to the eye. He had no direct proof of her magical power in the sense implied by his words. Drake was quick to seize upon his hesitation. "This may—it doth pertain to the matter in hand. We would hear more of this—strange power."

Anson looked directly into his captain's eyes. His voice was colourless, low and even.

"I have nothing further to say that would help your difficulty, my general."

Again his unfortunate gift of arousing antagonism in certain natures bore him into deep waters. Drake's quick glance towards Vicary plainly said, "You were right." He stepped forward and confronted Anson, with hand extended.

"Your sword, an you please! You are a prisoner!" He turned to the lawyer. "Summon a guard. He shall remain in irons until it pleases him to speak what is in his mind."

Richard stood, dazed, as if a deadly blow had been dealt him by an unseen hand. His first impulse was to protest passionately against the injustice of Drake's action and to avow his loyalty. Yet his admiration and affection for his captain were momentarily, at least, obliterated. He could not bend the knee while Vicary stood by to witness his humiliation. To his intense disappointment the general strode to the doorway with the lawyer. As he did so he said:

"You will remain here until the guard arrives."

Anson allowed his pride to prevent him from asking permission to speak privately with Sir Francis. In another moment he was alone. He sank down upon a chair and quietly waited. The men who came to take him were apologetic and, when he had been conducted to the ship's prison, were reluctant to place the irons upon him. He insisted that all should be properly done.

His narrow cell had not been occupied for a great length of time and, although small and bare, was clean. A bar of sunlight falling through the tiny iron-barred window relieved the gloom which accorded well with the mood which overwhelmed him. His respect for Drake had been an integral part of his being. The English commander had represented to him all that was heroic and had been an embodiment of the spirit that was making his island a world empire. He had loved his captain with the devotion which he gave to his queen and country but, deeply as he was attached to the commander and the enterprise of the *Golden Hind*, he was in the grip of something that was of more permanent import to him. Driven by the prophecy of Kate-o'-the-Mill to strange adventurings of the soul, he felt since meeting Auria that the

threads of his fate were being untangled by invisible hands and that, in some way not yet revealed, she had to do with the final scenes in his drama.

At first he had been bewildered by the infatuation which had mastered him, but he had eventually decided that she was necessary to him—that, without her, life would not be complete. Might she not be—it was a daring thought—"the Bride in the Sun" of whom old Kate had spoken? Within the mystery of her being, at least, he felt that there lay the key to his fate. Now, he was as much at a loss to understand the manner of her abduction by the Indians as any of the ship's company. Torn by grief, sensitive to the gaze of his comrades-at-arms, he had drawn suspicion upon himself by his peculiar behaviour since the hour when she had vanished into the forests. He doubted not that the attorney had been a contributory cause in the matter of his imprisonment. In this manner his thoughts mingled and jostled each other confusedly while the day wore on and the sun once more dipped into the ocean to westward.

With evening came his simple meal and the kindly face of a Devonshire sailor. There was no gainsaying Richard's place in the affections of the common seamen. It comforted him greatly to feel that he was not alone but, in reality, among friends and kinsmen. The bitter hurt caused by his general's attitude was thereby relieved. However, sleep visited him not at all during that night.

With the succeeding day began the wearisome monotony of hours when he was perforce his own companion, the routine of meals and sleep being unbroken. The crew were engaged in the task of repairing and refitting the *Hind* before she started once more upon her homeward journey. With all possible speed the work went forward. Fortunately, the Spaniards who were searching the harbours of the coast for the English corsair did not light upon their retreat. Nor were they interrupted by any more dramatic episodes staged by the natives. The Indians continued to be friendly, coming frequently to the fort to mingle with the sailors and watch them as they worked and to exchange their produce for the white man's wares which were a source of wonderment and pleasure to them. Of Auria nothing more was heard and no further efforts were made to find her. Drake, secretly, thought himself well rid of the woman.

At last the *Golden Hind* was seaworthy again. Her seams tight, sundry weakened timbers replaced by new wood taken from the forest, her sails and rigging mended and her body glittering with fresh paint, she looked as trim as when she had sailed from Plymouth Harbour. Camp was struck upon shore and her treasures replaced within her hold. The captain sat long into the night pondering over the charts which he had taken from the ship of Don Francisco. These had guided the Spaniard who crossed the Pacific to the East Indies. Beside him, as intimate companion of his thoughts and dreams, sat Master Vicary who, after the manner of the servile, knew when to preserve silence and when to anticipate action by thought.

The light from the candle which illumined the maps of the Spanish pilots served to throw into bold relief the face of the commander. The strain of the trying days of the past year had been somewhat abated by the rest which had been forced upon him by the ship's necessity but, for all that, Drake showed that he had suffered mentally. There were certain hard lines, a weariness in the droop of his firm lips, which dated from the hour when he had passed sentence of death upon Master Doughty in Julian's Bay. The grey eyes, too, were less given to mirthful glances since they had faced the terrors of the passage of the Horn and the welter of northern seas. He pushed back the charts and papers before him and stood, leaning somewhat heavily with both hands upon the table. Across from him Vicary rose and reached for his cap which lay close to him. After mentioning the lateness of the hour, the lawyer hesitated. Drake glanced at him inquiringly.

"Enough for one night, eh, Vicary? We should be ready to hoist anchor. The moon is full and we can go out with the tide."

The man toyed for a space with the plume of his velvet headgear.

"Might it not be well to increase the guard on our prisoner, my general?" he said.

Drake smiled.

"What, Master Vicary, is there fear of magic again? Iron parts not so easily. Tut, tut, man, if the white witch had wanted him she would have rapt him away bodily with her when she herself bade us farewell!"

"Belike enough," replied the lawyer. As an afterthought he returned the captain's smile. "I know not why the thought came to my mind."

"Nor I," replied his master. The sound of singing, as the seamen burst into a chantey while hauling upon the anchor, came to them through the half-opened door. "Up, sir, let us be on deck while our good ship gets under way!"

Vicary, following in the wake of his general, found his thoughts dwelling still upon Master Anson. He had been fearful of what might happen to himself were the man to be released. A vivid memory of a sword at his throat gave him uneasy moments waking and asleep. Fear had finally persuaded him that while Anson lived his own life was in danger and that he must, in some manner, contrive to prove a case of treason which would force Drake's hands and bring upon Anson the fate of the unfortunate Doughty. Now, on the eve of their departure, he had a presentiment of some unusual happening. Would Auria, whom he doubted not was alive and somewhere near, deliver over her protector and friend to adverse fates and calmly send him to his execution? The vague fears which flitted through the timorous soul of the lawyer might well have been results of a guilty conscience had it not been that there was a physical and tangible enough basis for his forebodings.

Master Anson, still in durance, had been kept well-advised of the progress of the work upon the vessel and in the encampment by his friends, the seamen who acted as his guards. Especially had old John of Bideford been his counsellor and confidant. A panic would have seized Vicary could he have known that at the very moment when he had allowed Drake to see his uneasiness Master Anson was stretching his limbs, freed from the irons which had held him. Shortly before the general appeared upon deck, the Devon sailor just mentioned had slipped into his place amongst those who hauled upon the winch astern and was now singing with the lustiest of them. As a matter of fact, his ancient voice seemed to have lost its treble and to have acquired a new timbre strangely youthful and exuberant.

Flags and pennons fluttered out from mast and yard-arm. As usual, the waits sat, in the moonlit space upon the poop deck, discoursing a merry music that was new to the dark, fir-clad hills surrounding the harbour. Upon promontories and headlands dotted here and there about the encircling shores red beacons shone, fed by the hands of the natives who knew that the white chief was bidding farewell to their world. All was excitement and bustle and imbued with the spirit of high adventure.

General Drake had ascended to the stern deck and stood surrounded by his officers. He turned to address a remark to Vicary, expecting to find him at his elbow when, to his astonishment, he found that the lawyer was not among those beside him. His eye glanced about the mingled throng and over the heads of the musicians.

"Will someone fetch Master Vicary?"

One of the younger officers immediately complied with the general's request. The conversation and merriment were continued by those who stood in attendance. Then, suddenly, the attention of all was arrested by a cry from the centre of the ship. Upon the gangway midway between decks, the Temple lawyer was standing with arms extended before him. At his feet lay his sword which had fallen with a clattering noise as it was swept out of his hand by a ringing blow dealt by the man who confronted him. Drake pushed those near him aside to obtain a clearer view. His eyes widened in amazement. Upon his lips was the muttered word, "Witchcraft!" For it was Master Anson, unkempt and haggard, whose sword, driven home in a deadly thrust, had behind it the pent-up passion of many days of agony. With a quivering moan which was that of an animal wounded to the death, Vicary pitched forward as his opponent withdrew his weapon.

Upon the decks all was confusion. Torches glared, the music ceased, as with drawn rapiers the company swept down into the waist of the vessel. But they were not in time to forestall Anson's next move. He sprang towards the rail and, grasping it, swung himself erect, standing poised for an instant before he plunged overboard into the dark waters of the bay. One silvery pathway of moonlight lay upon the waves, intensifying the blackness of the surrounding surface. For an instant, as he arose swimming, his arm and head gleamed in this moonlit space. An officer snatched a musket from the hands of a seaman. Drake's hand upon his shoulder restrained him.

"Nay, he can do no further hurt now. I would not have his blood upon our heads."

CHAPTER VI

THE KING'S JEWEL

King of New Albion, Francis Drake left the shores of America to awaken in the soul of insular England a new dream of a world-wide empire. If, Providence willing, any of his dauntless band of adventurers touched English soil again, there would be stirred a fire that would rage undiminished until the darkness of Rome should be vanquished utterly. In him there burned the Apocalyptic vision of ages yet unborn wherein freedom and peace would be assured under the sway of his sea-girt isle. As steel answers to the call of a hidden magnet, the great captain's followers were drawn by him into a unit which had one end and purpose, that his dream should be fulfilled. Stranger then must seem the individual fate which, pulling at variance to the great enterprise, had mastered and overwhelmed Richard Anson who was as true an Englishman as any. For, upon the *Golden Hind* as she disappeared westward into the trackless seas, his place was vacant.

The fervour of an August afternoon was drenching the wooded slopes of the Coast Range with warmth and sunshine. The blue waters of the Pacific glittered and danced under a landward breeze which marshalled the madcap waves and broke them in creamy foam upon the rugged shores. Upward from the beaches strewn with brown kelp and driftwood, the hills stretched their unbroken expanse of sombre green. Below the dense canopy of the red-woods, a tangled growth of bays, salal and mountain laurel clung to the bases of the great trees as decorative settings for the stately columns of their fluted trunks. Silence, cool and dim as in some old cathedral aisle, pervaded the recesses of the forest. A perpetual twilight reigned under the high arches hung with streamers of grey Spanish moss, and the quietude remained unbroken except by the chatter of a solitary squirrel, or the hollow tapping of the yellowhammers whose wings occasionally lit the gloom with a sudden flash.

In a clearing at the base of the cliffs which formed the topmost ridge of the hills overlooking Drake's Bay were clustered the rude huts of an Indian village. All of the houses, which were built with some show of arrangement into streets and alleys, were of a similar pattern. Pliant limbs of the native trees had been planted in a circle and then bent inward to form a bower or tent. The interstices in the framework of the walls were filled with moss, and the whole covered with deerhides and other skins as a protection against the sun and the elements.

An open space in the centre of the village surrounded a lodge larger than any of the others and constructed with considerably more skill and design. Welcome are you, Francis Drake, to all your gorgeous plunder of the seas which you are dragging through the sea-lanes to the Indies! Within this primitive bower in Eden the eyes of your gentleman adventurer, careless of your fate, are beholding a treasure more fair than any you carry or may win to in the course of all your voyaging!

In savage splendour, rugs of the cinnamon and black bear, together with weapons of the chase and war, adorned the chamber in which Master Anson stood before his heart's desire. He himself was garbed partially in doublet and half-hose of faded crimson. Indian buskins of deerhide, a beaded belt, a baldric and quiver ornamented in native fashion, and eagle's feathers set in his Milanese bonnet completed his motley costume.

Before him, upon the glossy, black bearskin covering a low couch, the Princess Auria reclined, a barbaric queen, glittering like some pearl of tropic seas cast upon bleak northern coasts. In her mysterious abduction from the English camp, her Indian captors, whether at her instance or otherwise, had contrived to carry away all of her jewels and clothing, and to these were now added sundry trinkets of coloured and carven bone which were evidently presents from her new subjects. But beneath the savagery of her adornments her beauty was of a delicacy and refinement more often seen in civilised courts than in these dark forest ways. She was finely moulded, ethereal as if born of some wood nymph's illicit joy—altogether a thing of air and white light—a dancing flame of life restrained by a sweet dignity for human uses and needs.

In the man's eyes as he looked at her there was a gleam which betokened repressed excitement. He moved rapidly

forward and, kneeling at her side, raised her hand to his lips.

"Auria..."

She was quick to catch the hint of something unsaid. Her eyes searched his face.

"Yes? Your voice tells me that there is news. Your hand trembles. There can be no danger that would daunt your heart in this wilderness. More kindly hearts surround us than in many places we have known. Is it not true?"

Richard answered hesitatingly, but with an intensity in his tones which bespoke his earnestness.

"I have no wish to disturb your mind, Auria. I will have my say and end it. A ship has been seen again approaching our harbour. You know the thoughts that have been keeping me awake of nights ever since the first sail was seen some days ago. It is not unlikely that the coasts are being scoured in search of our general, whom God preserve and keep from all harm. If by any chance we could get a ship, Auria, England might even welcome us before the *Golden Hind* reaches port."

The girl smiled, but she was evidently stirred by the restrained agitation of the man.

"Wild dreams, Master Richard! Should a ship, armed and filled with soldiery, perchance anchor in our bay, who is to capture it? Or, having taken it, who is to sail it without chart to your country? I understand. To you, the England of which you have told me is home. Would you were upon the good ship that brought you here, if by that means your happiness were assured...."

She was interrupted by Richard who attempted to take her hands within his own. She was shaken by the passion in his voice.

"No ... no ... Auria. You do not understand! I make no complaint. The die is cast and by my own hand. But, Auria ... you are English. Of this I am certain as of my own life. Your place is there among your own people and not here with these wild children of the wilderness."

Impatiently the man rose and paced the length of the room. Torn by his desire and the homesickness which, at times, well-nigh overwhelmed him, he allowed the words to rush unchecked from his lips.

"Wild dreams! They are that. And yet who shall hinder them? To the world's end I will follow the dark fate which hath promise of a golden dawn. That dawn, however, will never light these hills. This I know. Onward, onward, onward the power within me urges night and day. Passage I must take, if it be to England or to doom. This"—he waved his hand to indicate the confines of the room—"might hold me—that I realise—if you could return the love which I bear you."

He paused. The girl, who had risen from her couch, was now standing before him. In her face there was no reflection of the turbulent tides which were swaying the man. Her eyes were calm, shining with a clear light which fell upon his mood like a chilling dew. A certain majesty suddenly clothed her about and drew her away from him into some region in which he was a stranger. Her voice was no longer that of the playful child comrade. By a subtle stroke of magic he became a votary at the shrine of a wisdom that was beyond him—a purity and power which thrilled him with a sense of greatness to which he might aspire but dared not violate with his touch. Auria, the Priestess of the Sun, was not the woman of flesh and blood to whom, a few moments since, his impetuous words had been addressed.

Throbbing pulses were stilled as he listened to the level tones which checked and tamed the red passion in him.

"I, too, am drawn by a Power whose will is beyond my understanding. Whither it shall lead me I have little care. You love me? What is love? The birds in the forest pair and mate and are happy. The brave seizes a woman from another tribe. She bears his children, plants his corn, staggers under his burdens, withers and grows old while he wanders care-free upon the hills. Let us talk no more of love. Yet, if to-day you were on board a fair ship bound upon a venture that would bring renown to your arms and restore you to the favour of your queen, I should rejoice. If I have been the cause of your undoing, willingly would I make amends."

"Nay, Auria, for what I have done you are not to blame. But,"—the man's voice strove to pierce the veil of her sudden aloofness—"do you not feel that you are of blood apart from these savages who worship you because of the very difference?"

The girl's hand rested upon a great jewel which hung upon her bosom attached to a collar of linked gold medallions. A serpent of variegated hues, its tail in its mouth, surrounded laced triangles composed of brilliant sapphires.

"They worship me because I am a priestess of their faith, an initiate into the mysteries which are as old as the eternal hills which overshadow the ruined temples of Yucatan. You do not understand. Yet,"—Richard's heart leaped as he heard her voice soften and noted that her eyes were once more human, wistful, tender with a light which drew him close to her again—"yet, I am a woman and I have found you a good comrade and true. The weeks on board your ship among men whom my heart told me were my kinsmen taught me many things. But they were such children—your Englishmen—such children, playing with baubles. Meat and drink was an end for most of them. The God they worshipped was a grim tyrant in a heaven far removed from earth. These, whom you despise as savages, see God in every wayside flower, in the winds, and the waves and the sky. Even their dances are the sincere expression of the inner voice of the soul. Their orations, which to you are fantastical nonsense, are of such wonderful beauty and eloquence that your greatest writers might learn from them. These natives, whom you consider barbarians, are my kinsmen in spirit."

The princess placed her hand upon the jewel which was suspended from her necklace. She detached the pendant and held it towards the man who gazed at her wonderingly as she continued, "Love? No, I do not despise love as my words might lead you to believe. I know what place it holds in the dream which we call life. It is the one reality. Because I know its import I cannot be satisfied with its shadow. Look you, Master Richard! This jewel I had from an ancient priest in the temples of my native land. He said that it was mine by a right divine. Will you trust yourself to me? Lie there upon my couch and hold this trinket in your hand."

Richard hesitated. The request was strange and he had no inkling of what she intended. He stood stubbornly for a moment and then, perceiving that she stood smilingly with outstretched arm while she awaited his decision, he complied with her wishes. Holding the scintillating gems clasped within his hand, he stretched himself upon the bearskin rug upon which she had been reclining. Auria stood over him gently brushing his forehead with the tips of her fingers.

Richard relaxed and permitted the warm sense of drowsiness which flowed about him to overpower his curiosity. From the white hands which caressed his brow and eyelids he felt a delicious thrill like that from a faint perfume of wild flowers, but it was not only one sense but all of his waking consciousness which succumbed to the gentle spell of her touch. His breathing became more regular and gradually deepened. In a few moments more he was asleep.

When Anson opened his eyes he found himself standing by an open window. A red sun was setting above the dense verdure of a hill opposite to him and, from the configuration of the trees limned against the light of the sky, he knew that he was in the tropics. With General Drake, in the Cordilleras, he had seen just such a forest. From the scene which he could see through the arched embrasure of the window, he turned to view the interior of the place in which he stood. To his surprise he saw that he was within a chamber of imposing dimensions, the furnishings of which marked it as belonging to an age and a nation other than his own. Yet, the stone walls hung with tapestries cunningly wrought in weird designs of brown and red, the columns which supported the high ceiling and the vista of a courtyard which he glimpsed through a partially curtained doorway seemed to awaken vague memories which eluded him. He was puzzled and bewildered by the feeling that he had been there before, but analysis of his sensations was cut short when his eyes fell upon the other occupants of the room.

In a bed of carven ebony and marble, beneath a canopy of richly embroidered cloth, lay a man, gaunt and emaciated. His bronzed features bore the unmistakable stamp of power and authority. That it was a royal couch was no less evident than that the woman who knelt beside it was a queen. Her face was hidden from Anson, but the gems which adorned her person, glittering in her hair and in the girdle which held in the folds of her white robe, were such as only a great princess might rightfully wear.

It was evident that the monarch had just passed through a paroxysm of pain or over-exertion, for the long brown fingers which held tightly to the embroidered coverlet were clenched so that the knuckles shone white as the marble pillars of the bedstead. Above his closed eyelids great beads of perspiration were standing upon his forehead. The head

of the woman was partially buried in the soft folds of the bedding, but her shoulders, heaving at intervals, betrayed her sorrow and agitation.

Presently the king opened his eyes. His glance, dull and vacant, wandered slowly about the room until it fell upon the jewelled serpents in the bright tresses beside him. With a violent effort the man pulled himself into a sitting posture and leaned towards his consort. His voice, though husky and rasping, thrilled with the intensity and fire of his emotion.

"I tell thee, Quetla, the might of a king may not lightly be impugned. Even now the shadow of death is upon me and I know whereof I speak. The gods who watch over the fortunes of thy lover are weaklings compared with mine. Again, I tell thee he shall not have thee ... nor happiness here nor in the life to come. What hast thou done with the necklace which I gave thee on that day when thy foot first rested upon the steps of my throne?"

"Mighty one—my lord—it is here," replied the queen, raising her face from between her palms. Anson started. His hand grasped the folds of a curtain beside him as he leaned forward. The pale face confronting him above the form of the dying king was that of Auria! But, as in an evil dream, he felt himself bound, his limbs powerless, his tongue unable to utter the name that trembled upon his lips.

While she was speaking the woman had unclasped from her neck a chain of gold, curiously chased, from which was suspended a jewelled serpent, forming a circle which enclosed two interlaced triangles set with sapphires. Iridescent flame, imprisoned lightnings, flashed sword-like from its coruscating surface.

Viciously as a snake might strike, the lean hand of the king snatched the necklace from her fingers.

"Ha! The gods are with me. Know, false-hearted one, that thy fate and thy lover's are one and that fate is death—death! Little good will he have of the kingdom or of thee. This amulet is the Great Serpent of which thou hast heard it spoken that whoever shall possess it shall have his or her heart's desire."

The woman had sprung to her feet and now stood swaying as if drunken with wine or grief, her lips white and her face set and rigid. Her cry echoed throughout the great chamber.

"The Great Serpent! Pitiful gods, I beseech your aid!"

With a quick movement she seized the wrist of the king and attempted to wrest the jewel from his grasp. But even as she did so a dark figure stepped silently from behind the curtains at the head of the bed and pinioned her arms to her side. The crackling laughter of the king resounded in Richard's ears as she was half carried and half pushed towards the entrance to the chamber, where she was delivered into the grip of a slave whose copper-coloured skin glistened like metal in the sunset light. A red hand over her mouth smothered her cries as she was borne away from the death-bed.

The king's uncanny strength had vanished with the disappearance of Quetla. The tall form of the man who had overwhelmed the queen leaned over him to catch his intermittent whispering.

"Thou art high priest of our gods and thou knowest. Her lover will take the throne and her—as thou hast said. It is written in the stars, but—without the magic of this amulet—only evil can befall him and the gods will wreak vengeance for me...."

He ceased speaking and a shadow gathered and darkened upon his face. His breathing became inaudible. Out into the dark night of the region of shades, the spirit of the king was groping its way blindly as a child taking its first halting steps in a new world. If he heard the low voice of the priest in his ears he made no sign that could be interpreted.

"O king, rest thee well! Thy servant will bury the jewel beside thee in the tomb of thy fathers. And, if thou hast truly loved, again, it will be well. But if, in mockery of love, thou hast striven to hold what belongs to another, then will the gods restore the jewel to its rightful owner. On the high-roads of eternity the lovers will meet again. It is the law!"

The scene was instantly veiled by intense darkness. When Richard could see again he was looking up at the Princess Auria. Her arms were outstretched towards him.

"Never in this life must your lips speak of that which you have seen. The ages have passed. You love me? Prove your love. If the gods send us aid, take me back to the temples of my people."

When Master Anson left the lodge of the princess, he walked as a man still in the toils of dream. The overwhelming nature of the vision which he had seen possessed him utterly. There was nothing of which he had heard or read, nothing whatever in his world, which gave him a clue to the understanding of this thing. That he, Richard Anson, had lived before he had been born upon English soil was something which seemed to him ridiculous, a wild, fantastic vagary of his imagination. Yet, the great jewel which lay once more upon Auria's bosom was a tangible enough symbol of his experience. Again, the mystery surrounding his own present, fate-ridden life, the wonder of the unseen world personified by Auria, the dream from which he had but then awakened—all combined to render him susceptible to new impressions. Might it not be true that Love, being eternal, was so great a thing that it could not all be exhausted and its purposes fulfilled in one short life? Will a man's soul, submerged in the waters of illusion, not catch at any reed floating past him upon the stream of his imagination?

He wandered beyond the confines of the village and there silence and the green gloom of the forest ways brought him strength if not peace. Battling with the love in his heart, he followed a trail through the woods lying at the base of the cliffs which overlooked the sea. Night found him still torn by the conflict within him of the passion that would possess and the love which thought only of the welfare of the beloved.

Sinister cumuli of black clouds had gathered behind the rampart of the hills and, like great wings, had covered the harbour with a pall of inky darkness. Richard, heedless of time or place, had swung himself aloft from ledge to ledge until he stood upon the bare scarp of rock near the summit of the heights. Then it was that a jagged fork of lightning tore asunder the veil of the night which ringed him round. Below him, etched black against a sheet of silver, he saw the outlines of a ship at anchor in the bay. In that instant his battle was ended. Down through the soft rush of rain which followed he slid and scrambled, retracing his path through the forest.

Some hours later the Princess Auria was awakened by an unusual noise in the village. Calling the little Indian maid who slept in the room adjoining her own, she sent her out to summon Master Anson. Presently the girl returned to say that the camp was in a turmoil, but that Richard was not to be found. The squaws were uncertain as to what was on foot. The white chief had called the warriors. Silently, after the first low warning of the war-drum, they had all disappeared into the shadows of the forest.

CHAPTER VII

DELIVERANCE BY SWORD

Only vaguely divining the cause of the sudden summons which had thrown the village into confusion, Auria paced her chamber swept by a storm of conflicting emotions. The blind infatuation of the Englishman had blunted his perceptions or he would have known that the woman heart of the princess had been deeply touched by his devotion. Her sojourn on the *Golden Hind* had led her to dwell upon the fact of her English blood. When she had first gone aboard the ship, she already possessed a good knowledge of the tongue, learned, as Anson afterwards discovered, partially from her own father and from contact with English prisoners in the viceroy's capital. Its sound was familiar and sweet to her ears and moreover drew her strangely, thrilling her with suggestions of an unknown world. But her experience in the temples, where she had been initiated into the mysteries of the Maya cult, was still the dominating force in her life. Naturally, as a flower grows, her spirit had expanded in the light of the ancient teachings until she passed into an understanding of life's inner meaning, which cut her off forever from the stream of ordinary existence.

Yet all of her had thrilled to the human passion in Richard's voice, to the touch of his hand, the light in his eyes. Sibyl of strange gods, she knew that there was no such thing as chance in the affairs of men. Recognising her lover, known in other lives, at the moment when she first saw him upon the deck of the *Golden Hind*, she had, since that time,

been fighting with all her strength against the impulses of the natural woman within her. Now, she was asking herself what she, Auria, Priestess and Vestal Virgin of the Sun, had to do with human loves. Her kingdom lay in ethereal realms, in the passionless calm of the immortals. Why should she permit her womanly weakness to draw her into the maelstrom of human fate?

Darkness wrapped the forest and the waters below the encampment. Rain was still falling but the thunder had subsided into infrequent rumblings which echoed through the hills. The wood and ways were drenched and dripping, a soft, tangled mass of sodden leaves which obliterated all sounds except the purling of hidden streams which pushed their way through the moss and bracken. Somewhere, close to the shore, in the blackness, lay the galley which had been revealed to Master Anson. Now, through the forest, on feet as silent as the night, he was leading the warriors of the princess in the direction of the vessel.

Reaching the spot where lay their small fleet of war-canoes, these were quietly manned and from under the shelter of the drooping cypresses they shot out into the bay, paddling softly but swiftly to where a twinkling red light hung from the stern of the *San Rafael*. One of the many beagles now hot on the trail of Drake throughout the harbours of the Pacific coast, she was fully equipped, having a sufficiency of guns and ammunition to punish the English robbers with fire and death, if fortune so willed. As they neared the ship, the black hull against the less dense darkness about her discovered a vessel of considerable size. The long beaks of the canoes were nosing her side before any intimation of danger came to her crew. As a matter of fact, Anson's Indians had boarded the vessel before a lantern flashed and a hoarse voice shouted the alarm.

In less time than it takes us to record it, the English adventurer was in the thick of a scene that remained long fixed in his memory as a lurid dream—a nightmare of some struggle between demons in a phantasmal world. Torches glared upon the glittering helmets and corslets of the defenders, while Master Richard's dusky warriors were leaping and howling shadows which writhed wickedly among the affrighted Spanish soldiers, tearing them down as wolves tear down their helpless quarry. The wooded shore re-echoed with the cries of the wounded, the sickening thud of blows and curses and the ferocious yells of the Indians hot with lust of blood, until the little land-locked bay seemed some black corner of the Inferno shot through with the forked tongues of hate and red desire.

Master Anson had fought his way through the press until he found himself upon the highest point of the deck at the rear of the vessel. There, with back braced against the taffrail, he faced a ring of the Spanish soldiery. He was completely cut off from his men who were engaged in the confusion of the battle amidships. Two of his assailants went down before his sword. Two, remaining, engaged him. A third Spaniard held a torch to assist his comrades-at-arms. Splendid as was Richard's swordsmanship, it was, for the moment, taxed to the utmost point of its skill. Ward, parry and feint, his blade glinted with a rapidity that was dazzling in its brilliance. His opponents marvelled at the futility of their attempts to break through his guard. Superstitious fear began to possess them as they pressed in upon the tall, dark figure of the Englishman whose lips were smiling and calm, but whose eyes were tawny slits of light—those of a lion at bay. In Anson's mind there was only one thought—Auria! He fought as the troubadours of sunny France, his blood chanting a song to the immortal beauty that is as much of God as may be seen by mortal eyes.

Then happened a thing which well-nigh bereft him of further sight of her in this life. One of the men whom he had wounded to the death, in his throes, moved his arm just at the moment when Richard stepped aside to avoid a stroke that had almost penetrated within his guard. Stumbling over the outstretched limb, he collided with the Spaniard who held the torch and saved himself only by swinging the man quickly between himself and his assailants. As he did so his warriors swarmed up from the pit below. A short, sharp struggle, gasping cries from the Spaniards, was followed by the splash and gurgle where their bodies sank into the waters of the bay.

From the vantage-point of the high deck upon which he stood, Richard surveyed his prize. It was a vessel of less cumbersome shape than the great galleons of the Spanish navy or those flush-decked castles which carried the treasures of the New World. A square fore-castle bristling with cannon, a long waist wherein the slaves toiled at the oars, and the raised quarter-deck beneath him made altogether a much lighter and more rakish-looking craft than the regular ships of the line. However, the glare of the torches torn from the hands of the Spanish soldiers was not sufficient to permit him thoroughly to take stock of the equipment of the *San Rafael*. On the decks below, the mingled throng of dusky braves, Spaniards in steel corslets and helmets and half-naked slaves still swayed in desperate combat. The groans of the wounded and the curses of those who struggled in the grip of the savages prevented his voice from being clearly heard as

he shouted orders to his Indians to desist from further killing. To prevent more bloodshed it was necessary for him to descend to the waist of the ship and to push his way forward while he conveyed his command to all. With a surprising docility the tribesmen submitted to his wishes although, had their lust for blood been unchecked, they would most surely have persisted until all of the hapless crew had been slaughtered. Indiscriminately they had attacked the Spanish defenders and also the slaves who, bound four or five to an oar, were especially helpless. These unfortunates, however, had escaped from death to a greater extent than the soldiers and marines because of the fact that they could not actively engage in the conflict. However, had Master Anson not intervened, they would inevitably have perished like beasts in a shambles.

As he stood upon the central gangway where the slave-drivers walked when the ship was in action, the flare of a torch lighted the face of a slave who lay in his last agony, his limbs writhing still from the horror of the cruel death which had taken him where he was bound. With a cry Richard bent forward. The face of the dying man was white—the features unmistakably English.

Like a madman in his excitement, Anson forced his way through the warriors and their prisoners while he examined the huddled wretches chained to the great banks of oars. To his amazement and unbounded joy, English accents greeted his ears, English faces looked into his own. A round dozen in all, he found them, trusty men of his own Devon, who had sailed with Captain Hawkins and had been taken by the Spaniards. From the dungeons of the Inquisition in Mexico they had been haled to man the vessels sent out in pursuit of "El Draque," their masters glorying in the refined cruelty which made them instruments of vengeance against their own kinsmen. No better seamen had ever sailed the seas! Here Almighty Providence had delivered into his hands the material for further adventurings, or for a speedy return to England after the fulfilment of his promise to Auria. All of this, mingled with joy at the sight of English faces and with gratitude for being their deliverer, flashed through him as he laboured to release them from their irons and listened to the wild, incoherent talk of the wretched men saved from their living hell.

Seven only of the Spaniards remained alive as prisoners in the hands of Auria's warriors. While these were transferred to the canoes, Master Anson, together with his newly found comrades, knelt upon the deck to give thanks in prayer for deliverance. Then, while the flaming torches illumined their haggard features, unkempt hair and beards and intensified the light of devotion in their eyes, the strange company sang a psalm of thanksgiving. The dark shadows upon the hills about the bay trembled to the echoes of the unwonted sound. It was characteristic of the England of that day that religious exaltation should go hand in hand with a passionate faith in the greatness of their own blood. It was upon this foundation that the future empire was builded in the hearts of a people.

Auria, in her chamber, was engaged in the silent struggle in which woman and priestess contended for supremacy. An unearthly din attracted her attention outwards. The shrieks of women were mingled with the roll of drums and blood-curdling war-cries from a hundred savage throats. Lifting the tent-flaps of matting at the entrance to her bower, the princess saw the leaping red tongues of a great beacon illuminating the clearing. About it the women of the tribe circled in a dance of triumph. But what drew and held her attention was the disorderly throng of painted braves which was issuing from the trail leading up from the shores of the harbour. In their midst marched a number of prisoners clad in armour and helmets with waving plumes. Before them, a tall figure swaying unsteadily as he moved, strode Master Anson. His face was streaked with blood while in his hand he carried his unsheathed rapier. In another moment he was kneeling before her.

"Master Richard ... what is it? ... these men ... Spaniards!"

With his sword the man pointed towards the sea. "There lies your ship, my lady!"

"My ship, say you?" Auria's tones were hushed. She spoke uncertainly as one might when confronted by a miracle. "How can this be? Only a few hours since I prayed for the impossible to happen. Now, you return saying that it is accomplished. What strange magic do you work?"

"I have no such arts as yours, Auria. I have nothing but my sword and a stubborn will. Almighty God has all my thanks for sending this ship to our hands. With His aid, and the help of your warriors, I have taken it. It brings deliverance not only for you, but for some brave English hearts in misery these many years."

Eagerly he told her the joyful tidings in regard to his countrymen. Meanwhile the men were standing some little distance away among the Indians. When they were summoned to come forward, all gazed in bewilderment at the princess. Her beauty and not less her English tongue conspired to hold them dumb with amazement.

Auria stood for a space curiously considering the tattered clothing and grimy faces of the galley-slaves. Anson was quick to note the hint of anxiety, almost of fear, that crept into her voice when she spoke to them. He was startled by her question.

"Is there any among you who served with Captain Oxenham?"

"We are all Captain Hawkins's men, my lady," replied one of the Englishmen. "We were left by no fault of his, God rest him, among the bloody Papists. Because we believed not in bones, rags, saints and the Virgin, we have suffered for the true faith which we hold in our Lord and Saviour."

"Where were you imprisoned?"

"In the city of Mexico, madam."

Auria turned to Master Richard. "Let them be taken to a place where they may wash and rest. A lodge can be given them for their own use. My people will clothe and feed them. Now, let us go in. I would learn your plans. So suddenly these things have happened, I am at a loss to know whether I dream or wake."

Once inside her bower, Anson faced the princess. "What do you know of Captain Oxenham?" he said.

His tone was imperative, implying a right. This he instantly regretted. Auria spoke coldly in a way that put him without the barrier of her reserve. As princess and sibyl of the mysteries she was somewhere above him in a world beyond whose borders his rights ceased to exist.

"That he was hanged. I forbid you to talk about my past. It is my concern alone."

"But, Auria, with this ship and by God's grace we can go to England and restore these poor men to their homes."

She was still cold and impersonal.

"You may do what you will with what is yours. I will stay here or, if you care to fulfil your promise, I will go with you to Mexico."

Anson was quivering under the lash of her indifference.

"Auria, do you know that my love for you drove me to face death this night to bring your desire to your hand? I had gone into the woods, desperate with my longing for you, when there came a flash of lightning. Heaven revealed to me this galley anchored in our bay. I took it as a sign of deliverance for us both. But it was of you, not of myself, that I thought as my arm kept the Spanish swords from my throat. Auria, is there no drop of human blood in you? I tell you, woman, that I love you more than I thought to love anything again on this earth!"

"And if I were wholly woman, I could love you for what you are and for what you have done, and ... for a deeper reason which I cannot fully disclose to you. Are there not plenty of women in that far land of England any of whom can fill your life? You do not understand, my good soldier! Once, not so long since, a Don, in the viceroy's court, slew single-handed two ruffians who had attacked me in the streets. He loved me and offered me honourable marriage and, with it, security against the Inquisition. Can I forget the pain in that young face—I see it now reflected in yours—the light that went out of his eyes when I left him to return to the temples of my gods? Nay, it is no easy thing for me to hurt a living creature. Is it because I love all that I cannot love one only? I do not know. For a greater service I have renounced the safe and lovely ways of home and husband and children. If you were only closer to me—if life meant the same thing to both you and me—I do not know..."

Without the lodge, the triumphal chant of the women, who rejoiced with their warriors, echoed through the forest.

Anson restrained his impulse to plead ardently for himself. He said slowly, "And if, to prove my love, I take you back to the temples of your people?"

"I cannot say. I only know that the love which gives is higher than that which takes and holds."

She was standing now by a little rustic table at the head of her couch. The light from a brazier near by illumined the lines of her girlish, drooping figure. She had relaxed from her priestly poise. With her golden hair and clear, grey eyes she was a flower as fair as any in English lanes, apparently soft and yielding as a wild blossom. Anson felt the hot blood surge within him. With eyes blinded for the moment he seized her arm and drew her roughly to him. The blindness was for an instant only.

If he had been paralysed by an unseen power he would not have been more helpless before her. Within the woman stood the priestess, cold, immovable as adamant, an invincible will towards the denial of life. The man had not reached the stature necessary to meet and conquer this force which would slay human love while it made a virtue of pain. Her words fell upon him like a knotted lash.

"Not that way lies love. I will remain here."

"Auria, forgive me! I shall not forget again. Help me to be worthy! Trust me and you shall go back to your people!"

There was only sorrow in her voice and a maternal tenderness as she bent over him while he knelt, penitent, at her feet.

"Yes, I will trust you, Master Richard!"

CHAPTER VIII

STORM AND STRESS

Hakluyt and the chroniclers of the Elizabethan age have recorded quaintly and in sufficient detail the valorous achievements of English seamanship and the deeds of the merchant adventurers. But unrecorded forever, in manuscript or book, must remain the victories won by a man in the recesses of his own soul. Richard Anson, in the hour when he saw gleaming below him the masts and rigging of the Spanish ship in the shelter of Drake's Bay, had taken a step forward in the greater adventure which is of more moment than the rise and fall of kingdoms.

The elements, however, conspired to delay his purpose. The galley-slaves, the tried and trusty English seamen whom he had released from their captivity, were his chief reliance in the enterprise which he now planned. Whether at arms or at labour, they were each and every one of them worth ten men picked at random in a seaport. Grateful to their deliverer, they were ready to follow him in whatsoever undertaking he had in mind, knowing that eventually they would see England again and bring with them a tale of great deeds worthily accomplished. With them and two Portuguese slaves whom he had found at the oars, Master Anson manned his prize. Those of the Spaniards who remained alive he placed in irons, thinking that they might be exchanged as prisoners of war at some future day.

With a fair breeze he would soon have compassed the distance from the North American harbour to Aguatulco. But, to his intense disappointment, upon the first day out the wind failed and his little cockle-shell craft lay becalmed upon a sea as smooth as a polished mirror. The oars were called into use, but Richard had no mind to keep his English sailors chained to the terrible labour from which they had so lately been rescued. Above them the sky burned pitilessly blue and devoid of cloud. To larboard, the low line of cliffs lay silhouetted against the hard, metallic lustre of the air while, to westward, stretched the limitless expanse of the slumbering ocean. Only the gulls, that had followed the ship, broke the silence when, circling lazily above the vessel, they alighted upon the yards and rigging as upon some bit of driftwood aimlessly falling and rising with the tide.

When not engaged in scanning the horizon for sign of cloud or wind or directing the work of the crew, Master Anson was in constant attendance upon the princess. In the best cabin which the *San Rafael* afforded, he had arranged such furniture from her Indian lodge as was needful for her comfort. She had made him happy by laying aside for a time the role of priestess and by becoming a comrade more to his liking. Half-child and half-woman he often thought her in these hours, yet there was in her unblushing frankness and in the clear candour of her eyes something which strangely puzzled while it attracted him. She moved serene and unruffled by the stronger winds of emotion, in a sort of isolated region to which, at times, he seemed intimately near, but which faded as he approached into a remoteness which gave him a keen sense of loneliness. She was his companion, but was also comrade of all that lived and breathed, delighting in every little incident of the life about her, but yet viewing all things with a wisdom and detachment which was as a chilling wind to quench the ardour which burned in him.

Entering her cabin now, he found her sympathetic when he spoke of the calm which held them in its power. She was playing with a little bird of delicately beautiful plumage which was about the size of an English robin. This pet she had brought with her from the ship of Don Francisco and, in all her adventures since that eventful day when she had been transferred to the *Golden Hind*, she had retained the little creature. Anson had often wondered at her attachment to it and had marked, with much curiosity, the fact that it had no need of a cage but was so tame that it could be allowed complete liberty. It was climbing, now, up the sleeve of her gown, clinging to the fabric with its parrot-like talons. Reaching her shoulder it nestled against her cheek. As she spoke she glanced down lovingly at the bird.

"Master Richard, the wind will come. Be patient. Have I ever told you the story of my pretty Inca bird?"

"Nay, Auria, but why talk of a bird when our precious time is passing and we are lying like driftwood on this perverse sea?"

Auria smiled. Her fingers caressed her tiny pet which pressed close to her for shelter and protection.

"Why not talk of the bird? It may take your mind away from your anxieties which will all be righted presently. Besides, it may help you to understand many things which are darkness to you now. I cannot always make it clear to you why I, who am English, should so love the life of the natives who nurtured me. Listen, Master Anson! This little bird was brought to me from Lima by a Spanish gentleman. It is said that once only in the year do they appear in the streets of that city. For a day they remain and then, as mysteriously as they came, do they vanish and are seen no more for a twelvemonth. The Indians call them the Inca birds and say that in them are incarnated the victims of Spain. They are so tame that anyone may pick them up in the open market-place, and are all marked with this strange red patch as of blood upon the feathers of their breasts. No Spaniard dare harm them. Indeed, I have been told that they fear the birds so that they remain within doors while the flocks invade their streets."

What had a bird to do with the present issue when any hour might bring sight of a Spanish galleon which would crush their dreams like a frail bit of sea-shell? He gazed at her in bewilderment. The shadow of the mystery which eluded him was strong upon her. He felt that she belonged almost irrevocably to the region of the Terra Demonum, that dim borderland of the unknown which frightened the Protestant in him. But this other thing which called to the soul of the man who longed to touch the fringe of the garment of wonder and beauty and power ... what was it? He was silent, looking at her with darkly brooding eyes as she continued:

"Is it nothing to you, then, this little flame of life in its soft robe of feathers? Is life not more than that which is its shadow?"

Richard frowned.

"Riddles ... always riddles, Auria! Yet I would that you might lead me by the hand into your land of dreams!"

Again a smile, like a sudden gleam of sunshine, illumined her face. The man thrilled as she glided to his side and, with a child-like gesture, slipped her hand into his. A tendril of her hair touched his cheek like a bit of flying fire.

"Come, let us go upon deck, Master Richard! The sun is low. In a few moments more it will open like a glorious flower out there on the edge of the world."

Like a boy, he suffered himself to be led out of doors. They stood upon the castellated deck of their little ship, leaning over the taffrail. A dark stain upon the surface of the wood near to her hand caught Auria's attention. Other dark blotches of a similar hue were upon the deck at her feet. With an exclamation of horror, she drew close to her companion.

"It is blood ... blood! Harmless lives sacrificed that I might have my desire ... and, look, Master Richard ... the waves ... they are all blood ... and that black hand to the south whither we are bound! Look ... ah, look!"

Startled by her sudden perturbation, the man glanced at her before directing his gaze elsewhere. The girl's eyes were wide as of one just awakened from sleep, her features rigid and pale. Her hand sought his arm and clung to it. Anson looked across the expanse of water before them to the horizon, which was barely discernible where the blue of the sea merged with the cloudless sky. To the West the sun, glowing like the surface of a molten mass of metal, was sinking into waves as scintillant as its own gleaming rondure. Its level rays tipped the myriad waves with a dazzling sheen. For the glassy surface of the sea was broken now and was rippling like scaled armour under a sudden breeze from the south-west. The rigging of the *San Rafael* stirred uneasily and, responding to the undulation of the waters, rose and fell rhythmically as if unexpectedly awakened from its dreaming.

However, that which caught and held Richard's attention was the cloud that had appealed to Auria's imagination as a hand of warning. As the sun disappeared its blackness was intensified. No longer a hand projected, but the rising rim of darkness itself, it extended along the whole horizon behind them, dimming the brightness of the waters, its shade gradually submerging the lingering sunset's rays. The rising wind caught the sails which flapped and filled while the helmsman held the vessel head on to the swell that was racing in from the gathering night. From the north ahead of them, from east and west, the twilight shadows rose to meet and merge with the pall of inky gloom rising from the south. Together they watched until, at last, they were apparently enveloped in a world bereft of aught but hazard and sinister omen. The man strove to conceal his trepidation as he turned to the girl at his side.

"Auria, I like not this sudden change. It was even thus when we were driven north on the *Hind*. I must reef all sail instantly. A great gale is in this breeze. At any moment it may strike. Will you go below, my lady?"

"I will wait for you here, an I may, Master Richard," replied the princess. She disengaged her arm from his. A slight blush suffused the paleness of her face. She realised how closely she had been clinging to his side.

Leaving her by the rail on the stern deck, Richard hastened to summon all of his little crew to the task of taking in canvas in preparation for what might happen. He was none too soon. Before the last gasket had been fastened home, the ship was labouring in the trough of a sea which threatened to engulf her. The sudden fury of the wind seized upon the one sail which remained unfurled and the foretopmast snapped as if a Titan hand had done the damage. While his men struggled valiantly to clear away the tangled wreckage, Richard fought his way through flying spray and rain which whipped his face like pellets of steel. Upon the rear deck he could discern Auria clinging to the place where he had left her. He gave thanks that the first onslaught of the storm had not been sufficiently strong to sweep her away. Yet it was no place for her. He blamed himself mightily for not having compelled her to seek safety in her cabin.

When he reached her she made no show of resistance as he drew her close to him. Her light garments were drenched by the rain, her hair a tangled, dripping mass. She clung to him as a child might have done while he made the difficult passage from the deck to her quarters. Before leaving her, he stood for a moment above her. His blood was warm from the close contact with her. He could still feel her in his arms.

"Auria, if your gods are strong, pray to them. I have none."

She was lying on a couch where he had placed her. He lifted her limp hand to his lips as he knelt beside her and continued:

"None except you whom I love more than my life."

With breath indrawn he listened for her answer. Her face was hidden from him, but her voice, calm, without a trace of the fear which had so lately made of her a clinging child, braced him like strong wine. It also rebuilt the barrier

between the priestess and the man.

"Have no fear, Master Richard. The law is just. I have acted like a helpless child and for that I crave your pardon. I was not afraid ... just weak and a woman. You must go now. You are needed."

Aye, he was needed! Kate-o'-the-Mill might have seen a golden kingdom bathed in the sunshine of her vision of Master Anson's future, but assuredly none of it gilded the terror and darkness with which he fought during the succeeding hours and days. The courage that is the heritage of gentle blood, the iron will given by a Puritan discipline, were strained to the uttermost while Richard strove to preserve his frail vessel from the raging powers of sea and air. During the greater part of the time he manned the helm himself, keeping his little craft plumb as might be in the gulfs and on the racing crests of the sea. Light came not with sunrise but a grey fog above and blinding curtains of wind-blown spray and rain which wrapped the ship in their folds. Like a storm-tossed leaf, the galley drifted on eddies of wave and wind towards an unknown goal. Cowed by the struggle, his crew at times whimpered like frightened beasts, begging him to tell them in what direction they were being borne. To one of them, shaken by the certainty of doom which he imagined that he saw upon his captain's face, Anson replied through clenched teeth:

"You ask me whither we are bound? To hell or through Anian ... it matters not!"

With a despairing glance at the white face of his commander who was heading the ship into the darkness, the man slid forward, clinging to the rail, his hands numb with the terror that possessed him.

Lacking Auria, Master Anson had grave doubts as to whether he could have survived the unparalleled strain of those days and nights. When he was relieved from his watch, she always had ready the warm food and drink needed to restore his strength and the inspiration afforded by the sight of her carried him through the succeeding hours. He marvelled at her smiling confidence in life, her assurance that what she persisted in calling the Law would bring good out of evil, safety out of danger.

CHAPTER IX

MORE MYSTERIES

On the evening of the fourth or fifth day (so merged were day and night that time was not reckoned) Master Anson had placed a seaman at the helm before retiring to Auria's cabin for a brief interval of rest. The wind had somewhat abated, although a dangerous sea was still running. He felt that the man could be trusted provided no change occurred which might call for unusual skill. Ahead, there was a waste of leaden-coloured waves veiled by drifting clouds but, to westward, stars were glittering through rifts in the flying wrack. There was also a perceptible warmth in the breeze that whipped through the wet rigging of the *San Rafael*. Richard's heart was greatly lightened by reason of it all.

He came to the cabin with a brave smile upon his lips. On the threshold he paused abruptly. In the dim light he saw Auria kneeling as if engaged in prayer. As he slipped softly forward he noticed that before her upon the low, carven chair against which she leant there stood a crystal bowl filled with water. Into this the girl was silently gazing with a fixed intensity. Her back had been turned but now his footsteps aroused her. She stood swiftly erect, kept her face averted for a moment, then looked towards him. Richard was startled by her pallor and the wide, unseeing eyes which held no response to his own.

"Auria, I was about to crave pardon for having interrupted you. But this which you are doing can be no good thing. Without, the sky is light. Why these ways of darkness which have power but to injure you who tempt them?"

Languidly, as if to recover her normal mood, she stood plucking at the edges of the robe which was drawn loosely over her bosom. Her voice was thin and lifeless but gathered fullness as she spoke.

"My light is darkness to you. When all one loves is in danger, why not use knowledge to save? The future we should all wish to know were it permitted."

Master Anson felt a sudden glow of warmth at heart. "All one loves"—she had said that. His ears had heard it. Yet, as he looked at her with a dawning hope in his eyes, he felt his ardour flicker and die. Half-child, strangely undeveloped, and half-sprite she seemed as she stood before him, her slight form swaying like a reed in the wind. There was little there to stir the adventurous blood in a man, yet—he had memories—memories of a flame against his breast which had left flesh tingling and a song at the heart of him. It had not been the earth-tang of English lanes. That he had known and understood in a dim way. What was it that drew him to this slim maid of air and fire—this woman who held while she repelled him? He watched her curiously as she curled herself up like a kitten upon her couch. She held out her hand to her Inca bird perched upon the chest at her side. The sibyl was all child now, her eyes sparkling mischievously, a soft pink flush replacing the whiteness of her cheeks. She smiled at Anson.

"The storms are over. To-morrow there will be glorious sunshine. Come, sir, do smile—just a little! You must be tired. Please, do lie upon my couch, boots and all. Yes, look! I will sit here upon the chest. My bird would have me play with him."

She prattled like a school-girl and, a few minutes since, she had been Auria, the priestess of dark mysteries beyond his comprehension! After much protesting Anson complied with her mood. Propped up on her cushions, he felt relief from the physical strain of the days and nights when he had held the *San Rafael* against the power of the elements. Now, a certain incompleteness, an indefinable impatience, kept tugging at his nerves. He rose upon his elbow to look at her.

"Auria, will you never tell me all that I would know—the mystery about you—the strange things that are a wall between us—your past?"

"And which question, sirrah, would you have me to answer first of all?"

There was a touch of coquetry in her tone. Then, as she looked into the serious blue eyes so near her own, her glance fell. When she met his gaze again she was the woman he knew to his undoing, remote—in a world beyond his imagining.

"There is truly a part of me which is hard for you to understand ... unless you will come out of your world into mine." She noted the bewildered look which he bestowed upon her. "Love—ah, yes—you have spoken to me of love! Do you know that love is cruel—a two-edged sword that slays and saves? Do you know that sacrifice is the very essence of love? I have a certain power beyond that of others, but I cannot use it except in the service of my fellow-creatures. I am bondswoman to a law which is greater than myself."

"Has it always been thus, Auria? Was there never a time when you were altogether as other women?"

Quietly, a little sadly, she continued, "You would know of my past. Something you may know of it, if it will please you, although there is little enough to be told. Have you ever had a dream—a wonderful dream which you wished might never end? Then, have you wakened to find that it had gone beyond recall, only fragments of light remaining to make you ache through the hours when you tried to rebuild it all again?"

The recollection of a certain dream was strong upon Master Anson—an obsession which haunted him by day and night. Somewhat grimly, he admitted that he had experienced visions of the sort to which she referred.

"Well, my early childhood was like that," continued the princess. "I can remember my mother's face, her soft brown breast, and another face—white, like yours—that came, now and then, and looked at me. He had a sword-belt like that—she touched Anson's leathern baldric—"and a cap with plumes in it like this"—again she pointed to his Milanese bonnet, gay but bedraggled by moisture—"but this face—my father's—came not often and when he went away my mother cried and rocked me softly, hour after hour, under the green vines before our door. Then the white face came no more and my mother grew frail and thin, a beautiful brown shadow that stole silently in my wake as I became a romping child in love with the sunshine and the many-coloured birds and butterflies. I knew little of the sorrow that was in my mother's heart, being but a baby, but, as I grew older, I understood. Often, as the moon rose over the great trees of the forest about

our village, I sat with her gazing silently down a winding trail that disappeared into the depths of the jungle—watching and waiting. It became a sort of ritual to be performed every evening when all was quiet and before we retired to sleep.

"Then a day came when we prepared for a long journey. Taking me by the hand, my mother led me through the forests until we reached a higher country, where there were fewer trees and where we could see the tops of a snow-capped mountain range lying against the hot, blue sky. I became very tired—we drank often from the goat-skin bag of water which my mother carried slung across her shoulders—but, at last, we came to the mouth of a rude cave in the wall of a ravine. There an aged man, his hair white as snow, but his eyes bright and young as those of my playmates in the village, met us and took me by the hand. He looked long and deeply into my eyes, then, turning to my mother, he told her many wonderful things. I was to be taken to the ancient temple of our people to become a neophyte—a daughter of the gods. I would be a blessing, he said, to our poor, down-trodden race and a terror to their oppressors. I cannot tell you all that he said."

"Did you go to the temple?" interrupted Richard.

"Yes, but again, I cannot tell you of my life there. You would not believe me. Our religion is very old and its mysteries have been handed down from the foundation of the world."

Anson frowned. "There is but one true faith. All else is of the powers of darkness," he said.

"We will not dispute about that," Auria replied gently. "I may tell you that I became an initiate into these mysteries and some strange power was given me over my people. They came to me in their sorrow and went away healed and full of courage to go forward. They learned that although the Spaniard might torture their bodies, he could not destroy their souls. They learned, too, that evil can best be met by kindness and not by force. It was a hard lesson. The Spaniards, lured by the hope of plunder, had ransacked every temple within march of the city of Mexico. Ours alone, of all near the capital, remained untouched, and this my people attributed to my presence. They were mistaken. It was I who first attracted the spoiler towards their sanctuary."

Auria paused as Master Anson exclaimed, "You did this? Nay, it cannot be that you betrayed your trust? It were hard to believe that."

The girl smiled. "I am not perfect. I might even have done that. It so happened, however, that the harm was unwittingly brought about. I was," she blushed and turned from him so that he could not see her eyes, "said to be very beautiful and the Spaniards—the young adventurers who repair their fortunes in our lands—doubtless long for the fair company which they left in the Court of Spain." She covered her face with her hands. "I cannot bear, even now, to dwell on those days. Our temple was sacked and our villages burned. The innocent blood of our people stained the altars where I had taught them only of love, while I, powerless to help them in their need, was carried away a captive to the viceroy's capital."

Anson leaned forward. His hand, on the silken coverlet, trembled. Auria's fingers were interlaced tightly now, her face still averted.

"Love," she said in a tone so low that he could hardly hear the words, "love—what do we know of love? Yet they were courteous after the manner of their nobility. I have seen faces go white with desire. Is it a crime to be beautiful? Oh, if they had only known how little I had to give! I am not as other women. I do not want children. Yet, I love all children. Wife I cannot be and I cannot play with love. I have often wondered if I can love—you have my meaning?—in a human way!"

"Were you long at the viceroy's Court?" Richard said abruptly.

"It was not long," she faltered. "The tribes rose in arms. My people would not be stilled until I had been returned to them. They did not seem to fear death and the Spaniards were sore harassed until the viceroy decided that I must be removed from the country. You came upon me when, by his orders, I was being taken to Lima."

As she sat there torn by the memory of the tragedy of her people, her grief was borne in to Anson as a tide which moved him mightily towards her. Such a child to have been the centre of conflicting storms of war and passion! He

would willingly have folded her in his arms, for there was that in her which called to the protective masculine instinct in him. He leaned closer to her and ventured to place his hand upon her shoulder.

"Auria, do you regret that you fell in with our general and all that has followed? Can you forget the past? Where we are at present, Heaven only can tell, but our ship has held. It will bear us in good time to some shore, I doubt not. Will you still insist that you be returned to the dark lands where all these evils were yours, or will you not trust to an honest English heart that would shelter you from all dangers? Our course has been, for the main part, northward. There remains Anian and a short passage to the land of your fathers if, God willing, we can find the way."

Auria rose from the chest where she had been sitting. "I do not know—I am not of the sea—why your heart burns to find this new passage to your English home. You have spoken often of it. It was on your lips as you steered our ship through the horrors of the last few days. I remember, in your dreaming as you slept in my lodge in the forest exhausted after your hunting, that Anian would murmur through the broken words about Devon and Plymouth and Drake and the *Golden Hind*. Would it make you happy to find this passage-by-sea?"

Anson seized the hand nearest to him and drew her towards him. His heart was beating madly.

"Happy? Aye, Auria, I am a man and would fain be happy. It is in your power to speak the word that would make me that as nothing else could."

Gently but firmly the girl withdrew her hand and stood a little distance away from him. Again he felt the invisible barrier, icy and impenetrable, that held him from her. In the dim candle-light she looked ethereal, not akin to his world of flesh and blood. In the brooch upon her bosom the eyes of the serpent glittered frostily. An unexpected interruption caught the attention of both man and woman. The little Inca bird which Auria had placed upon the chest when she arose from it had screamed shrilly. With all its feathers ruffled, its eyes beady points of glowing fire, it was advancing slowly towards Anson. As it walked it clung unsteadily to the cloth covering of the box. Hastily Auria stooped and gathered it into her hands, smoothing its plumage and murmuring softly to it. She looked apologetically at Master Richard.

"It is a strange bird. During the storm it sat cowering in its cage, refusing to come out and hop about the room as it does usually. Then, just before you came, it demanded to be released, and seemed aware that the danger was past. I feel that it is a link with my own land. You remember that the natives believe that the spirit of the Incas is in it. You must not heed its moods, Master Anson. It feels only for what concerns the mysteries of the unseen world."

"It is these mysteries, madam, which stand between you and me." Anson rose from the couch and reached for his cap. "I must leave you now. The ship demands my care." With his lips firmly set, he bowed and left her.

When he had gone the princess sat long upon the edge of her couch while she caressed the Inca bird. The soul of her was wavering. Emotions whose existence she had ignored, or which had been rigidly repressed, swept over her, were thrilling through her being as winds upon the sensitive strings of a harp. The stern control of the mystery schools of the Mayas, their asceticism and denial of human affection, had combined to render her immune to all feeling except compassion for life in general. Pity is not love, nor was it pity which moved her when she thought of Richard Anson. He was a man capable of moulding fate with his will to ends of his own. Courage and strength he possessed in no ordinary degree. With head bent low, she leaned over her little pet, stroking its soft feathers.

"We cannot love him as he needs to be loved, can we, little one? He needs something we cannot give him—something warmer and more of his kind—something that would draw him close to earth and hold him there to do his work and carve out his life as a gift to his people and to his country. We would starve him or take him away. Then, in the long nights when he slept, he would go back and leave us alone and our hearts would break in the darkness."

So intent was Auria upon her thoughts that she did not hear the suppressed sound of heavy breathing without her door. The wind was still shrill in the rigging of the ship and it was not until a sudden moment of silence that she overheard the strange noise. It was low, barely audible, and yet it filled her with inexpressible terror. It was as if some great beast lay with nose pressed to the space below her cabin door. Chilled, she drew her light garments closely about her and sat intently watching and listening. A few moments, interminably long, intervened before she heard the sound again, and then, distinctly she was aware of the movement of a heavy body and the scraping as of a boot upon the deck.

Her cabin door began to open inwards. Slowly, while she sat numb and powerless to cry aloud, the space grew wider and the keen night air rushed in with a sudden gust that extinguished the candles upon her dressing-table.

In the aperture of her partially opened door there appeared the outlines of a man's form. A glance told her that it was one of the Spaniards whom Anson had placed in irons pending their return to Mexico. Ships' prisons are at best but vile sties in which human flesh turns bestial, and this creature's face, his matted and unkempt hair, showed plainly the marks of his confinement. Auria shrank in horror as if from the breath of the pit.

With the swift movement of a wild animal the man sprang upon her. After some instants of agony, she found herself bound and gagged, lying prostrate upon her couch, while, along the deck without, she could hear her assailant creeping stealthily in search of further prey. Evidently he was alone and would most probably continue his prowling until he obtained weapons or tools with which to free his companions. At least, this was the surmise in Auria's mind as she lay gasping for recovery from the short, sharp struggle. With all her force of will she sought to calm her nerves and to think clearly, quickly and to good purpose.

Presently all was still. The gentle creaking of the cabin door which was swinging open, the occasional sound of sail or rope flapping in the wind, were all that broke the silence.

Auria knew that it was highly probable that Anson had not returned to his duty at the wheel. With calmer weather in prospect he would likely seize the opportunity to take a much-needed rest. Bound as she was, there was no possibility of warning him of his impending danger, yet, at any cost, her own life if need be, that message had to be conveyed. Physically it seemed that nothing could be done. She exerted her slight strength until it seemed that veins would break if further effort were expended. The desperate dispatch of the Spaniard had made secure work with the silken sheets which stifled her voice and held fast her hands and feet.

Then, as she lay exhausted, there came to her the memory of the wisdom of her people. The old seer of whom she had but lately told Master Richard had assured her that it was possible to work out of and independent of the body in case of need. He himself had possessed the power. Clothed in matter more subtle than the thinnest of air, in a body formed in every particular like that of its physical counterpart, he could travel at will to help those in need or to minister to the weary and sorrow-laden. She had never been allowed to leave her body even under the care of the priests, but now her will was exerted to produce the effect for herself. For a few minutes she lay perfectly still, mind and soul concentrated—centred on the one desire. A deathly silence pervaded the darkness in the little cabin. Then the Inca bird uttered a shrill cry.

When Auria awoke she felt the cool night wind upon her cheeks and, looking up, she saw the stars between the dark spars of the *San Rafael*. Master Anson bent above her, chafing her hands within his own. Presently lanterns flashed and, about her, lying upon the deck, there thronged the grim but honest faces of the English seamen. Anson leaned nearer and gazed fearfully into her face.

"Mystery, always mystery, Auria! I find you bound and helpless, yet, a short space ago, you stood by my bedside and awakened me. Praise be to the Giver of all good, it was a timely awakening. We owe you our lives, my princess."

The girl closed her eyes and with an effort drew herself closer until she lay in his arms. She murmured, if his ears belied him not:

"Master Richard, I will go with you through Anian."

CHAPTER X

THE STRAITS OF ANIAN

Following the storm that had driven the *San Rafael* northward, there succeeded a period of halcyon weather. Hakluyt records that Drake experienced vile fogs and arctic temperatures in these regions, but modern chroniclers more often speak of the prevailing warmth of the North-west coast due to the benign influence of the Japan current. Into sparkling seas swept by balmy breezes redolent of Oriental perfume and colour, the tiny craft entered joyously. Cloudless skies, blue as those which domed the classic Ægean, chaste dawns clad in white and gold, and evenings which merged into glittering starlit nights, combined to erase memories of terror and threatening doom. As flowers expand in the sunlight, the hearts of master and crew grew light and filled with the joy of living. No fear of the future, no uncertainty as to the final event could cast a shadow while all revelled in the happiness of the moment.

Auria spent little time in her cabin now. Like a tropical plant, sunshine and air were her natural foods. Anson had marked the fact that she ate only minute quantities of the simplest fare which the ship afforded. Playfully and, at times, half-anxiously he had reprimanded her for not taking more solid nutriment, reminding her that a body was necessary in order to give expression to a soul. She had promised to eat more, but the pledge had always been forgotten. Now, she was standing upon the fore-castle deck, a group of seamen about her, watching the antics of her Inca bird which was playfully attacking each of the men in turn. Under a white veil of gossamer flung about her head and shoulders, the tide of her golden hair was shining like imprisoned sunlight, while every gesture, naturally graceful, revealed the charm of her beautifully moulded body. Anson's heart, as he moved forward to join her admiring audience, sang with pride in the knowledge that she had chosen him as her captain in the adventure ahead. England was very far away, and time would be ample to woo her from the memories of her mysterious youth. He was glad to see her fraternising with her own kindred, the sturdy salts of Kent and Devon. It was all as he would have wished it to be.

When Richard appeared within the circle of smiling faces, the girl paused in her play and gathered her pet into her hands.

"He is a naughty little bird. He likes to tease. Look! He has well-nigh torn the buckles from Oxley's shoes. But he knows no shame!"

Subduing their hilarity, the crew doffed their headgear to Master Anson and then, without waiting for orders, drifted from the deck, betaking themselves to tasks or leisure in other parts of the vessel. With a twinkle in his eyes, betokening understanding, Richard watched the men as they disappeared, leaving him in undisputed possession.

"It pleases me well, madam," said he, "to see you helping my poor lads. They have been through grievous days and your smiles hearten them." He paused—then, "Some of them have wives and daughters whom they have not seen since they kissed them farewell before sailing westward to unknown adventures. But, by God's grace, they will come again to know the joys of home and fireside."

"And so will you, Master Richard. Are there not those who await your coming?"

A shadow clouded the smile in his eyes. "There were some, but those who would have mourned most deeply have gone beyond tears. Yet there are many left who will be glad, methinks, to see me again. They are a kindly people in Devon and their memories are long. You will love that countryside or I am mistaken."

"Is it very beautiful?" asked Auria. "Indeed, I have tried hard to imagine it, but I have seen only my country as you know."

"Nay—if you will pardon me, Auria—you have still to see your own country. You are English. Your eyes, your hair, those roses in your cheeks are not of Mexico, but are of the sort that grow in English lanes, or in the Court of our good Queen Bess. Will you not try to realise this? You ask me if England is a fair country? I reply that it is the fairest God has made. Oh, I too have memories of the land which you miscall yours. My first adventurings with General Drake led me through your verdurous forests, with their wild luxuriance of blossom and leaf, their gaily painted birds and the insects that flashed like living gems in the shade of the jungle. It is like a dream to me now—a dream of a fantastic fairyland of light and shadow and weird shapes that build themselves into my fancy and dissolve again like summer clouds. But, Auria—Auria—if you could wander with me down a lane I know in Devon when spring comes softly over the hills, and the air is heavy with the scent of violets and primroses—when the dew lies sparkling on moss and bracken, and it is all like Eden after the Lord had called it good—then you would know why it is home to me as it will be to you."

"I doubt not that all of the world is filled with beauty," murmured the girl. She raised her head and looked inquiringly into his eyes. "What of the men and women? They would not understand my people nor my ways?"

"They are your people," Richard retorted impatiently. More gently he continued, "There are God-fearing, honest folks as well as rogues in all places. This I know. I am trying to picture you to myself in your own country. You love colour. Then, it is certain that you would be entranced by the magnificence of the Court, and of London when it dons its festive attire. The masques and the pageants, too, when wit and beauty gather to refresh themselves with a riot of laughter and music amid a blaze of rainbow hues, would delight you mightily. Though we have stern and bloody work abroad with the Dons, there is everywhere at home a stirring of new life. Gold is spilled like wine to blazon the prestige of our sovereign and the glory of England.

"I have memories of the progress of her Majesty through our quiet countryside when the nights were red with beacons and the lanes golden corridors lighted by a thousand torches. The good Devon yeomen were staggering with the profusion of beef and ale, while the gentry, in glittering raiment of velvet and cloth of gold, vied with each other in the display of gems and costly ornaments. Mummers and strolling players crowded the inn-yards, which appeared like the enchanted courts of Fairyland all bedecked with ribands and points. Everywhere there was merriment and life and laughter. It is pleasing in the sight of God that we should spoil His enemies and convert their treasures to the glory of the true faith. Oh, it is a goodly land, Auria. There is none like it on earth, and your love will go out to it, by God's grace, and rest there content."

"I have no doubt that it will interest me much, and that I shall be glad to have seen it," said Auria. She had unbound her hair. The robe which she wore intensified the golden shade of her skin which, in texture and colouring, would have delighted an artist of ancient Greece. Her tropical blood was nowhere else apparent but through her flesh, as from a vase of fine porcelain the Southern suns shed their old enchantment. Her hand upon the rail touched Richard's. He let his own hand follow its impulse, covering her fingers while he looked at her.

"You will not want to go elsewhere having seen it. If I could only hope that my home would be yours—always..."

Auria did not immediately withdraw her hand. She leaned imperceptibly towards him. Her cheeks were flushed, but it might easily have been the fresh breeze whipping the bunting above her head that brought the colour to them. Master Anson felt his breath quicken as her intangible warmth and softness seemed about to envelop him, then, suddenly, she drew away from him while she pointed to starboard.

"Look, look, Master Anson! Is it some great creature of the sea? Look, oh, look! It is there again!"

Following the direction of her arm, Richard's eye perceived the cause of her excitement. A solitary whale, rising at intervals to the surface, had caught the girl's attention. The sunlight glittered on the dark bulk which disappeared smoothly amid the waves. Without analysing the reason therefor, Anson hoped that it would stay under. It so happened. The girl turned to him with a disappointed look in her eyes, a pretty pout upon her lips.

"Let us go down. I have been ransacking my chest. There are some strange jewels—weirdly beautiful—which I received from the hands of an old priest at Chichen Itza. They are full of lightning. I will show them to you."

She tripped lightly along the deck, the tips of her fingers still touching the man's hand. Anson had never seen her so vital, so full of nameless charm. He was stirred, vaguely bewildered, although a certain anger filled him because his suit, delivered in all earnestness, had been so lightly thrust aside. Her gaiety continued as they made their way aft. It was checked only momentarily when, on the gang-plank, they touched the remnants of the broken chains which had held the slaves to the oars. The princess shivered, paused, and allowed Master Richard to place a protecting arm about her waist. In this manner they entered her cabin.

Auria, disengaging herself, ran forward to open the great, carven chest which stood at the head of her couch. Its brass hinges, rusted somewhat, offered resistance. The lid was heavy. Anson assisted her.

"How strong you are, Master Richard!" There was a subtle feminine note of worship in her voice. Then, from the depths of a tangle of silken finery, she extracted a small box of polished wood. This, when opened, revealed a

marvellous collection of Mexican opals. On a bed of black cloth they lay—coruscating, imprisoned rainbows, smothered lightnings, fires of the pit flashing through clouded veils of pearl and filmy smoke. Anson had not seen gems of this species before, and to him they were magical and to be feared. Nevertheless he was drawn by the spell of their beauty.

"Come, sit by me." Auria looked up at him with a mild expression of inquiry in her eyes. "You are not afraid of them? He was a good man who gave them to me. Many like these are found in my country. Are they not glorious?"

The girl compelled Richard, who was threatened by a strange trembling, to sit by her upon the couch while she displayed the jewels. Her head was against his shoulder. The intoxication of her hair was a golden mist before his eyes. To complete his undoing, there glittered upon her bosom, rising and falling gently as she breathed, the mysterious Serpent of the Incas. His subconscious memory, stirred into a temporary wakefulness, whispered strange things to him of places and ages remote and alien to Richard Anson, gentleman adventurer of England. He was standing again in a high-ceiled palace chamber gazing at the pale face of a queen who saw him not but who held, clasped in her hand, the fateful jewel of her avenging gods.

Auria exclaimed as Anson hurriedly sprang to his feet. Upon the man's face there was an expression which made her wonder if he was really afraid of the opals which lay scattered upon her counterpane.

"You will pardon me, Auria." His voice was unnatural and distant. "I have neglected some work which needs must be done. At some moment when leisure permits—an I may have that privilege—I shall be pleased to examine your treasures."

With a courtly bow he was gone, leaving the maiden sorely puzzled by his hasty change of manners.

With the evening there came indications of a decided change in the weather. The sea, which all that day had lain like a polished mirror reflecting the cloudless blue of the sky, was now in a restless mood. A short, choppy swell was running before the gathering force of a south-westerly wind, while a dark wrack of clouds lay like a sinister barrier along the horizon. The water was dull grey in colour, full of shadows which merged in the distance with the low-lying bank of vapour. Stars were beginning to shine fitfully, like flying storm signals, through rifts where green strips of sky showed through the blackness ahead of them. To westward and in the wake of the *San Rafael* gusts of rain obscured the sight, effectually blotting from view the darkening waves.

Having given directions to his crew to prepare for a rough night, Anson stood alone upon the half-deck at the stern of the ship. His heart was at one with the gathering storm. Unwittingly, as a child might tear up a flower by the roots, Auria had once more violently aroused the long-repressed desire in the man and had shaken his control. Had she known, she would have knelt to him for pardon. Her coquetry was unconscious, the product of a superabundant vitality which had blossomed in the sunshine of the last few days. It brought a glowing joy to her to feel that Master Anson was happy upon his homeward voyage. In the meantime, the priestess and sibyl had been submerged by the spirit of the woman-child who rejoiced in life while she radiated the very breath of it in every movement. Consciously to use her feminine powers where her heart was not pledged was impossible to one of her fineness and innate nobility. For the rest—her beauty and womanliness—she was not to be blamed. Nature has coloured the flowers and has given them fragrance for the fulfilment of her own great purposes.

However, the philosophy of the matter was of little avail to the man whose being was swirled hither and thither by conflicting tides of duty and desire. At this moment he was rejoicing fiercely in the rising storm. He felt a temporary sense of relief when the ship was overtaken by the rain and her decks were suddenly swept by a pelting shower. Looking at the men toiling in the waist, he perceived one of them struggling hardily to fasten down the shrouds which had been partially torn loose by the onslaught of the wind. The seaman's strength and will were tasked to the uttermost but, with dogged persistence, he bent to his work until the last rope had been securely fastened to the side of the vessel. No pious ejaculation but a sound curse was upon the sailor's lips as he turned to meet his captain whom he presently saw standing beside him. He felt that his master, being a seaman, would understand that words were in some cases a relief and that no disrespect was implied.

Jack Kent was the sturdiest and the least respectable of the lot of English prisoners who had been rescued by Anson. He was the stuff of which buccaneers are made, ready for any reckless adventure so it brought him means to

quench his longings for the fleshpots. Principles he had none, being unmoral. Yet, in pious company, he could sing a psalm or quote Scripture with the best of them. He stood, now, looking curiously through his matted locks at Master Richard who had laid a hand upon his shoulder.

"Hearken, my man, you have done more than your share. I warrant you can carry a pottle of sack discreetly. There is a cask of Canary in my cabin that has not been opened since it was brought aboard. The Dons, cursed though they be by all manner of vileness, know good wine. Come, we will drink to our safe homecoming and the end of these hard days!"

Nothing loath, Kent followed his master. Entering Anson's cabin, he stood silently while the candles were being lighted. This done, he wiped the sea-water from his ruddy cheeks and beard while he gazed about him in a bewildered manner as though uncertain whether to sit or stand. Cap he had not upon his grizzled locks, and his frame, which seemed of more than ordinary bulk at all times, appeared huge by reason of the dim light and the smallness of the room. A buff belt about his waist held together the remnants of what had once been a smart doublet of russet leather. His black eyes were small, shifting uneasily before a straightforward glance, and twinkled when he saw a small butt of Canary being trundled from under the captain's bed. His embarrassment disappeared as he assisted in the task of opening it. He seated himself comfortably upon a chest while Anson filled a glass brimful of the sparkling liquor.

"This for the man who hauls the ropes," said Anson as he passed the cup to Kent. "Not that I cannot haul to good purpose myself, if need be. Don't scowl at it, man! It is the best, or I warrant you the Spaniard would not have hidden it in his hold. Let us drink to General Drake and his hearties! Under God's favour, they should be well on their way to England—mayhap, within sight of her ere now!"

Richard poured a smaller portion for himself, but drank it with quite as much show of abandon as if it were an ordinary affair with him. Kent's admiration was aroused by the joviality of his captain. The seamen had all liked but had not understood Master Anson. His melancholy, his aloofness, and the serious purpose which usually dominated his expression had combined to give them the opinion that upon festive occasions he would be a mar-feast. Nothing like good liquor to break down the barriers between man and man! Kent felt now that the master was human—a man of the same clay as himself.

"No need for book or candle to frighten away goblins with this under one's belt, eh, sir?" Kent relaxed his loose bulk and sprawled upon his seat. Partially he sought the support of the cabin wall for the ship was rolling heavily, while, through the wooden sides and the deck above, the thud of the waves and the wash of the spray were plainly audible. Anson filled the glasses again.

"It may be longer before we bask in the sweet smiles of our sovereign mistress, the queen, but we will, Kent, we will," said Richard. "To-night I have a vaporish humour that needs quenching. You may not have my meaning. But, do you never long for the lights of London, the merriment which no fiend can withstand, for your boon companions and a wench?"

The seaman chuckled. "I fled England with a warrant at my heels. I liked venison too well and the wenches, God bless 'em. I may yet dangle from a tenpenny cord or a yard-arm, but I may say that I have lived, sir ... I have lived. Even when the Papists had me, under the broiling sun in Mexico, there were compensations, an I may say it ... compensations." He mouthed the last word as if it had a savoury taste. Wondering inwardly, but without resistance, he permitted his supply of wine to be replenished. He glanced surreptitiously at Anson. In his dull, ox-like brain there was stirring a desire to estimate the man. To himself he reasoned, "He is one of the slim, cold kind that never show their drink. And we thought he never touched it. How we were fooled! Lord, how we were fooled!"

Anson's voice, smooth, tense and fine, came to him now from some uncertain place in his immediate vicinity.

"Compensations, said you? How could there be compensations in that hell? You were a slave, were you not?"

Kent roused himself to defend his statement. He raised his hand deprecatingly, rather unsteadily.

"Hush, sir! There are those among the crew that are different from Jack Kent. They would hold it against me ... but they don't know it all ... and what they don't know won't hurt 'em. You, being as you are a gentleman, will understand. It

was not the Spaniards that took me, in the first place, but a pair of bright eyes and a slip of a woman that held more fire in her than the stoutest wench in Devon lanes. Between you and me, sir, the native women are marvels. I'd have stayed happy for the rest of my days, but the Spaniards found me. Not that it's the same as being married. No man who is not crazy would think of marrying into a breed less than his own. No Englishman would do that ... the Lord made us different ... aye, the Lord did that!" The sailor's wits gave him no further aid in his argument; in truth, they had forsaken him. However, he attempted to draw himself into a more dignified posture. "We are the salt of the earth..." he began once more. The effort was unavailing and he sank back, limp and befuddled, into his former comfortable position. Anson's hand upon his arm aroused him.

"Come, Kent, another glass and then you must take yourself off. It will be a bad night and we may need all hands. The salt air will clear your head, lad."

The captain's hand was none too steady as he guided his companion to the door of the cabin and bade him a rather boisterous farewell. The manners of a boon comrade of the tavern accorded but slightly with Master Anson's temperament. However, he could act the part.

In every man there are two beings—one of the jungle, a part of his long journey in the past when there was no light save that of the primitive hungers, and another which is a brighter fire, not of the earth but of the beauty which hides therein. Men in whom the Vision has dawned are more disastrously affected by over-indulgence of the senses. Kent could have swilled sack and ale until daylight and then, after a hasty douse of cold water or a nap, could have taken hold of the day's work with a laugh upon his lips. Richard, recovering from the several cups hurriedly swallowed, would on the following day be a nervous wreck. In the meantime his hand was off the helm and the brute in him, usually quiescent, was now in complete control. For an instant only, as he sank to a sitting position upon his couch, did he struggle against the overwhelming tide that swept through him. Kent's standard of life, ordinarily powerless to affect Anson, had touched him at a moment of weakness. Yes, Kent—an Englishman of his own breed—was right. He, with less courage than the seaman, had been a fool—an idealistic fool who held women, of whatever race, upon the pedestal of an airy dream.

Out into the night and the storm which was tossing the *San Rafael* to and fro like a bit of driftwood, Anson staggered as a man driven by an unseen power. The lurching of the vessel threw him against projecting obstacles, bruising and battering his flesh, but the cabin door which he sought was close at hand. The rain, drifting in gusts before the wind, shut out sight and sound from other parts of the ship. Slowly, with the pent-up force of his will behind it, he put his shoulder to the door. He felt the wood strain, heard the iron which held the bolts parting from the jambs and a moment thereafter he was standing in the darkness within the room. There was a muffled scream and a rustling of robes as a form slipped past him towards the light of the door. A quick movement of his arm caught and held her.

"Not so fast, my mistress!"

"Richard ... you..."

They were startled by a piercing cry which sounded in their ears. Like a leaf borne upon a gale the Inca bird flew past them into the night. At almost the same moment a dull, grinding shock thrilled through the vessel, shaking the timbers beneath their feet. The *San Rafael* trembled like a frightened animal, shrouds rattling, yards and masts quivering under some terrific strain. From the waist of the vessel and forward there came to them cries and the shouting of men. Suddenly the floor seemed to slip from beneath them as the ship lurched sideways and began to settle to starboard. They were already in water to their knees before the complete truth came home to them.

"Richard ... Richard..."—he felt her arms about him—"you thought only of me!"

Without answering, the man gathered her into his arms and staggered through the opening of the door behind them. Into the waters which were overwhelming the doomed ship, he sprang outward with her as far as his strength permitted.

CHAPTER XI

ON SAVAGE SHORES

Blackened and charred, shot through with dull crimson, the smouldering remnants of day clung to the rim of the hills. The waters which had rippled gaily throughout the summer's day now lay beneath a ghostly pall of mist. Their unbroken surface seemed to be awaiting the touch of starlight to lift the spell which bound the waves. Except for the quavering cry of a water-fowl which, at intervals, echoed eerily from behind the curtain of the fog, silence and beauty were the sole guardians of the scene.

So great was the prevailing peace that the sudden grating of a boat's keel upon the gravel of the beach had all the significance of a mystery—the advent of a human interest when least expected. Following the first sound of wood on stone, several dark shapes clove through the mists and lay at rest upon the shingle fringing the shore-line. The trim outlines, the curved and carved prows, marked them as war canoes of the Haidas, the master boat-builders of the Pacific Coast. Men sprang from the light craft into the shallow water and quickly pulled them far enough forward to ensure their remaining unmoved by the receding tide.

Among the group which had disembarked from the first canoe was one who was apparently in command. His majestic figure, rendered seemingly more imposing by the enfolding mist, moved swiftly from crew to crew. His resonant voice alone was heard to reply at length to the guttural monosyllables of the other Indians. Indeed, in any assemblage of men, Tik-atl, medicine man and chief of the Haidas, would have attracted attention. The fire, made from dry driftwood which had been lighted by the boatsmen, revealed the savage strength of his face—a study, with lines to delight a sculptor's eye. Under the red and black of his war-paint, his squarely moulded jaws, lips sensual but firmly set as a drawn bow, were features which might have belonged to an emperor of decadent Rome. The eyes, however, were those of a jungle beast—the pupils flecked with tawny fire. Over his broad shoulders was flung a robe woven from the wool of the mountain goat, strengthened by the sinuous fibres of the cedar bark. A shirt of the same material, edged with fur and drawn about his waist by an embroidered girdle of cedar cloth, completed his costume. Head-dress he had none with the exception of a narrow band encircling his brows and raven hair. In this there were displayed the feathers of the flicker to denote his dominion over water and air.

While some of the braves tended the fires and prepared food for their meal, others were engaged in erecting temporary shelters of fir boughs beneath the overhanging alders which fringed the shore. The flames illumined the grey branches of the trees until they resembled fretted woodwork on the ceiling of the dark, purple sky which, in places, was gemmed by a glimmering star. In all other directions, the walls of the mist shut out the world of water and forest.

Tik-atl, standing erect and motionless by one of the fires, suddenly stooped to touch the shoulder of a warrior who was shredding dried salmon into a shallow wooden vessel. The man's response was that of a wolf disturbed while eating. The snarl upon his lips disappeared when he glanced at the shaman's face.

"Tik-atl forgets that the way has been long. He may need no food who is fed by the air and the sea—but I..."

The chief's hand closed like a vice upon the warrior's shoulder. With his eyes upon the food before him, the man arose from his crouching position.

"I come," he said. "Have your will, O ruthless one!"

Into the shadows beyond the firelight the shaman was followed by his henchman. Again the warrior was gripped by the strong hands which, talon-like, fastened upon his shoulders. His leader's eyes, glowing in the darkness like those of a wild animal, held him fascinated, helpless as a bird before a serpent.

"Tsik-an, hear me! Why do we live even though we have ventured over the great seas farther than any have gone before? Why have the waves borne us safely over the treacherous white waters of death?"

The man trembled. "I know whose hand has given us life," he said. "Greatest of the Great Ones, your totem will stand forever before the Haida lodges. Wind and water are servants who bow to your will. Yes, I know why you have

come. The white priestess quakes to-night with the sickness of fear. To-morrow we will humble the pride of the Salish. I know."

The shaman's voice rasped like steel upon steel.

"You know? Fool! What do you know? Have you seen Her? Have you gazed upon Her face whose power is the boast of our enemies? Not by hatred but by knowledge only can we hope to match the might of the great Serpent of Wisdom. Go to your food! Eat, for to-night you have need of your strength. When you have finished, Snake of the Haidas, get you into the forest on the trail to the Salish lodges. By to-morrow's sun I must know how many braves guard the shrine of their priestess."

The warrior glanced upward in the direction indicated by his leader's upraised hand. Above the fog-banks he knew that the mountains were glimmering now in the twilight and among them the snow-clad peaks guarding the villages of the Salish. He drew himself proudly erect, standing with folded hands before Tik-atl.

"Even though he lives not on air and the breath of steaming blood, Tsik-an is not a fool. His strength may help your wisdom. Because I hungered, I had not forgotten. I will go."

Together they returned to the camp-fires. Tsik-an gorged himself ravenously upon salmon and salal bread, while the shaman sat impassively watching the blue flames where the salt in the driftwood yielded to the heat. By his side, wrapped in a cedar blanket, lay the instruments of his black art. From the far Northern sea, he had brought them to challenge the might of the white magician whose fame had threatened his place as the greatest wizard of the Coast tribes.

When the Snake of the Haidas had eaten his fill, he arose and adjusted his broad belt of matting to make room for a bone-handled knife. Then, gathering up from the sand his bow and a quiver full of arrows, he retreated softly to where the ring of light from the fires melted into the shadows. For a moment he stood there, his eyes fixed upon the shaman who sat stolidly as a wooden idol beside the flickering embers. Tik-atl did not move. The warrior slipped into the fog and the darkness. Not one of his companions showed by word or sign that they had noticed his departure.

We, who have travelled far from nature into the complexities of what we call civilisation, can scarcely understand the sensations of the Haida warrior who, alone amidst the threatening powers of darkness in a hostile country, plunged forward through the trackless forest at the command of his chief. No greater tribute could be paid to the devilish power of the medicine man of the North. His warriors would go through the seven hells rather than face the terror of his curse. Truly Tsik-an was between Satan and the sea. Behind him was the shaman's ruthless, implacable will; around him there pressed in the imminence of the unseen spirit world of darkness; before him was the vague shadow of a greater power—a magic whose might had thrilled through all the tortuous waterways of the Coast until it stirred the far-away villages of the Haidas.

Silently, true to the instinct of the furtive-footed children of the wilderness, he felt his way upward to the plateau where lay the stronghold of the Salish. With the grim will of a stoic, he repressed his desire to curse when his feet were tangled in the cedar roots and vine maples or to cry out with fear while the mysterious touch of some streamer of moss caressed his skin. He stumbled and fell. A bed of soft, brown leaves lay beneath him and there, for a moment, he paused to rest. As the coolness of the earth soothed his fevered flesh, his primitive imagination tried to picture the enemy upon whom he had been sent to spy.

In the spring of that year, when the salmon were running, a Haida canoe had fallen into the hands of the Salish. One, a youth, had later escaped from his captors and had arrived, spent and worn, to die among his kinsmen. While in the throes of the fever which consumed him, he had raved unceasingly about the white Queen of the Salish. "Daughter of the Sun" he had called her—her eyes made of the sky, her hair the fiery rays of the Sun-god woven into a net through which her white body glistened like a Tyee salmon fresh from the silver tides, her voice was the singing of many waters, her touch the red magic of summer moons which fired the blood to madness. Tsik-an remembered the face of the Haida medicine man as he stood listening at the lad's bedside. Hitherto Tik-atl had been accounted the greatest of the interpreters among all the Indian nations from the frozen North to the South where summer was long and it rained in winter. Now, his fame seemed tottering. Raging, the shaman had retired to the fastnesses of the forest for the space of a moon and then, emaciated but more implacable than ever, had suddenly appeared and had ordered the war canoes to bear

him southward. For the honour of the Haidas he would meet the sorceress of the Salish and destroy her or be destroyed. Before the power of his will to hatred the warriors had bowed like reeds. The canoes had skimmed the waters like leaves borne onward by the storm of his passion.

Now, Tsik-an wondered if the white queen's magic permitted her to know that he was stealing upon her through the night with fire and blood in his wake. He dared not think. He must only obey the will that was driving him forward. Above him the stars shone dimly through rifts in the canopy of leaves. Far below he could hear the wash of the surf upon the beach where Tik-atl sat and waited. He struggled to his feet.

Soon he emerged upon a rocky promontory which commanded a view of the hills above the vapour enshrouding the sea and valleys. Below him the white billows of the mist stretched to the horizon. Nearer at hand the dark spears of the firs pierced the fog-curtain, upholding its folds like flowing draperies. Above and to his right stood, outlined against the starlit sky, the majestic peaks of the Coast Range. Those close at hand were clothed with dark verdure, while beyond them snow-clad summits, tier above tier, glistened like temple terraces built by Titan hands. Separated from him by a mist-filled ravine he saw, upon a plateau overlooking the valleys, the clustered fires of the Salish encampment. A few more minutes of grappling with rocks, shrubs and tangled vines would bring him within hearing of his enemy.

He plunged down through the underbrush and was once more enveloped in the darkness, but, unerringly now, he directed his steps towards his goal. An exhausting struggle up the face of a steep declivity brought him to the edge of the clearing about the Salish village. Grasping a young cedar which sprang from a cleft in the rocks, he ensconced himself upon its curved trunk and, effectually concealed by its lace-like fronds, he looked out across the space between him and the nearest dwelling.

The little hamlet was laid out irregularly, about a dozen lodges comprising the main buildings. However, according to the custom of the Coast people, each of these would accommodate several families during the winter season. Each of these community lodges was walled by logs which extended to a distance of eight or ten feet above the surface of the ground, but the main parts of the dwellings were the excavations below the ground-level where, tier below tier, platforms extended around the inside of the houses. Upon these broad shelves, which were partitioned into rooms by means of cedar-bark matting, lived the Indians and their entire households during certain portions of the year. At the present time, the weather being mild, everyone lived in the open and slept at night under crude shelters of shakes which protected them from the dew and rain.

Tsik-an saw, to his intense disappointment, that the camp was well guarded by the presence of a large company of braves, all of whom were well armed. The Salish warriors had evidently just returned from hunting or were making preparations for an expedition. After letting his eyes take count of the groups of men clustered about the camp-fires, he directed his attention to the largest of the buildings which stood upon a little eminence in the centre of the village. It was of sturdier construction than the other lodges, being built of matched and squared timbers skilfully laid together to give it a finished appearance. Before it stood a magnificent totem-pole which towered over the roof-tree of the house, while its apex, carved and slender, was outlined against the sky above the dark forest on the farther side of the clearing. The base of this column was sufficiently huge to form the entrance to the house. A doorway was cut clean through the trunk of the great pole and so arranged that it represented the mouth of a great saurian which formed part of the symbolic carvings on the monument itself. The spy rightly concluded that this was the temple and dwelling of the white priestess of the Salish.

While he rested in his hiding-place, his snake-like eyes glittering with excitement, a man detached himself from those seated about the fires and moved towards him. The Indian's attention was instantly caught and held by the strange figure which made its way leisurely in his direction. Tsik-an crouched upon his slender support, ready to slip from it to a more secure shelter. However, to his great relief, the man paused and seated himself upon a rock within a few yards of the rim of the plateau.

Here his face was silhouetted against the light of the camp-fires. The Indian noted the brawny forearm and the powerful shoulders of the stranger, but was more keenly stirred by the fact that the warrior's garb and features were unfamiliar and mysterious. Surely no brave of the Coast tribes had a skin of so fair a complexion, nor were the tight-fitting garments which wrapped the shapely legs, nor the stained and tattered doublet of faded velvet like anything which he had seen heretofore. Truly the dark robe of woollen cloth loosely flung over his shoulders was like that worn by Tsik-an's people but, besides this, a hunting-knife of bronze and a belt of cedar matting were the only parts of his costume

which caused no amazement in the mind of the Haida. Apparently unaware of the proximity of the black eyes which were studying his face, the man looked out over the valleys filled with fleecy mists and across the canyon to the ranges beyond. Then Master Anson, gentleman adventurer, rose and, striding quickly towards the lodges, disappeared into the nearest of them.

CHAPTER XII

NORTHERN MAGIC

Tsik-an dared to breathe audibly once more. He would return to Tik-atl with the news of what he had seen. Softly and silently as a serpent uncoiling from a limb, he slid down from his cedar and cautiously began to feel his way down the cliff and over the slippery moss-covered ledges. Scarcely a leaf was stirred, certainly no treacherous pebbles were dislodged by his descent. Then, without warning, his heart bounded violently against his ribs and lay still while he lashed like a captured python in the grasp of relentless hands which held his throat in a vice-like grip.

The Snake of the Haidas, if he must perish, could only die as became his breed. His arms quivering outwards sensed a body not of ghostly mist but solid enough, and about it they wound with the desperation of the drowning. One terrible moment passed when he could taste his own blood in his throat and then, with all his remaining strength, he threw himself backwards. Crashing through the brush he was hurled together with his assailant down the face of the cliff. A sudden stabbing pain in his head was his last sensation before losing consciousness.

When Tsik-an awoke he was aware of two things. He was lying upon his back gazing at a strip of starlit sky through black branches overhead and there was a sharp point, cold and sinister, pressing against his throat. He looked up into the face of the man who was bending above him, but the light was too dim to permit him to see his enemy's features. The Haida spy understood the Salish tongue in which he heard the question:

"Who are you? Speak!"

The pressure of the knife touching his flesh brooked no delay.

"A friend."

"Friend? You lie. Friends come openly. Speak!"

Tsik-an tried again. "Does one approach the sun with wide-open eyes after long days of darkness? I feared the great white magic which is the light. Even to the far-away places over the waters has come Her fame to dazzle us. We could not believe until we had seen."

The Haida appreciated the fact that the blade pressed less relentlessly.

"We feared? Of what nation are you?"

Fear of death, like strong wine, forced the Indian's brain to act with lightning speed.

"I am of the North. The Mighty One, Lord of the Sea and the Wind, is my master. He came with gifts to lay upon the altar of the Sun. He desired to look upon the face of Her who is greater than himself. I, his slave, have disobeyed his will. I could not wait until the morning. Kill me!"

Tsik-an breathed more freely. The knife's point was removed from his throat and the weight of his enemy's knee upon his chest was somewhat relaxed. His hands, however, were securely tied behind his back. The pain in his swollen wrists made him wince when he moved. But his loquacity had been effective. He listened carefully to the words of his

captor.

"I would know more of this master of whom you speak. Who is he?"

"The greatest of the Sons of Wisdom who have ever been sent to our people. Even in dreams the warrior's mind is an opened path which he treads at will. The waves of the sea obey him like slaves, the wolf-winds in the mountains hear his voice and are still. Being told of the magic of the Salish priestess, he longed to unite his power with Hers. Together, he felt that they could bring peace and plenty forever to the tribes. For this he has come—to join Her councils."

The Haida's statements were partially true. Tik-atl had planned, if the Salish warriors were present, to appear as an envoy of peace. If he found their stronghold unguarded, then he would plunder and burn and bear back with him the white priestess as a captive.

Master Anson released his grip upon Tsik-an's shoulders. For a moment he stood erect, then seated himself upon the projecting root of a fir tree which was close by the side of his prisoner. In his new position the Indian could see his face. To his astonishment the spy recognised the strange warrior whom he had studied so closely while upon the edge of the plateau. He was given no time for reflection. Like steel striking flint, Anson's voice rapped out the next question:

"Where is your chief—now?"

"He is waiting below upon the shore."

There was a long pause during which the wind in the tree-tops and the distant surge of the surf sounded loud in the Haida's ears. He was at a loss to understand this man who spoke so quietly and deliberately.

"I should kill you without hesitation. Now, I have a mind to spare your life if you will tell me the truth about your master and his magic. You say that he has power over the spirits of air and water. Whence came this knowledge? Have you proof of it? Are these, your priests, born with the power as a gift, or do they afterwards acquire it, and how? This I must know."

Tsik-an marvelled at the strange turn of affairs. He had expected death. The price of life was no betrayal of his chief's plans. However, wariness was second nature to him.

"You are not of our blood. Are you not of the race of the white priestess who talks with the Fire? What can I teach to a child of the Sun?"

Anson's reply checked further evasion.

"I know nothing of the magic of our priestess. This I may tell you. I am a victim of her power. I must learn how to overcome it or remain a victim. If your chief can teach me, I will be his servant for a time and will teach him the white man's art of warfare. Do you understand? If you do not, you will die and that shortly."

The starlight flashed upon the blade of a drawn knife in Master Anson's hand. Tsik-an, in his imagination, could feel the point of it upon his throat. The Haida did not comprehend but his brain, used to acting quickly in the face of peril, prompted his words.

"The Seer of the Haidas knows. I have seen him save his children from the mouths of the hungry waves. Under his spell, I have seen the wild Storm Spirits sighing gently as a summer breeze. When he was a young man he watched alone in the mountains while he fasted and prayed. For many days and nights he fought single-handed with the spirits who descended from the clouds and came up out of the great waters. The Eagle and the Fish were his friends. They gave him his life and everlasting dominion over the air and water. When he returned to our lodges, he was big with the strength of the wolf-winds and the white-crested waves that eat the land. If the white man thinks that I lie, let him come with me. I will lead him to Tik-atl. There he can learn from the chief what his heart desires to know."

Master Richard was silent. The beady eyes of the Haida at his feet watched him furtively. The Indian could have no idea of what was passing through Anson's mind as the man swung mentally between a desperate course and the saner

counsels of his reason.

A few months before this night, he with the Princess Auria had fallen into the hands of the natives of this unknown land. Later, the bodies of his drowned shipmates had been washed ashore together with the wreckage of the *San Rafael*. By virtue of her knowledge of their rites and mysteries, Auria had almost immediately taken her accustomed place as priestess among the Indians. She had been forcibly removed from Anson and, surrounded by a close guard of Salish warriors, had been ensconced in a temple or lodge set apart for her use. Richard had vainly attempted to communicate with her. Finally, by stratagem, he had gained an entrance to her quarters and, penetrating to her chamber, he had been terrified and awed by finding her in the midst of strange sorceries of a nature which left no doubt in his mind as to her supernatural powers. Trembling and bewildered in mind and soul, he had retreated from her sanctum.

Since then he had been distraught by his love and grief, seeking, within and without himself, for means whereby he could once more place himself at her side. The Salish treated him with respect and courtesy, but would yield neither to threat nor entreaty in the matter of the princess. Anson attempted to acquire the secrets of the Indian mysteries—to seek the sources of Auria's knowledge and superhuman powers. But, upon these things, the Salish were dumb. So it happened that when he captured the Haida spy it came to him as an inspiration that he might force from this native some clue to the secret of communion with the unseen. No sacrifice upon his own part seemed too great if by its means he could again hold the hand of the woman he loved.

As he listened to Tsik-an, his heart was beating premonitory signals of a great adventure which called to him from the dim world of the unknown. In the gloom of the forest, the Haida could not see the sudden gleam of desperation, the quick tightening of his lips. Anson rose and bent above his captive. With a turn of his knee and hands he rolled the Snake over in order to release his arms. Presently Tsik-an was standing erect and trembling but free. The stranger's knife prodded him to attention.

"Haida, lead on to the shore and your chief. One false move and I will slit your lying throat. I have no fear of your warriors. If I come by harm except at my own hand, the Priestess of the Sun will send fire to destroy you utterly."

Silently the Indian glided forward into the thick, scented shadows while, behind him, Master Richard moved warily, keeping a distance of several paces to the rear. The light from the stars was sufficient to enable him to keep watch upon his enemy's movements. They halted for a minute upon the promontory from which Tsik-an had first sighted the Salish stronghold. The fog-banks had risen from the waters of the bay below them and were now draped in folds of pearly mist along the dark slopes of the mountains.

In his heart Richard experienced an unwonted pain as he looked across the canyon to the village where Auria reigned in her isolation. He wondered if she knew that he was risking his life to gain access to her world. Would she care if she saw how lightly he valued his safety in comparison with the gift of her comradeship? He might never again be within sight of her dwelling-place. However, to be within earshot of her voice and yet to know her removed and inaccessible was a refined torture which had well-nigh driven him mad. Again he was urged forward by the hope that he might penetrate into her world of mystery—be admitted, in some way, to a plane of equality with her. If the Haidas could tell him of a discipline, a way of approach, the adventure was absolutely worth while. If he perished by treachery, then the heartache would be ended.

Tsik-an was amazed at the folly of a man who walked willingly into the toils of an enemy. He reasoned, however, that the strange warrior must be under the protection of magical powers. He was in haste to watch the *dénouement* when the white man stood face to face with the dreaded might of Tik-atl.

The descent was comparatively easy as Anson directed his guide into trails which led directly to the beach. In less than an hour's time they emerged into a little clearing overlooking the bay. There, between the trunks of the firs, the silvery waters gleamed to the black shore-line on the opposite side of the inlet, while a thin scarf of blue smoke showed where the Haida camp-fires lay. A short scramble down the slippery bank through an almost impenetrable tangle of ferns and blackberry vines followed before they stepped out upon the shingle beneath the alders. Facing them, ranged about the fires, the Haidas were standing with bows bent and arrows strung. In their midst towered the majestic form of the medicine man.

Even at the distance across the intervening space, Master Anson could feel the power of the dark eyes which glowed in the sinister face, rendered more terrible by the red and black paint besmearing its outlines. Tsik-an held a brief conversation with his master, at the conclusion of which the shaman raised his hand. The bows of the warriors were relaxed and they quietly disposed themselves in groups about the smouldering fires, leaving Tik-atl standing alone and apart from the others.

Tsik-an signed to his companion to advance. In another moment Anson stood before the great magician of the Haidas.

"Speak," said his guide in the soft Salishan to which the white man was accustomed. "The Mighty One would know from your own lips the thought in your mind."

"Tell your chief," replied the Englishman, "that I am bewitched. The magic of the white priestess makes a wall about her through which I cannot break. I seek to know the secrets of your people—of your gods—that I may be equal to her. In exchange I shall give him the white man's knowledge which will make of his young men great warriors and rulers. I have helped the Salish to conquer their enemies. I can help your nation as well."

In the colloquy which followed Anson had no means of knowing what passed between the shaman and Tsik-an. Their impassive faces betrayed no hint of the feelings which prompted their words. The spy suddenly faced him. He was startled by the sibilant impetuosity of the Indian's voice.

"The Great One has spoken," he said. "You will come with us to the Haida lodges. There he will teach you the things you would know. But first he will talk with the Wind and the Waters. Then we will know if this is also the wish of the Raven who made all things. You must come with us now. If there is no treachery in your heart, you too may hear. Come!"

As he spoke Tsik-an moved towards the water's edge, motioning to Anson to follow him. While he complied Richard glanced curiously at the shaman, who had thrown aside his robe while he stooped to unwrap a cedar-bark blanket which lay upon the sands. From it the Haida selected a rattle of thin wood painted with a weird design in black and green. Attached to its handle was a thong of plaited deerskin with which the Indian fastened the instrument to his belt before resuming his robe. In two or three sharp monosyllables he issued orders to the braves sitting about the fires. The warriors grunted in reply. Then the shaman moved quickly to Anson's side, passed him and led the way along the slippery shingle of the beach.

With some difficulty Anson followed the forms of the Haidas who glided silently through the shadows of the trees fringing the shore. Soon they passed out of sight of the camp and rounded a headland which separated them from a little cove. The beach here was wider than at the landing-place and, beyond the driftwood and barnacled rocks, was a broad expanse of sand upon which the surf broke gently, rolling backwards and forwards in curving lines of silvery brightness. The moon, still high above them, held the sea and land in the toils of its enchantment.

The shaman paused where they stood in the full radiance of the moonlight. The Snake motioned to Anson to withdraw with him to the rocks farther up-shore. Silently and intently Master Anson watched the movements of the medicine man who remained standing rigidly erect gazing out over the water before him.

Presently he dropped his robe from his shoulders and, with a quick motion of his arm, threw it to some distance from him. He then stooped and drew about himself upon the sands a circle some twelve feet in diameter. Detaching the wooden rattle from his belt, he stood for an instant in an attitude of invocation, face upturned to the sky above him, and then, bending forward with his left arm thrown over his face, he began rhythmically to swing the instrument with his other hand. Slowly, lifting his feet in the steps of a stately dance measure, he traced the inner circumference of the circle. The low hum of the rattle increased in intensity until it sounded like the first mutterings of distant thunder, or the purring of giant wings hovering above the shadows of the forest behind them. Tik-atl was chanting now, his voice rising and falling, blending weirdly with the menacing note of the rattle and the soft lap and hiss of the waves upon the wet sand.

Anson glanced uneasily backwards in the direction of the black wall of the forest. He vaguely felt as if, in answer to the call of the medicine man, some dim, intangible Presence was gathering its forces there, taking form from the

invisible, nursing its unseen powers into some sort of smouldering rage which might burst into instant flame. He felt suddenly cold and impotent. He tried in vain to dismiss the impression that he, the shaman and the Snake were the focus of attention bestowed by some very real but mysterious intelligence which stood beneath the drooping sombre veils of the great firs and cypresses. He glanced upwards to where the trees crowning the cliffs were limned against the sky. Was it some trick of his fancy that showed him the impossible there? Although the foliage near him was immobile, the trees upon the heights were swaying as if in the grip of a hurricane. Yet no breath of wind was apparent where he was standing.

His eyes sought Tik-atl. Within his magic circle, the medicine man was whirling now in an ecstasy of abandonment. His bronze skin, covered with perspiration, glistened in the moonlight like metal bathed in oil. The rattle, invisible by reason of its momentum, whined and shrieked about him like a wolf-pack surging in blind fury over its kill. The Englishman instinctively reached a hand towards his Haida companion to assure himself of human contact. Suddenly, he quailed before the unexpected. All was silent. The Snake of the Haidas knelt beside him with arms outstretched towards his leader. Tik-atl, erect, tense, immovable as if carved from rock, was standing with uplifted head facing the forest behind and above them. The relief was momentary only.

Somewhere in the dark labyrinth of verdure there was heard a ripping, crackling sound as of air split by a thunderbolt. Towards them, through the jungle of trees and underbrush, came rushing down a Storm incarnate which cleft its way like a sword driven through the night. As the Thing passed over them, Anson, prostrate with fear upon the shingle, experienced a terror which left an ineffaceable mark upon his mind and soul. He, a man, the crowning work of the Creator, had known the indescribable power of the blind forces of Nature that sweep all living beings to ends known only to the gods.

Trembling in every limb he pulled himself to his feet. The magician still stood erect but, behind him, a great and angry surf was pounding upon the sands. The Presence, whatever it might have been, had by its passage stirred the sea into a tumult.

Anson felt a quick glow of returning strength when the medicine man left his circle and spoke as he moved towards them. His voice, even if harsh and guttural, was human.

"The gods have spoken. Your wish is to be granted. They will reveal themselves to you and, if your courage fails not, you will be taught the ways of the Water and the Air. You will come with us to our country?"

"I will come," said Master Anson.

CHAPTER XIII

AMONG THE HAIDAS

Because of its unusual beauty of colouring, modern travellers have called Puget Sound the "Opal Sea." They might as correctly extend this significant title to all that portion of the Pacific which lies close to the mainland of British Columbia. With even more appropriateness might the term be applied to those straits which lie near what we know upon modern maps as the Queen Charlotte Islands. Here the humidity, a daily shower of mist, tempered by the warm breath of Kuro Siwo, the Japan current, bequeaths to the atmosphere a spicy sweetness which brings to perfection the luxuriance of the verdure clothing the shores of the blue waterways. From the snowy ranges along the horizon are condensed clouds which roll or float over the sunlit waters, elusive as dreams, entrancing in shade as the delicate primroses and pinks of old-fashioned gardens. Green islands are enswathed in silk and gossamer of the filmiest texture, while evanescent robes of vapour are draped about the lofty firs and cedars which crown their hills.

Yet in this warm region of beauty dwelt the hardiest and fiercest of the native tribes of the North-west. The Haidas, the vikings of the North Pacific, here launched their corsair fleets which carried dread and desolation to the people of

the mainland and more southerly islands. In many ways they were a race apart from the other Indians of the Coast. Their language was harsher and more vigorous. Their warriors were physically superior, with tall, well-knit frames, in sharp contrast to the shorter and more squat bodies of the Tsimpsean and Salish peoples. As in hunting and in war they excelled the other tribesmen so, in the arts of peace, in the manufacture of their far-famed canoes, in their basketry and weaving, in their dyeing and carving, they were the master artists of their world.

Master Anson had been taken without mishap to the chief village of the Haidas upon the northern island of their group. Troubled in spirit and embarked upon a desperate venture, he had, nevertheless, found his interest aroused and his attention diverted by the many marvels of his new surroundings. His first days there had been spent in becoming acquainted with the manners and customs of his hosts. Now, in the bright sunshine of a summer afternoon, he was intent upon learning the mystery of the making of a war canoe.

While Se-an, the artificer, worked, Richard sat upon the fragrant red cedar stump of the tree from which the boat was being wrought. They were upon the northern slope of a hill overlooking the Haida village and the sea beyond, and to them, as the work proceeded, were wafted the barking of the dogs and the cries of the children who played in the lanes between the houses. The scent of the cedar mingled with the warmth of the sun was seductive, but the tapping of Se-an's wooden mallet upon his stone chisel served to keep the Englishman awake. He watched curiously while the naked Haida bent over his task, neatly cutting out a large oval piece of wood from beneath the prow of his boat. This was the finishing touch which would give to the craft its ability to cleave wind and water with the minimum of resistance.

Fully sixty feet in length with a beam of over eight feet, the great canoe lay shining in the sunlight, a marvel of symmetry. No plans upon paper or parchment had assisted the artist in his modelling. In his mind there was a picture and, in his instinct, there stirred the memory of stormy winds and violent waves which demanded certain qualities in a vessel that would withstand their onslaught. After the canoe had been polished with the dried skin of a dog-fish, the seats for the rowers would be inserted and tied to the sides with thongs of cedar bark. The prow would be higher than the stern and would be carved and painted with the raven, the bear and the killer-whale, crests of Se-an's family, while along its graceful sides would be depicted other symbolic legends of the past. Completed, it would be a masterpiece of craftsmanship which no modern workman with all the advantages of machinery could better either in strength or beauty.

Anson wished heartily that he had a knowledge of the Haida tongue. Being a sailor, he knew the points of a boat and would have relished some conversation about the matter, but he had so far discovered no one in the village, with the exception of the Snake and the shaman, who could understand his imperfect Salish. He had almost decided to attempt some means of telling Se-an how much his work was commendable when his attention was suddenly attracted by an unusual commotion upon the hillside below him. Se-an, roused by the Englishman's exclamation, also directed his eyes towards the sea. Across the waters of the strait, which were glittering brightly in the sun, they saw approaching a fleet of war canoes. The vessels, over a dozen in number, were crowded from bow to stern with warriors and oarsmen while, in the bottom of each, reposed women and children who acted as ballast.

A stiff surf was running but it served to give the Indians an opportunity to display their skill as they approached the shore. For a space they rowed as if they were a unit, silently, without causing a ripple to denote where their paddles had cleft the surface of the water, then, with a piercing yell, the oars were plunged deep into the waves and the canoes, lifted as if by invisible hands beneath them, bounded forward through a swirl of creamy foam. Then again, chanting in rhythm to their movements, the warriors swept shoreward slowly and majestically as great sea-eagles might drop towards their rocky aeries above the waves. As they beached the canoes, their paddles were raised triumphantly in serried rows above their heads.

That they were friends, Haidas from some neighbouring community, was apparent because of the shouts of welcome which hailed them from the assembled crowd upon the shore. Se-an and the Englishman made haste through the belt of scrubby fir trees separating them from the scene and joined the procession making its way to the council chamber of Tik-atl.

The shaman's lodge stood upon an eminence to the east of the other houses and, like all the others in the little town, was constructed of great timbers of split red cedar bound together by means of upright poles and rope fastenings. The front of the dwelling had a width of fully fifty feet, its roof sloping almost imperceptibly to the rear for a distance of over one hundred and fifty feet. Towering in the centre of the front wall was a gigantic totem pole, through the base of which

was cut an oval doorway leading to the interior of the building.

The throng, consisting of the visitors in full war-paint and finery, the sub-chiefs and the braves of the village in their ceremonial robes, and the young people and women, was crowding through the narrow entrance. With them went Master Anson without exciting attention from the Indians. Entering, he found himself upon a platform about eight feet in width which extended along the four sides of the immense hall. Below, like successive steps leading to the bare earth of the floor, there were three other similar terraces. Hewn logs of the cedar supported the roof and were in turn held in place by gigantic columns carved from the trunks of the great native trees of the island which had been converted into the semblance of the heraldic animals of the Raven clan. In the centre of the lodge, fires of fir logs were blazing. These obscured the air with haze owing to the fact that no outlet was provided for the wood-smoke except through openings in the roof. If untouched, the fumes from the flames would have been fragrant but, to add to their intensity, slaves stood about with troughs filled with seal-oil and oolachan grease which they poured at intervals upon the wood. Thus acrid and stifling odours were added to the heat of the summer day and the vapours from the perspiring assembly of natives. With an effort Richard suppressed a desire to escape into the open air.

Upon the upper tier at the end of the room was seated Tik-atl, while below him, in order of rank, were ranged the members of his family. The chief, who was also a shaman, was arrayed in a magnificently embroidered and fringed dancing-robe. Over his brows rose the carved crests of his clan and, depending from this cap, were ermine skins so arranged as to fall in a shower over his shoulders and back. When the visitors had all been assigned to seats, at a motion made by Tik-atl there arose the throbbing of deerskin drums and the weird accompanying chant of the musicians who sat upon the lower platforms. This was the signal for the commencement of the ceremonies.

Rising, the warriors of the village moved into the centre of the arena and, advancing to each guest in turn, bowed gracefully before breaking into a slow, rhythmical dance movement, weaving through and about the visiting Haidas. As the dancers moved they shook from the hollow crowns of their headgear showers of snow-white down of the swan and eagle. These feathery clouds, floating in the air, finally descended upon the guests and thereby sealed their welcome according to the ancient rite. Feasting followed in which, upon trenchers inlaid with mother-of-pearl, offerings were tendered of dried halibut and salmon in oolachan grease, boiled seaweed and the foaming froth of the soapberry. Although the Englishman was mightily fascinated by the strangeness of it all, the thickening smell of perspiration, smoke and food proved too much for him. Seizing an opportune moment, he slipped out through the great doorway.

He paused a moment to look at the beauty of the scene before him. The Haida village lay in the curve of a bay whose wooded shores reached down to a white shingle upon which the evening shadows were now gathering. Behind him the sun had disappeared over the tree-tops, so that only the waves off-shore reflected the opalescent hues refracted through the mists clinging to the hills. The great forest aisles were shaded now—dim halls of dream brodered by the ghostly tapestry of Spanish moss and whispering lace of cypress and fir.

He turned his steps towards the woods. Without warning, a great loneliness had descended upon him. Was it homesickness or the more immediate desire for sight of a beloved face? He did not know.

Anson was not so entirely sure of the wisdom of his adventure among the Haidas as he had been upon the occasion when he accepted the shaman's offer to lead him to a knowledge of the Indian mysteries. During the long months in the Salish capital, he had been under the strain of a forced separation from Auria which had finally driven him to a desperate resolve. As he strode quickly through the spaces between the great trees, brushing aside the growth of bracken and vine which impeded his way, his mind reverted to a memory of the night when the *San Rafael* had been wrecked. He had come very near, in those tragic moments, to winning the prize upon which his heart had been set. A hot flush suffused his face as he remembered how her more spiritual nature had mistaken the sensual motives in him to be entirely noble and heroic. Then, during the succeeding days, when the Salish had taken her to themselves and had hailed her as deliverer and messenger of light, the shadows had fallen. The barrier of her secret vow of renunciation had arisen across his pathway once more. He could remember her wavering. "These are my people. I am pledged to them by ties I cannot set aside. They are my children, yet..." Again his heart was wrung by the agony felt when he had pleaded for his love. If only once he could have set her feet in human ways! On good English soil that would have been possible. She had never known the sweet uses of earth, the glory of human life. Now, in his absence, what misfortunes of war or accident might threaten her? Could he win through to a knowledge of her world and the powers to whom she gave her allegiance? Yes, he would meet her in her own kingdom since she would not enter his.

Among the interlaced branches of the trees above him were stealing the colours of one of the marvellous sunsets for which this Coast region is noted. As through the windows of some old Gothic cathedral, rose-gold and orange and saffron, the subdued light was falling until submerged in the green gloom of the tangled vine-maple thickets. There was a strange silence befitting the majesty of the giant trees and the dim corridors between them. It was an atmosphere in which high dreams are born and the wine of romance flushes cheek and fills burning veins. Here, indeed, Sir Galahad might have recorded a vow upon his jewelled sword-hilt, or Arthur have gone, with heart singing, to his last great battle by the sea.

Knowing that darkness came quickly in the depths of the forest, Master Richard turned his steps towards the sea-shore and its open spaces. Soon, having broken through an opposing barrier of leafy underbrush, he stood upon the rim of a clay bank that sloped to the level of the beach.

Here the man paused abruptly and partially withdrew into the shelter of the surrounding shrubbery. A canoe was landing upon the gravelly shingle within a few yards of him. With a grating noise, the craft came to rest and its occupant, springing lightly from her place, stood erect upon the sand. In the soft afterglow of the sunset Anson saw a girl, a native as evidenced by her colour and dress, whose striking beauty distinguished her from any of the Haidas he had heretofore looked upon. About her supple form, rounded into the full curve of mature womanhood, was draped a red-brown robe of some woollen material which left bare her arms and displayed a modest measure of shapely limbs. Both ankles and wrists were adorned with silver bracelets, but her dark hair, luxurious in its abundance, was without ornament. Nor did it need additions to its charm. It was not of exceeding fineness but, unlike that of most Indians, was wavy and of a quantity sufficient to clothe her shoulders and bosom completely. Anson watched her intently, with admiration stirring in him, as she made fast her little bark. Suddenly a dry branch beneath his foot broke with a snap. Startled, the girl sprang into the canoe and stood facing him, paddle ready to propel her into deeper water.

Richard stepped from his place of concealment and called to her in the Salish tongue:

"Do not be afraid. I am a friend."

Her eyes searched him. She was like a deer, ready to bound away at the slightest unwary movement. To the man's surprise she answered him in the only native tongue which he knew:

"Who are you?"

"If you are a Haida you will know of the white chief who is staying in the lodges of Tik-atl." As he spoke Richard smiled in a friendly manner.

The girl relaxed her firm grip upon the paddle.

"Yes, I have heard of the white chief. I have been away in another village. Tik-atl is my father."

If she had quietly announced that she was the daughter of Satan it would not have more thoroughly astonished the Englishman. The evil face of the medicine man, scarred by ambition and hatred, seemed something apart from this wild beauty which confronted him.

"Tik-atl is your father? You speak the Salish tongue? Where...?"

"I learned it from a slave. It is a slave's tongue. Has the paleface no words of his own? He was not born of a Salish mother."

"The Haida would not understand my language, but I am in no way different from your people, although the Great Spirit has made my face white." Anson continued gently in the hope of winning her confidence, "I am here because your father said, 'Come!' I am not an enemy. I would learn more of your people who are great and very brave."

She still remained in the canoe while her dark eyes slowly appraised him. Wonder and fear were evident in her glance although her voice betrayed no hint of either. In his imagination Anson was still finding it hard to connect her with Tik-atl. Innocence and guile, light and darkness are not easily recognised as opposite poles of the same humanity. Her

voice was rich in tone, deep and mellow, but yet exquisitely feminine. There were depths in it as alluring as the shadows in an amber pool. It suggested unbelievable warmth and tenderness, as well as strength to overcome and endure. He was glad when she spoke again, this time calmly and with less restraint.

"Keet-sa-o knows no fear. The paleface has a beautiful voice and his eyes are like a sky without clouds. Why has he wandered far from the lodges?"

"To be alone with his thoughts and the trees and the winds and the sunset. These things have tongues for him and he loves to listen to them."

A swift look, entirely sympathetic, greeted Richard's speech.

"They have voices for those who have ears. If you have heard them, you cannot have evil in your heart nor the black magic that kills. Keet-sa-o came here to speak with them before going back to the lodge of her father. The shadows are growing long. Will you go with her?"

Gladly the man permitted himself to be seated upon the one thwart of the canoe while the girl took her seat at the stern. As they glided out into the waters shimmering with sunset hues, he learned that she had been at another Haida village taking care of her brother who had been wounded in a recent hunting expedition. She had heard of Anson's arrival and confessed that curiosity had hastened her return to her father's community. Then, without warning, the maiden fell strangely silent, answering only in monosyllables. The man was used to the taciturnity of the Indian nature and realised that, for their first meeting, she had spoken with an abandon quite out of the ordinary. He was in truth amazed to be so readily admitted to her friendship. In her own good time she would talk again.

The canoe was being noiselessly propelled upon the surface of waters aglow with beauty. Delicate and fleeting tints and colourings just below the waves were veils through which the dark green shadows of the wooded shores could be seen in the depths below them. Mists, soft-footed and white, were stealing upwards through the forest clothing the hillsides, while, upon the summits, the conical tops of fir and cedar were silhouetted against the sky. A faint, chill wind was blown to them from where hidden waterfalls, in dim ravines, stirred the air to sudden motion. The soft thunder of these falling streams and the wash of the ripple caressing the sands of the beach alone broke the silence. It was as though the memory of a glorious dream still trailed its broken light and fleeting perfume over sea and sky, leaving an intangible feeling of pain because the day had vanished.

Rounding a headland they came into sight of the Haida village. The war canoes clustered upon the landing and the echoes of drums and chanting from the great lodge of Tik-atl proclaimed the fact that the festivities were still in progress. The spaces between the houses, which could hardly be dignified by the name of streets, were empty, showing that the entire population was attendant upon the ceremonies.

"We will wait," said Keet-sa-o. "Soon the darkness will come."

In answer to his inquiry the girl would give no reasons for her delay. Not a little annoyed but helpless in the matter, Anson had, perforce, to accede to her wishes. They drifted a few rods off-shore where a tiny projecting cliff hid them from sight of the village. The girl was still silent, refusing to respond to the man's friendly attempts to draw her into conversation. With the darkness came a fog. This seemed to be to the girl's liking. She rapidly drove the canoe forwards and in a few minutes they beached at a spot some distance from the regular landing.

While Anson and his companion worked to pull the boat above high-water mark, they were entirely enveloped in the thick mist which was almost rain. Chilled by sitting in the canoe, the man was glad of the chance to exercise himself and left but little for Keet-sa-o to do. The canoe being made fast, they had turned towards the village when they were halted by a harsh voice. From the enclosing wall of the fog, the tall figure of Tik-atl emerged and stood beside them.

Still clothed in his ceremonial robes, the gigantic shaman loomed large in the grey shadows—a fantastic but sinister form. Anson could feel the trembling of the girl at his side. He was also aware of a hand that touched and held his own. The Englishman did not fear the magician, having been on the most friendly terms with him during the voyage to the North and in the days which followed.

"I had wandered into the forest alone, O Mighty One. By a strange chance I have met the girl, your daughter. We are on our way to your lodge."

Tik-atl reached forward, seized Keet-sa-o by the wrist and pulled her violently to his side. His vice-like grip held her while she winced from the agony of it.

"It is now many moons since I permitted her to visit the lodge of my son. No word has come from her—no reason for her delay." He bent over the cowering girl, his words hissing through clenched teeth. "Ugh!" He pushed her away from him. "Why did the Great Spirit send me a woman? I needed men—only warriors and men!"

Richard felt his anger rising.

"Indeed, she has spoken but good words of you. This cruelty is surely uncalled for. I will pledge myself that the girl has done no great wrong."

"The paleface speaks without wisdom," snarled the shaman. "He came to be taught—not to teach."

Anson found himself in an exceedingly awkward position. He knew nothing of the girl who had clung to him for protection. The fact that she had done so, however, influenced him. He spoke stubbornly.

"I have said that I will pledge myself that she has done no wrong."

"Tik-atl knows and his will is law. To-night she may sleep. At sunrise, she shall be whipped like the ungrateful dog which does not know its master."

"I say that she shall not be whipped—not while I have a sword in my hand!"

The Englishman's defiance was flung recklessly, his temper having mastered him. The shaman's answer was a derisive laugh. He shoved the girl forcibly towards Anson who stood with his hand upon his sword-hilt awaiting the effect of his temerity.

"The white chief speaks brave words, but they are the words of a fool. We will not break peace over a squaw. There are other things to be done."

Without further speech the magician folded his robes about him and strode away.

Not yet able to fathom the wiles or subtlety of the Indian mind, Master Anson was only indignant and sorely at a loss as to what should be done. In his own opinion he had most unfortunately fallen foul of the domestic affairs of his host. That he was the victim of a darker wisdom than his own never entered his mind. At this moment he was occupied by his pity for the girl whose beauty had appealed to him, and who seemed to him to be the victim of parental tyranny.

"Keet-sa-o, I will go with you to your door. Lead along, girl. You know the way."

"I cannot go to my father's house," replied the maiden. "I will go to my brother's lodge which has stood empty since he went away. I do not know why my father is angry. His heart may change during the night."

Again the girl relapsed into a stubborn silence while she led the man through the village. At the door of her lodge he bade her good night. In a bewildered state of mind, half-regretful that he had angered the shaman who had promised him the key that his heart desired, Anson sought his quarters and retired to rest.

CHAPTER XIV

HUNTING THE SEA OTTER

"Se-an, the wood-splitter, walks like a stuffed crow. May Nee-kwun smash his work into firewood!"

A wrinkled old hag weaving a basket in the shade of her house spat out the words through toothless gums as the Maker of Canoes strutted proudly past her on his way to the landing below the village. There, upon the sloping beach, lay the great fleet of the Haidas in course of preparation for the otter-hunting. Age, which is envious of the exuberance of youth, will sometimes become bitter and warped by a blind hatred. An inferiority-complex is thus given relief. Se-an passed on oblivious of the venom cast in his direction. Mumbling and mouthing, the old crone rocked herself to and fro above her plaited reeds. Presently her attention was arrested by the sound of voices approaching along the path taken by the artificer. The woman shifted herself and the baskets so that she was hidden by some half-dressed deerskins hanging from the eaves above her. She recognised the voice of the magician, Tik-atl.

"They must go in the same canoe. Let it be with Se-an. The paleface has watched while Se-an worked and the fellow is proud that his skill has been seen and admired by the stranger."

The shaman was answered by a grunt from his henchman, the Snake.

"The blood of the white man is cold."

"He is strong," replied the magician, "but we will tie him hand and heart. The white priestess, lacking him, will have only the Salish sheep. At the full of the moon we will go south."

Their voices died away as they passed along the wide, crooked lane between the lodges. The squaw, stooping forward, traced several indistinct figures in the dust at her feet.

"May the Great Raven save me—save me," she muttered, "from the evil of his eye! He is the king of the wolves who tear open our graves and devour the dead."

Meanwhile, among the canoes there was laughter and the joy of life. The daring of the warriors was to be tested by the adventure before them. Hearts beat proudly and happily, while the brown maidens, even as their white sisters of romantic story, vied with each other in bestowing favours upon their champions. Not all who went in search of the wily sea otter, braving the dangers of the rocky headlands and the treacherous reefs where death lay in wait for the unwary, could hope to return. Those who bore home the glossy pelts won them at a cost as great as ever had been paid by a warrior in battle.

Master Anson was in the midst of the chattering throng while he assisted Se-an to fill his canoe with the necessary provisions and implements of the chase. A chubby baby of four, who looked like a bronze cherub torn from some niche in an old church, manfully did his best to help by tugging at the cedar-bark ropes and matting which lay upon the sands. Richard won a broad smile from Se-an by pretending to take seriously the efforts of the little chap. Soon, however, the play threatened to interfere with work. When the man placed an article in the canoe it was promptly seized by the little fellow who deposited it forthwith upon the pile from which it had been taken. Anson, awkward as most men are with children, was embarrassed. Se-an was too busy to interfere. To the Englishman's relief, Keet-sa-o hurried towards him from a group of young women near by. She took the chubby one into her arms.

"Keet-sa-o is coming with you—in your canoe," she said. Anson was pleased and let his voice tell her that was so.

"Indeed, I am very glad. I cannot speak the Haida tongue. It was good of your father to let me go with the canoes. I want to learn all that I can while I am your guest."

He continued his task of loading the canoe with boxes of dried fish, herring spawn and dried cakes of seaweed. Se-an meanwhile had stowed the bows and arrows, and blankets or mats for shelter and warmth. Presently all preparations were completed. The fleet was ready to sail.

The Englishman observed that the canoes used for hunting were not the ocean-going craft but smaller vessels each fitted, as in the case of the larger boats, with two sails. When the wind was favourable the fleet could skim over the

waters with amazing speed. Lacking a breeze, the paddles were used. In almost every instance the crew consisted of three men, one in the bow, one in the middle of the canoe and one, who steered, at the stern.

With some astonishment Anson watched the ceremony of drinking sea-water in which the braves participated before finally launching their boats. It was an ancient custom which was supposed to instil courage and to confirm the mastery of the waves which was the birthright of the Northern tribes. This done, the canoes were pushed out upon the sea by slaves who waded waist-deep in the surf. Fifty strong, Chief Tik-atl's squadron spread snowy wings and glided out over the dancing waters of the strait.

Richard, who occupied the thwart in the centre of Se-an's vessel, was for the moment relieved of work. The artisan sat in the rear, occasionally using his paddle to control the direction of the canoe. The man, stripped to the waist, presented a superb picture of Indian manhood which was somewhat marred, however, by the elaborate symbols tattooed upon his brawny chest. The Haida's face was stolid, but his heart sang with pride as he displayed his skill before the pale-face chief. Gradually they gained the lead and, without apparent effort, it was maintained.

Before them, like white clouds along the horizon, lay the snow-capped peaks of a great range of mountains. The sky was clear; no mists were to be seen anywhere upon the surface of the sea. All was sparkling sunshine which was reflected with dazzling brilliance from the surface of the waves. It was a day when it was good to be alive, and life called to Master Richard as he saw Keet-sa-o framed by the beauty of sea and sky. She sat facing him in the bow of the canoe, her luxurious hair tossed about a face that would have brought joy to an artist's heart. It was not beautiful after the English manner, but the features were regular and noble, without disfigurement by any of the savage ornaments affected by the Coast people. Her eyes, thought Richard, are like her voice—soft and deep, tuned to tears or laughter. He could see in them nothing of the cruelty or craftiness of her kinsmen. Now they were merry, shining with happiness, for was she not spared the present sight of her father's angry face, so unlike the kindly countenance of the white chief? Like a little child she rejoiced in immunity from pain, even although she knew that the near future held it inevitably.

Anson now noted that the fleet was separating into divisions. In groups of three or four, the canoes commenced to diverge in varying directions. Soon, with Se-an in the lead, three of the vessels turned westward parallel with the island which they had left behind them. For several hours more they kept well out to sea, then, as the shore-line became more rugged, bordered by cliffs and marked by rocky headlands, they changed their course and skirted the coast more closely. Hours passed, but no sign of their quarry was discovered. Then, before the sun had reached its highest point in the southern sky, the various crews headed towards the land and beached their little fleet in a cove where a stream of fresh water could be seen falling from the ledges of a great rock. Here they cooked a meal from the meat of a fur-seal which had been shot by one of the men. No delay was permitted after the repast. The fires were extinguished and the hunt resumed.

Presently patience met its reward. An oarsman in one of the leading boats shouted and then stood erect while he pointed with his paddle. The canoes all circled about the spot indicated by the huntsman. A few moments later there appeared above the surface of the water the shining black head of an otter, and Anson heard the twang of a bowstring behind him as Se-an launched an arrow. His aim was good for the animal instantly plunged forward, disappearing amid a flurry of blood-flecked foam. Presently the commotion of the water ceased and the prize floated upon the surface.

Richard exclaimed aloud in admiration when it was hauled aboard. The glossy black fur, tipped here and there with a suggestion of silver, was of wondrous texture and beauty. He listened with interest while Keet-sa-o told him of the habits of these graceful creatures. The harshness of her Indian tongue was softened as she spoke wonderingly of having seen a mother otter sleeping peacefully, her little ones cuddled upon her breast, upon the waves many miles from the nearest land.

Following the first catch, several more otters were taken in a similar manner, and so engrossed were the hunters in their sport that they failed to note a sudden stiffening of the breeze which had veered to the south-west. The rim of a dark cloud-bank had appeared above the summit of the hills and although the brilliant sunshine still prevailed, the surface of the sound was broken by crinkling lines of grey and blue. The canoes rocked uneasily and those steering headed their craft to windward. Presently a boisterous gust of wind threw the waves into a turmoil of foaming crests.

An exclamation of alarm from Se-an roused the Englishman. He turned but, even as he did so, he felt a paddle thrust

into his hand by Keet-sa-o. As he watched her trying to regain her seat in the bow, he noted that she, too, held an oar. Above the wind, he heard her cry:

"For the shore! Work! Fast! Fast!"

Their canoe was facing the rollers which threatened to submerge them. With the blinding spray lashing his face, Master Anson laid to with all of his strength. Keet-sa-o was forced to give over paddling. The might of desperation was hers as, with face set and pale, she clung to the gunwale while she tried to bale the sea-water from the waist of the vessel. A quick rush of rain shut out sight of the rest of the fleet.

Alone, now upon the peak of a sliding mountain, now in a watery trough that hissed under them like a coil of grey serpents, they battled for life with a relentless foe. That they were nearing shore was evidenced by the flying knots and wisps of seaweed which whipped them in the driving sheets of rain. Then, in their ears like intermittent thunder, there sounded the pounding of the breakers upon the rocks fringing the low-lying cliffs.

It was useless to struggle further, for they were lifted like the lightest driftwood and crashed into the jaws of the harassed reef. In some manner, never afterwards clear to him, Anson seized Keet-sa-o as she was swept onward with him. Partially stunned and lacerated by his first impact upon the rocks, he was sucked back only to be cast ahead once more. This time, by a miracle, they were carried safely past the first barrier and found themselves being floated forward into a shelving, cave-like aperture in the cliff. Up into an interior, black and vast, the cavern rose from its floor which was a declivity cruelly fanged with barnacled and slippery projections. These, however, proved to be their salvation for, clinging to them, Richard managed to drag the girl and himself beyond reach of the billows.

Time was not reckoned as they lay there in the darkness, aware chiefly of their bruised and shivering flesh. Keet-sa-o was hysterical from terror. As each successive wave swirled up as if to clutch them in its embrace, she cried aloud and clung closely to the man, her arms about his neck, the drenched tangle of her hair wet upon his breast. After a time she grew quieter, and drawing away from him, in the succeeding hour was so silent that the man wondered if she were sleeping.

Then he felt her hand stretched to touch his face in the darkness. She caressed his cheeks with her fingertips and, so chilled was his own blood, that her hand seemed warm to him.

"Keet-sa-o is sorry. The Storm Spirit drove away her courage. She will not be a squaw now—not any more."

Richard drew her to him and made her rest her head upon his shoulder. The girl curled her supple body closely together for greater warmth and very soon her breathing told him that she was really sleeping. Her unusual physical strength had been taxed beyond its limit of endurance. Knowing that they were beyond the power of the storm to reach them, he allowed his own utter weariness to overcome his desire to remain awake and upon guard.

When Master Anson opened his eyes the dim light of his surroundings bewildered him. Then memory asserted itself. Below him he saw a strip of light and, to his delight, the bare, wet sand of the beach. In the aperture, between the light and the darkness, Keet-sa-o appeared. She could not see him and began to climb the sloping floor of the cave, but he called down to her:

"All right! I am coming!"

Stiffened and sore, he had some difficulty in making the descent. When, with eyes dazzled by the sudden sunshine, he stood without the entrance to the cave, in his devout English heart there was a prayer of thanksgiving for their deliverance. The tide had receded, leaving a strip of pebbled shore between them and the rocks which had been the cause of their disaster.

"The canoe is safe. I have seen it with my own eyes. Come!"

A nymph from the waves she appeared to him as she seized his hand in her eagerness to drag him to the scene of their undoing. As though she had just completed her morning toilet, her cheeks were glowing, dark red beneath the amber of her skin. Her clothing had been partially dried by the sun, but about her shoulders her hair hung heavily as a dark

curtain embroidered by the strands and wisps of seaweed intermingled with it. Altogether she was a bit of the wild, rugged loveliness of this desert place. Anson was nothing loath to follow this maid of the sea as she picked her way carefully over the rough stones.

"It is between two rocks. I cannot move it. Maybe together we can shift it."

There was no hint of tragedy in her manner. The fate of the other canoes or of Se-an was not, apparently, weighing upon her.

They found the boat, as she had described it, wedged in a peculiar way into the barnacled cleft of a gigantic boulder that stood glistening and dripping in the morning sunshine. Brown ropes of kelp and a tangle of grey-green weeds together with a considerable quantity of water stood in the bottom of the little vessel. Anson examined the situation carefully and then tugged at the canoe in an attempt to dislodge it. In the process his hands were skinned and scratched by the sharp mussel shells which clung thickly in patches upon the face of the stone.

He decided that they would need bars with which to pry it from its present position. More quickly than he could have done it, Keet-sa-o dragged up stout branches of polished fir-wood and slabs of drift. Together they exercised all of their mechanical skill. Her strength seemed equal to his own, her ingenuity more apparent. At last, torn and battered, the canoe lay upon the beach. Without repairs it was useless. However, that lack was no great obstacle. Richard believed that, with very little effort, he could make the craft seaworthy once more. In the meantime he was exhausted, but, seeing the tide had turned, they dragged it over the shingle to the mouth of a creek which came tumbling through a rocky defile near by. It would be better to leave the boat in the water than to permit the sun to open the seams which might be, at present, invisible.

Upon the cool moss on the bank of the stream Master Anson stretched himself to rest. Keet-sa-o wandered away and returned presently with a handful of clams and large mussels. These, with the tang of the salt water still upon them, the man found most refreshing.

Beside him as he ate, Keet-sa-o stood happily. Leaning against a huge boulder, she was lowering her bare feet, one at a time, into the stream to wash away the sand of the beach. Anson found her good to look upon. He was amused, momentarily, by the thought of one of his countrywomen under similar circumstances. How helpless, in the wilderness, would have appeared one of the fine ladies of Elizabeth's Court!

"Keet-sa-o, do you think that any of the other men may have been spared? We must look presently. They may have gone ashore somewhere near."

The girl looked at him indifferently while she waved a hand to dismiss the matter.

"All gone, I think."

"If we cannot repair the boat, what shall we do?" continued Anson.

Keet-sa-o contemplated her toes for a space. Her eyes sought his from among her black tresses, then, suddenly, she was intent upon her toes once more.

"I do not know. Maybe we will stay here. Maybe We will go. I do not know."

"Oh!..." Anson had no intention of remaining upon a barren shore one moment longer than was necessary. "The good Lord who, in His mercy, delivered us will doubtless provide further means for our escape," he said. "This you do not understand? It may be, however, that your people, even as the Salish, believe in the Great Spirit?"

"Yes," replied the girl, "I do understand. The Great Spirit, Tahit, will care for His children, but there are some who are not His. My father is stronger than the gods who work for good. He knows now that we are here and will send for us. If we stay here he will find us."

Anson was instantly curious. "You mean that your father is an enemy of the Great Spirit?"

"He knows what the Great Spirit knows," said Keet-sa-o, "and what the Spirits of the Wind and the Sea know. It is dangerous to know that."

Quite certain in his own mind that all superhuman knowledge was fraught with peril, the man turned to problems closer to hand.

"You have no doubt, girl, that your father will find us?"

"He will," repeated Keet-sa-o, nor did Anson understand why she quickly flung away from him, rushing down to the water's edge where she sat with her back turned to him, while she gazed out over the straits at the white mountains beyond.

As the sun rose its warmth swept the last vestige of moisture from grass and fern, so that, on a bed of delicious comfort, Anson reposed beside the stream while he recovered from the strain of the preceding hours. Through the brocade of the bracken above his head the sunlight filtered like golden wine. The hum of insect life sounded in his ears more loudly than the surf upon the sands near by. He was drifting into a dream where everything was radiant whether of sight or sound, since all sensations seemed here to be commingled and merged into one another. Through it all the face of Auria shone clearly outlined against the chaotic background of his thoughts, a star steadily shining through the wavering mists. He fell asleep.

The sun dipped downward until it touched a headland to westward of their haven and still Master Anson lay in deep slumber. As the shadows gathered, the Haida maiden made a pile of driftwood beyond the reach of the tide. Having heaped it high, she bent to the task of making fire by the primitive method of whirling between her hands a pointed stick inserted into a depression in the surface of a piece of dry wood. After much labour a spark smouldered in the light dust about the end of the twig and, by further careful manipulation, a flame was obtained. When her beacon was well alight she sat in the warmth of it, her arms clasping her knees as she gazed into the depths where the brine-soaked wood glowed in coruscating shades of gold and blue and green.

In her wild, pagan heart there was abounding pain. It was the primal hurt which the first Lilith knew when she saw that Adam thought not of her but of another. In the Haida encampments she had heard much talk of the white priestess of the Salish. She could hear again the words of Tsa-lan, the young brave who had come home to die: "Her eyes are made of the sky. Her white body glistens like that of a Tyee salmon caught in the golden net of the Sun-god. Her voice is the singing of many waters." At that moment Keet-sa-o's dark hair, her eyes that were black as the shadows in the ravines, were hateful to her. Kindness she had never known. Friends of her own sex she had been denied because she was the daughter of the dreaded Tik-atl. Her heart had gone out, in her loneliness, to the white chief whose voice was like soft rain upon the leaves, and whose arm had been strong to defend her. She knew the tradition of her tribe—that she was the property of the man who had laid his hand familiarly upon her. According to her faith she believed that Richard had been sealed as her master by the Storm Spirit who had placed his arms about her. The waves on the shingle near her, the wind that stole, silent and chill, from among the whispering firs, seemed weighted by the sorrow which she firmly repressed within her bosom.

Her ear, trained to detect all sounds which broke the silence of nature, heard the far-off dip of paddles. Swiftly Keet-sa-o rose and hastened to the spot where the man lay sleeping. All a-tremble now, she shook him violently so that he sprang to his feet in alarm.

"Quickly—they are coming! It is my father. You will tell him?" she cried.

Anson, only half-awakened, stared stupidly at the girl. Her eyes were imploring. Her eager, passionate face illumined by the firelight, she stood erect—waiting, with her hands clasped submissively before her.

"Then," said Anson slowly, "we are saved. Thanks be to the Giver of all good!"

While he was speaking the shaman's canoe grounded upon the shore.

CHAPTER XV

TOTEMS

"The white chief must have patience. He cannot command the stars. When they speak, he will be led into the knowledge which he seeks."

Tik-atl spoke oratorically with intent to drive home his decision as final. Before him stood Master Anson, inwardly fuming but striving to preserve a calm demeanour. Other English virtues of dogged courage and bluff honesty he possessed, but in patience he was sadly lacking. Over a fortnight, filled with moving events, had passed since he had landed in the Haida village. The shaman had made no mention of his initiation into the Indian faith or its mysteries. Anson had restrained his desire as long as it was possible for him to do so, and had finally broached the matter, demanding that the magician's promise be fulfilled.

"Is it given, then, to know when the stars will permit me to share your wisdom?" said he.

Tik-atl smiled condescendingly. They were standing before the white man's lodge which commanded a view of the whole village and the adjacent shore. Totem poles, so thickly set that they looked from a distance like the seared snags of a burned-over forest tract, broke their view of the sea beyond. The magician waved his hand towards the horizon.

"From far and near they will come, the children of the Bear and the Eagle and the Raven—yes, and others less great will come. It is the moon of totems and there will be much feasting. There will be a giving of gifts so rich and so many in number that the Haidas will tell the story to their children's children. Then, when all are engaged in the ceremonies, you will be led into the silent places. There, alone, in the moonless night after you have fasted and watched, you will meet face to face the spirit of your kind. When I know the will of Tahit and where your feet stand on the ladder of lives, little and great, I can give you the key to the mysteries of earth and sea and air."

The shaman folded his arms within his robe and prepared to depart. His glance said, "I have spoken." Anson saw that further inquiries would elicit no response.

He was silent as Tik-atl moved away towards the lodges, then, wearily, he turned towards the doorway of his own dwelling. Time dragged heavily on his hands for he was but little interested in the savages with whom he was a guest. The novelty of the first days having gone, his thoughts were all of the South and his heart's desire. He shuddered with disgust as a landward breeze brought to him the sickening stench of the Haida encampment. By day his eyes were revolted by the sight of decaying corpses and the grim fragments of the dead which littered the vicinity of the houses, for these people, unlike other Coast Indians, did not bury their dead. Even the bodies of their great men, their chiefs and shamans, were retained close to the homes of the living, placed in painted and carven boxes set between upright pillars or enclosed in the hollow bases of mortuary totem poles. This barbarous custom made it less easy for his mind to do justice to the nobler qualities of his hosts.

Entering his lodge he was therefore disagreeably moved by the sight of an ancient crone who sat calmly enjoying the warmth of his fire. There was scarcely an hour of the day when he was not honoured by parties of the Indians who came to sit about his hearth while they discussed, in their own tongue, the strange appearance and habits of the paleface. The present guest, however, exceeded in ugliness and filth any he had seen heretofore. Her wrinkled face and rheumy eyes were rendered more hideous by a nose ring and the horrible decoration of a labret. This latter, a carved wooden wedge inserted into a broad slit below the lower lip, was enough to banish beauty from the loveliest face. In the case of the old squaw it was inexpressibly revolting. The woman, crouching by the open fire, was almost entirely enveloped in a dingy blanket which she drew tightly over her withered breast. She grinned up at the man who stood, loath to come nearer to her. Anson watched curiously as she reached into the folds of her robe and drew forth a buckskin bag beautifully embroidered with the crest of the Raven. This, in her shaking, claw-like hand, she extended towards him.

He instantly recognised it as part of the shaman's equipment—the receptacle for his charms and amulets. He had seen it suspended from Tik-atl's waist. As he took it into his hands, the crone wagged her head vigorously and mumbled

unintelligible things—curses they might have been, or warnings—Anson was at a loss to know their intent. When he attempted to return it to her she pushed it back into his hands. Pointing in the direction which Tik-atl had taken in leaving, she shook her fist violently, then pointed to the sack and to Master Anson. It was evidently her desire that he should keep the bag. Complying, the man placed it in his bosom. The squaw clapped her hands in approval and rising, with much difficulty, she made her way to the door, chuckling as she did so with some inner glee that possessed her. Her shrill cackle came back to him more faintly while she was hobbling off towards the village.

Richard decided to retain the article, but dismissed the incident from his mind as he went about the preparation of his evening meal. He was moving among strangers in an unknown land and could act only with incomplete knowledge. Much had to be left to chance and to the Providence in which his early trust had been placed. He slept but poorly that night. His visions were disconcerting. Over them all, the evil face of the magician flitted like a threatening cloud.

Several mornings later, the Englishman was awakened by the throbbing of drums and the noise of trumpets and shouting. He had scarcely completed dressing when Keet-sa-o's voice called to him from without:

"Come! Come and look!"

He was not a little surprised by her summons, for she had avoided him during the days following their rescue. Emerging into the brilliant sunshine, he found her awaiting him with a smile of welcome. She laughed as he held his hand before his eyes.

"You are sleepy. Like a bear, you would snore until the spring!"

Anson shared her merriment before his whole attention was absorbed by the scene before him. From what is now known on maps as Alaska, from Prince of Wales Island, from Skidegate and the islands to the south, from all the sea-beaten coasts which owned the sway of the Haidas, canoes dotted the strait, bearing in to the lodges of Tik-atl guests for the feast of totems. The blue waters seemed to cast them up as bright bits of driftwood flashing in the sunshine. The vibrations of their drums and wild chanting filled the air with a slumbrous murmur of sound, broken by the sharper yells of the tribesmen who thronged the beach before the encampment. Sea and land were astir with life, the hills shaken by the assembled might of the Northern warriors.

Anson responded to the exhilaration of the excitement and the day. He shook off his sleepiness and strode briskly beside the Haida girl who led the way to the water-front. His motley garb, half-savage and half-civilised, blended well enough with the varied accoutrements of the Indians upon the beach. In masks and dancing-robcs, gaily bedecked with abalone and vivid dyes, the Haidas awaited their guests. The lodges were emptied, squaws and children mingling freely with the braves and those especially set aside as dancers. Music, too, was not lacking, for the leaders in that art had assembled their orchestras of trumpeters and drummers who vied with each other in making a din louder than the shouts of the assembly. The drums were particularly in evidence and greatly excited Richard's curiosity. Some of them were square, others rounded, but all made of the wood of the red cedar painted with symbolic designs, over which framework were stretched taut deerskin hides. Beating upon them, the musicians produced weird effects—the rattling sound of musketry in action, the subdued throbbing surge of surf or the echoes of receding thunder.

As the incoming canoes reached the shore they were met by naked slaves who rushed in a body into the water and drew them safely to land. The various parties, headed by dancers and musicians, made their way up the hill to the space before the great lodge of Tik-atl. Here were piled immense heaps of blankets, skins of the bear, otter and seal, cunningly wrought weapons of war and the chase and, beside them, slaves who stood ready to be transferred to new owners in the lottery which was to follow.

This accumulated wealth was the property of a brother of Tsik-an, the Snake, who upon his elevation to the rank of chief had decided to impress the world with his abundance and power. In recent raids upon the mainland peoples he had mightily distinguished himself and, during the days of the feasting, there would be erected a huge totem pole whereon would be told the story of the prowess of his ancestors. Before his lodge lay the great timber, hewn and carved, its grotesque symbols shining with the paint which had not yet dried upon the wood.

Keet-sa-o answered Anson's inquiries regarding the various crests and insignia of rank which adorned the visitors.

She had, for the moment, dispensed with her Indian taciturnity and was all sunshine and laughter, a bit of natural beauty strangely relieving the fantastic distortions which her kinsmen seemingly considered worthy of admiration. Richard told her of the shaman's promise that he should be made a brave during the festive week. Quickly she glanced at him, then at those who stood near. She was suddenly grave, the laughter stilled upon her lips. Remaining close to his side, she lingered behind the crowds until they were comparatively alone. In a tone so low as not to be overheard by any except her companion, she said:

"You must not go into the forest. Keet-sa-o knows."

"It is for that, indeed, that I have come to your lodges," replied Anson. "Why should I not go, then? Your young men have gone and have returned with a greater wisdom.... Is it not so?"

The girl murmured hesitatingly, "Yes, you will go. You came for that. Your heart is set on it. But, I—I am afraid!"

Richard pressed her to tell all that she feared. She would not reply and for a space was silent. Then she shook her head.

"It is a squaw's fear. You are a man. Yes, you will go."

She walked quickly forward to join the stragglers who were climbing the hill path before them.

Anson noticed that the Indians were not assembling before the lodge of the shaman. They paused, in groups, to examine the variety of treasures which lay heaped before his door. Then, the first curiosity satisfied, they proceeded to the space before the house of Ka-weah in whose honour the feasting had been ordained. There lay the great totem pole, newly finished and ready for erection. The fresh earth was heaped beside the hole prepared to receive the base of the pillar.

With just pride, the artist, Akana, Maker of Totems, surveyed his handiwork. His family, possessing the hereditary skill of many past generations, had hands which obeyed with unerring precision the commands of the master-brain. From the trunk of a mountain cedar which had braved centuries of wind and weather, he had wrought this monument to his craft and the fame of Ka-weah's ancestors. With adze and axe of stone, with maul and wedge of the same primitive sort, he had accomplished what few artificers with finely wrought tools of steel could have rivalled. For whether it happened to be the gigantic wooden poles that stood in serried rows before the Haida lodges or the meticulously wrought, highly polished statuettes of black slate which he produced, into the work of his hand was projected a wisdom older than time.

In the pyramids, in the Taj Mahal, the rock caves of Elephanta, the giant images of Easter Island, the crypts and temples of Yucatan, Akana's predecessors had woven their visions of the power and majesty of the unseen spirit world. What mattered it that the Egyptians had called his Wolf, Anubis; or the pinions of his Thunderbird, the wings of Horus? The inner meaning was the same. Crowning the pole was the Great Raven and below it was Hoh-hok, the mythical bird of prey, holding in its talons the body of a whale. Then in order came the giant Frog of the Sea who needed a fin to propel him upwards from the depths of his ocean lair; Wasku, the sea-wolf, who was a devourer of those who fell into the hungry maws of the raging waters; the Killer Whale, and again the Raven with a broken beak closely set above the head of the Grizzly Bear whose body formed the base of the column. Myths as old as the earth, symbols that spoke of ages when strange creatures, half-bird and half-reptile, scaled and winged monsters of sea and air, fought for existence in the fiery mists of prehistoric jungles, figures that bodied forth the fantastic terror haunting the borderlands of sleep and delirium, all were wrought from the cedar that had overlooked the Northern sea while Rome fell and new empires were built upon its ruins.

When Master Anson and Keet-sa-o drew near, the medicine men had already begun their incantations over the totem pole. Tik-atl, from the mounded earth of the excavation, was directing their movements. The din of their yells and the rattles which they wielded drowned the chatter of the audience who ringed the sward before the chief's house. A swaying movement of the crowd communicated from those nearest the door prevented Richard from pressing forward into the throng and, at that moment, a piercing cry was heard which drew all eyes to the entrance of the lodge. In the doorway there appeared a number of warriors who bore between them the naked and struggling form of a girl slave. Although bound hand and foot, her lips were free and from them issued a succession of agonising screams which chilled the

Englishman's blood. He heard Keet-sa-o's voice from where she stood behind him:

"Come away! Quickly—oh, come away!"

He felt himself dragged backward and, yielding, he turned to face his companion.

"You must come," she repeated. "I did not know they would do this. I cannot bear it." Her face was drawn—her eyes wide with terror.

"What will they do?"

"The slave will be thrown into the pit and the totem placed on top of her. Come!" Placing her hands over her ears, Keet-sa-o turned and fled down the hill. Anson was not slow to follow her and was glad, indeed, that the voices of the yelling Indians submerged the cries of the victim.

Could anything but evil dwell in hearts which could tolerate such cruelty? With his consternation at this depravity and his sorrow for the innocent sufferer were mingled distrust and fear of the shaman who had led him north upon his quest of knowledge. The action of the old crone who had given him Tik-atl's charms, Keet-sa-o's warning—all strengthened the feeling that he had been deceived—misled by his own desperate desire. He determined to wrest from Keet-sa-o the truth in regard to her father.

Following the footsteps of the flying girl, he skirted the beach which was deserted except by a few of the younger children who played in the sands. The blue expanse of the sea, the snow-capped mountains upon the horizon spoke only of beauty and peace. Was it always the part of humanity to soil the face of nature with barbarism?

Keet-sa-o was running as if pursued by demons. The man's breath came hard and fast as he climbed the moss-covered cliff that lay to the east of the encampment. Over the rim of this, the girl's blanket had fluttered as she plunged through the underbrush growing upon the farther side. Breaking his way through salal and a thick growth of young spruce, he found her seated upon the white beach of a little cove that lay sheltered from sight or sound of the village. He remembered that she had lingered behind the shadow of this promontory upon the night when he had first met her. She lay now, flushed and panting, upon the sand at his feet. Anson seated himself beside her.

"Keet-sa-o, you are a Haida. Why are you different from your kinsmen or—from Tik-atl, your father?"

"I do not know," replied the girl. "Maybe it is because I am a squaw. Maybe it is because I have lived much alone and apart from all people. I have lived much with the flowers and trees. They do not hurt. They heal."

Anson leaned towards her.

"Methinks you are more like those same flowers and trees, Keet-sa-o. It is strange that, in this savage spot, you should have a heart like those in English bosoms—a heart which can pity and love. Will you tell me some things which I wish to know—which I must know?"

The maiden shifted the coils of her dark hair so that they partially covered her face and eyes.

"Keet-sa-o will tell you the truth," she murmured.

"Then, tell me, pray,"—Richard hesitated—"tell me if the knowledge which your father possesses is of good or of evil."

He reached into the bosom of his shirt and drew forth the embroidered sack containing the magician's charms. "An old woman, who does not love your father, gave this to me."

He held the bag towards the girl who sat up suddenly and looked at the little buckskin pouch, while a strange expression of alarm flashed across her face.

"I know," she muttered presently. "My mother gave it to you."

"Your mother!" retorted Anson. "That old crone! Is she, then, the wife of Tik-atl?"

"No, she is not his wife. She never was his wife. She was my mother, but I died when I was still a little girl. Then I was born as daughter to another woman and Tik-atl."

The man looked at her in bewilderment. The idea of reincarnation, which was part of the Indian faith, was new to him. Truly, in the days succeeding his vision of Auria and her Peruvian kingdom, he had felt that in some unknown fashion he was linked with ages that were past and buried, but he had never seriously formed a theory about the matter. Keet-sa-o had much difficulty in making her meaning clear. But, in a few moments, his brain, slow to grasp the things of the spirit, had a dawning conception of what to her was simple fact.

"But you have not told me if your father's wisdom is of light or darkness." He was anxious to press the main issue.

"What is light to some is darkness to others," she told him. "My father has talked with the spirits of the air and the fire, the earth and the sea. He has powers which he can use for good or for evil if he so wills. The powers themselves are not good nor are they evil. This I know inside of me, but it is hard to say it in words. I think—if the powers come to you—you will use them for good."

Her simple wisdom, deeper than his own, though so haltingly expressed, was exactly what Master Anson required at the moment. He was determined now to go through with his venture. Whatever of knowledge he obtained he could use to assist Auria in her work and thus he would gain a place at her side.

They rose and wandered together in the woods. From this child of nature, unspoiled by the orthodoxies and conventions which hedged her civilised sisters, the man learned many things. He was a wiser man when, in the twilight, they turned their steps once more towards Tik-atl's lodges. At the edge of the forest surrounding the village they parted. They endeavoured to reach their respective places without exciting attention.

So enwrapt was Richard in thought, that he scarcely heard footsteps which halted at his door. Opening, there entered Tik-atl accompanied by a slave who stood cowering beside his master as they took their stand within the entrance. The fire which burned in the centre of the lodge cast fantastic shadows of the shaman upon the wall and illumined his evil visage distorted by passion and cruelty. His eyes looked straight into those of Anson. His voice was impersonal. He spoke as the oracle of powers beyond himself.

"The stars stand in wait, O white chief! Even Tik-atl, the Mighty, cannot refuse their demand. This slave will lead you to the place where you must meet their messenger face to face. No food must pass your lips. There you must remain, fasting and praying, until the Great One shall come to you. Are you prepared?"

In the silence which followed the white man heard the beating of his own heart. Immobile, towering above him in the sombre robes of his office, the magician waited.

"I am ready," said Anson quietly.

CHAPTER XVI

IN THE BORDERLAND

Into the moonless night, a dim twilit land of stars, Master Anson followed his guide who glided before him silently, a shadow slipping between the trunks of the great firs. They had entered the forest which lay to the south of the village and were climbing a narrow trail which led to the summit of the low mountains overlooking the strait. In some places the

path led through open spaces where moss-covered ledges of rock afforded a soil too thin to support vegetation. Here they found their progress impeded by the nature of the growth beneath their feet. It was soft as a Persian carpet, but of so smooth a texture that they had difficulty in standing upright. They slipped and scrambled over the springy turf until the spruce thickets closed about them again. Here the underbrush was dense as that in a tropical jungle, the giant conifers towering above them like pillars springing from the base of solid greenery. The gloom was unbroken and the silence oppressive in these forest tracts. The misted blue of the few strips of sky visible overhead was besprinkled sparsely with stars which seemed remote as if belonging to some strata of a world above and beyond them.

For fully the space of an hour, Anson stumbled after the sinuous form which flitted before him. His endurance was taxed to the uttermost limit in order to keep pace with his guide. Finally they emerged into an open space which lay at the foot of a precipitous cliff which rimmed the crest of the hills. Immediately at the base of the promontory there was a fan-shaped rock-slide composed of jumbled fragments of basalt lying like a supporting buttress against the wall above it. Between this and the forest below there was a semicircular declivity covered with a mantle of soft brown pine grass through which an occasional boulder projected a sharp elbow. Turning here, Master Anson saw the grey stretches of the sea shining beneath the dark slopes which he had just traversed and, beyond, like a bank of low-lying fog, the snow-capped peaks of the great island to northward. Ringed by the wall of the silent woods and the adamant barrier of the cliff, roofed by the dim sky, it was an aerie perched above the world, shut off from sight or sound of mortals, a sanctuary where only the wandering winds whispered a message old as time, and the shadows of lonely clouds wrote their story upon the grass of the hillside. It breathed a peace that was unruffled by the cruelty or ignorance which made "a place of tombs" out of the community they had just left behind them. Here, it could indeed be imagined that spirit hands might draw aside a curtain.

The Englishman stood with bared head, allowing the night wind to cool his forehead which was wet with perspiration. The slave, after a short space in which he seemed to be recovering himself after his exertion, shivered slightly. He glanced hurriedly about the place and upward to the black cliff towering above them, then, without so much as a gesture of farewell, turned towards the forest and a moment thereafter had disappeared into the dark caverns between the trees.

Expectation, reinforced by a vivid imagination, is a mighty force towards the accomplishment of the end desired. Over seas fraught with deadly peril, through days when uncertainty and loneliness had pre-empted his spirit, among a savage people who revolted his sensibilities by their cruelty and unnatural customs, Richard had been steadfast and unmoved, because before him he saw a picture of himself turning the key of a portal which would admit him to a world of which he had but second-hand knowledge. Of superhuman powers he had been given evidence in his association with Auria. He knew that her wisdom was the hereditary property of the Indian. He believed in its existence as he had previously had faith in the teachings of his Bible, but no clue had been given as to the path leading to the heart of the mysteries. Now, for the first time, a servant of the invisible powers had said, "Watch and pray and the Great Spirit will speak to you." Conquering for the nonce the superstitious fears which were part of every Englishman's equipment in his day, he stood armed in spirit for conflict with the legions of darkness, or for parley with a messenger of light.

If he had been without hope or without imagination, nothing would have been there for him in the dim-lit space between forest and cliff, but, possessing both, everything or the possibility of everything was there present. There could be no sight which was not an intimation—no break in the silence which was not a rift through which sounded the approaching footstep of an event.

Master Anson watched while a wind, which flowed over the cliff above him, rustling the shadowy tree-tops in its descent to the sea, gathered clouds from somewhere to southward and drove them swiftly and silently across the sky. Their ragged vanguards spread like dark hands blotting out the light of the stars until the sea was no longer visible as a shimmering line beyond the land. Darkness, palpable and impenetrable, closed about him, shutting out suggestion of the world without himself. Then it was that the man prayed, not to the personal deity of his childhood but to the Spirit which he had learned to think of as pervading all things, whether of earth or water, air or fire. How long he crouched in the darkness waiting, straining nerve and brain to sense the presence of some unseen messenger, it would be hard to say. The wind brushing the grasses against his bare hands, the soft thud of his own heart alone intimated that life was stirring about him. A great and overwhelming loneliness swept over him and he slept.

The cold dawn awakened Anson to a realisation that his vigil had just commenced. The sky was still overcast and

the landscape obscured by thick mists which had gathered during the night. Shivering, he endeavoured to restore the normal circulation by exercise. His limbs, cramped and stiffened, gradually felt the returning glow of warm blood. Then, as if to add to his discomfort, it began to rain, at first gently, but slowly increasing until a driving shower swept the space in which he stood exposed. He sought shelter beneath the boughs of the trees fringing his little park, but the dripping branches only partially protected him. During the long hours of the day the weather remained unchanged until, with the approach of darkness, there arose a wind which lifted the clouds but in no measure abated Richard's cheerlessness. It was not a warm breeze from the south-west, but one which flowed from the snow-covered Northern ranges. He would have no difficulty in keeping awake through the long watches of the night.

Four days and nights of discomfort and weariness followed. Rain and cold continued. The man persevered in his hope that any moment might bring the long-expected entry into a new experience. He was willing to pay the price and did not believe that the gates would swing open at his first imperious summons. Now a disconcerting complication troubled him. His health had been of the best until the continued strain of his separation from Auria had begun to undermine it. Inclined at all times to be neglectful of his physical well-being, he had paid little or no attention to the matter of food. Now, his nerves, wrought to a high state of tension, were his sole source of strength with which to resist physical ill. A headache accompanied by a high fever warned him that all was not well, but, impatient to carry through his venture, he dismissed the matter as incidental to his fasting.

On the evening of the fifth day a slanting sheet of rain drove across the clearing and broke upon the rocky barrier below the cliff. Master Anson lay crouched in the shelter of a cedar whose long branches touched the sodden earth of the hillside. Suddenly he laughed. The sloping ground below the rock-slide, carpeted thickly with a matting of grasses, was illuminated by a pale green light, phosphorescent and elusive, which flowed like the swirling water of a mountain torrent downward to the dark edge of the forest. Up the declivity, struggling against the streaming radiance, were climbing numbers of tiny, fantastic figures more grotesque than the trolls of Peer Gynt's dream. Rotund rabbits whose quivering ears supported Milanese bonnets, hen partridges flapping in crinolines and lace, solemn crows fluttering in clerical broadcloth and bands—these, with others of the furred and feathered folk in motley garb of the court and camp, curveted and slid, fell and pushed forward again in an attempt to gain headway against the light. Then the whole weird scene was blotted from sight as if by an invisible breath. Only the towering black front of the cliff and a handful of twinkling stars remained. Master Anson struggled feebly in the gloom and groaned.

A warm stream, as of perspiration, trickled down his forehead and his eyes smarted from the intrusion of the briny moisture. A flash, red and lurid, illuminated a space before him in which were clustered faces grim and sinister which pressed in as if to submerge and overwhelm him. In his hand was a short sword; behind him the cold, rounded surface of a stone pillar; below, a wide staircase thronged with a seething mob of armed men bearing aloft torches whose flickering light revealed the scene. A soft hand rested for an instant upon his head so that he glanced upward. There, above him, upon a projection from the side of the column, stood a woman, her white robes dishevelled, her unbound hair partially veiling her face. "Auria!" Even as the name sprang to his lips, a surging movement of the crowd before him drew his whole attention to the danger which confronted him. The light danced upon the bared weapons advancing towards him. A few seconds of desperate sword-play and then ... a spasm of pain gripped and held him momentarily in its power. Darkness followed, but a dull agony still continued to clutch at his heart.

Gradually the pain subsided, to give place to an indefinable terror—a creeping sensation of horror which bound him helpless to move or cry aloud while it stole towards him through the silence. It was there, he knew, without his leafy covert—in possession of the clearing. If upon his face he had felt the foetid breath of some monster feeling for his throat, he would not have been more certain of immediate peril. Between him and the cliff it stood, gloating, before it leaped to destroy him. He clutched at the grass roots in his fear. Death held no special dread but this invisible Presence threatened something beyond loss of life. It was crouching now to spring. Richard felt a shadowy body launched through the air, a cold wind followed by a fiery breath. Despair gave him voice. His agonised cry tore through the darkness of the forest.

A sudden rush of rain followed, drowning his groanings. The few stars that had, for an instant, struggled through the mists overhead, were obscured. Alone, ringed round by terror, the man lay raving under the spell of delirium.

The feast of totems was drawing to a close. Five days of continuous ceremonials and merry-making had crowned Ka-weah with a fame that would go down to his children's children. In groups, the visiting Haidas were departing to their respective villages, bearing with them, in their long canoes, precious freight of blankets, weapons and ornaments received during the big potlatch. However, the lodge of Tik-atl was still occupied by his relatives in force, so that he was compelled to seek privacy in the house of the Snake.

In the centre of his henchman's lodge there stood a circular hearth of clean white sand rimmed with clam-shells whereon there was smouldering a fire which lighted the room. The red embers illumined the faces of the magician and his host who were the sole occupants of the place. The great entrance had been securely barred against chance stragglers from the feast.

Tik-atl, still in his ceremonial robes, held beneath his arm a curiously shaped bundle wrapped in a yellow mat of cedar bark. Depositing this upon the floor near the fire, he directed his companion to untie the ropes with which it was bound. Tsik-an obeyed and presently there appeared a statuette or image composed of some clay-like substance which looked like putty as it glistened in the firelight. As the Snake turned the lay figure face upward, it presented features strangely like those of Master Anson, the white chief. The cheeks were painted to represent the ruddy complexion of the Englishman; even his brown hair had been simulated by a hemp-like substance which might have been seaweed of some peculiar variety. Grotesque and crude though it was, it presented a reasonably accurate image of the man whom Tik-atl had drawn into his toils.

The shaman leisurely divested himself of his cumbersome garments until naked with the exception of a narrow belt about his waist. His tall figure gleamed like a bronze statue in the firelight. Then, replacing his ceremonial bonnet from which dangled rows of costly ermine skins, he seized a rattle which was attached to his discarded clothing. This tool of the magician's trade was a handsomely carved instrument of red cedar, the major portion of the convex surface being formed to represent the sun with projecting rays, while the long, slender handle was beautifully inlaid with bits of mother-of-pearl. Tik-atl swung the rattle slowly with a circular movement above his head, increasing the speed until the air vibrated with the droning of its flight. While the insistent hum gradually increased in volume and intensity, he commenced to chant an accompaniment as he moved in a rhythmical dance about the figure which lay upon the floor.

The sorcerers of the mediaeval age just ending in England had no greater knowledge of their ancient art than this priest of the darkness who ruled his tribes in the undiscovered wilds of America. It had been the practice, from time immemorial, of those who dabbled in the black arts, to wreak their vengeance upon an enemy by making for themselves an image of the victim, of wax or other plastic material, upon which they inflicted the tortures which they wished to transmit to the man himself. Tik-atl, armed with his evil wisdom, was quite capable of placing the white chief upon the rack mentally or physically in order to draw him under the spell of the nature forces who were his own guides and servants. Instinctively, he knew that Anson was, in some respects, his superior in mentality and possessed of a will no less determined than his own. But, worn by fasting and loss of sleep, his physical resistance might be broken down so that his wandering mind might leave unguarded the doors of his house of clay. Then could other minds and wills find entrance and, taking possession, hold the man at the disposition of their lord and master, the great magician of the Haidas. It might even be desirable to send Anson back to the Salish villages, knowing that, in him, there would be a sworn ally of the powers of darkness. Auria, the white priestess, would have within her camp and in the person of her most trusted guardian an emissary of the Haidas, ruthless as the winds which swept their rock-bound islands, subtle as the great serpent who guarded their waters.

Crouched by the fire, Tsik-an sat silent as an image carved in wood while the shaman proceeded with his incantations. The black eyes of the Snake glistened in the light from the embers, but no movement or sound betrayed his intense interest in the results of the spell which was being woven about the white chief.

The walls of the lodge were shaking now with the combined roaring of the magician's rattle and the steady throbbing of his voice, backed by the concentrated power of his emotion. From somewhere in the invisible world, he had gathered in as to a focal point elemental forces which swayed at his command, struggling like hungry wolves on the leash held by his will to evil. Circling the lay form and prostrate figure of his enemy innumerable times, he swept onward in his dance which was a strange admixture of restraint and abandonment. Then, of a sudden, he paused and bent above his victim.

His whole attitude was that of a wild beast about to spring upon its prey. Even Tsik-an moved slightly as if to avoid some doom which was poised before being launched like a destroying avalanche. The hands of the magician were fumbling at his waist quietly, but now more uncertainly. His face, set in its intensity of passion, relaxed and, with an impatient snarl, he took his gaze from the image of clay and looked downward to the belt which girded his loins. His jaws snapped as he whirled to face Tsik-an.

"My medicine-bag! It is gone!"

The Snake knew that day and night, sleeping or awake, this package of charms stayed upon the person of his chief. From the hour of his initiation it was his guardian. The Haida rose and stood, trembling, before his master.

"No—no—that cannot be! Who would dare...?" he stammered.

The shaman looked as if to spring upon his henchman.

"It is gone! I tell you, it is gone!" His face worked convulsively. "Go, bring the squaw, Keet-sa-o, my daughter. She alone enters my house in the night. Go!"

As if driven by an angry wind, the Snake gathered his robes about him and fled through the doorway of the lodge.

With the uneasy, elastic step of a caged animal, the shaman paced up and down the floor of Tsik-an's house. Viciously he kicked out at the image of his victim, which impeded his path, so that it lay sputtering and baking within the circle of the embers on the hearth. Then a cold breeze from without scattered the fire and ashes and his warrior stood upon the platform within the great door.

"I have searched, O Mighty One. The maiden is not to be found. It is said that, at sundown, she was seen going into the forest. She was alone but carried a burden."

Tik-atl turned his back upon the brave and for a space stood quietly. Then he laughed. It was not a sound that was good to hear, but it relieved the fear of Tsik-an who gazed wonderingly at him as he faced about.

"We are fools, Tsik-an! The gods have chosen their own way to destroy the white chief. What need had I to call upon the spirits of earth and air when love is a guide without eyes? A spell more powerful than my charms will hold him helpless while he dreams in the arms of a Haida. Now—I must go—over the dark waters to the camp of the priestess of the Salish! She will kneel to the power of the hand that has taken her warrior. She, too, is a woman and love—I who know have said it—is blind!"

Alone, in the grip of delirium, Master Anson fought with the powers of darkness below the black cliff which overlooked the Northern seas. With its characteristic waves, the fever made him conscious at times that he was in the control of a disease and then again plunged him into a coma which swept him outward into unknown depths of night and the mists of illusion. When conscious he had risen and, with a desperate effort, had dragged himself from beneath the tree which sheltered him until he crouched in the open grass-covered space before the rocky barrier of the hill. But there his strength had failed him and he had collapsed, sinking into a limp heap which lay motionless upon the ground.

As the disorder progressed his lucid intervals became shorter until he was entirely within the power of the malady. Through all the experiences which succeeded the first entrance into the borderland between waking consciousness and its fantastic counterpart in the realm of dream, there was a persistent recurrence of the face and form of Auria. At one moment he lay bound and powerless while she perished in agony before his eyes. He was tortured by the thought that, if he could only cast off the spell which bound him fast, one touch from his hand would save her. He saw her ringed about with dangers innumerable, her beauty helpless in the clutch of foul and evil men, and again he watched, in terror and amazement, while her golden hair became grey and sparse, her glorious features marred and wrinkled by age and decrepitude. The physical brain, wearied by the strain, finally succumbed and he no longer knew that which transpired in the haunted places of the invisible world of dreams.

Richard's first presentiment that he was returning to life came when he felt that he was being borne upward on unseen but powerful wings from some black depth that had engulfed him. He was dimly aware of the rush of pinions through vast empty spaces, a cool air which fanned his brow and a glimmering light gradually growing brighter which suggested sunlight and green grass and a fragrance as of flowers after rain. Opening his eyes, he looked into the face of Keet-sa-o, who bent above him while she chafed his hands and brushed back the hair from his forehead.

A blazing fire near by leaped and crackled, the fragrant cedar and fir boughs casting showers of sparks against the blackness of the forest. The Haida girl had taken off her outer garment, a blanket of the soft wool of the mountain goat, and, wrapping it into a bundle, had placed it beneath Anson's head. In her short kirtle of deerskin, her dark hair clothing her shoulders, she was an alluring picture of savage beauty. When Richard stirred in a vain attempt to rise, she smiled and shook her head.

"Not yet, my chief, my beloved. When the dawn comes, we shall try what you can do. Till then, rest and Keet-sa-o will watch."

The maiden rose and went swiftly to the fire. Presently she returned with a wooden bowl in which was steaming a savoury broth.

"It was hard to bring, but I carried it carefully and have it all. My mother makes good baskets. You must try to drink some of it."

Having taken some of the broth, the man felt a glow of returning strength. He sank contentedly back upon the blanket and closed his eyes. Presently he murmured:

"Why did you do this for me, Keet-sa-o? I am not of your people and may be, at any time, forced to be their enemy. How did you know that I was perishing?"

"How did I know? How does the bird know that somewhere high up in the blue a hawk is circling above her loved ones? How do I know why I am your friend? You have been kind to me and Keet-sa-o never forgets. Besides, I know the heart of my father."

"He could not know that I would be ill," said Richard. "And he gave me my chance as he had promised."

"When my father promises," whispered the girl, "it is because he wishes to increase his own power. You might, indeed, have become a brave and have entered into your totem, but that would have been because you yourself have the warrior's heart and have no fear. You are ill now and must not talk."

With gentle, restraining hands she touched his lips so that he could not reply. A feeling of tenderness, an affection which drew him strangely to her, grew in the man's heart. She was all that a woman might be to heal and to strengthen when the conflict of life had proved too strenuous. An instant pain was present, suffusing his thoughts which went out towards the little Haida maiden. Loyalty to Love forbade that he should give way to anything which might dim his memory of the one woman. He lay very silent, and presently his breathing showed that he was falling asleep. Through the long hours of darkness Keet-sa-o watched and waited for the dawn.

CHAPTER XVII

LIGHT AND DARKNESS

"The Haidas, O great queen, are wolves. In the night they creep—creep like shadows through the forest. Their canoes leave a serpent trail upon the waters. No salmon will run where their paddles have poisoned the sea."

Auria smiled indulgently at the fervour of hatred in her maiden's voice. The girl, slim as a young fawn, with eyes that held the devotion of dumb, woodland things towards the hand that feeds them, was busily engaged in the task of braiding the hair of her mistress. Her comb of polished cedar-wood was quite as effective and beautiful as the most modern instrument of ivory. The golden hair of her queen was a continuous wonder and delight to her handmaiden.

"You are safe, little one. Why should you let fear disturb your dreams? Our scouts, of late, have brought no word of Haida canoes and you know that they have been far north in search of the white chief."

The little brown maiden was silent. She had reason to think that her mistress might be happier if she did not speak further of the great white warrior who had so mysteriously disappeared from their villages.

Auria was seated upon a rude chair covered by richly embroidered deerskins. With her maid, she was alone in the great council-house which served as a home for herself and attendants and a temple for the celebration of her religious ceremonies. The large room in which she was sitting was a spacious hall. Its sides held the apartments of her servants. The centre of it was bare of furniture, and upon the earthen floor were the remnants of smouldering charcoal from the fires about which the ritualistic dances were held. At the end of the building farthest from the great entrance was partitioned off the private adytum of the priestess. Steps led to the portals of this apartment, the door of which was guarded by two beautifully carved and coloured totem poles.

The wisdom of the handmaiden was correct in its surmise. In the heart of her princess a terrific struggle had been waged between the woman and the priestess when Master Anson had gone upon his quest to the land of the Haidas. Though the woman had been defeated and set aside by the devotee who was pledged to the service of her people, there had been a sudden accession of human emotion when she knew that Richard was no longer within call of her voice. The Salish braves, spurred by her orders, had searched the coasts of the mainland for traces of the missing man and the tribes of the interior had sheltered her spies while they sought for clues leading to an explanation of his absence. Night and day her prayers had gone up to the powers of earth and fire for him, and her art, in so far as was permitted, was strained to discover reasons for his disappearance. But no answer had come in response to her efforts. Her face was a mask which held for her Indian counsellors no hint of what was passing in her mind.

Bestowing a hasty caress on the maiden, she rose when her toilet was completed. The mention of Master Anson had stirred her again. She dismissed the girl.

Time and circumstance had failed to affect the beauty which was hers. In every detail she was the same fascinating vision of loveliness that had awed the English sea-dogs when Master Vicary had haled her from the hold of the Spanish galleon. She was clothed now in remnants of the rich finery which she had preserved through all her adventures but, in addition, she wore barbaric ornaments peculiar to the Coast Indians. A belt of cedar fibre, tastefully coloured and as soft and as pliant as velvet, confined her flowing robe; a fillet of the same material above her brow bound the luxuriance of her fair hair, while the jewels which she had brought from Mexico still adorned her person.

The momentary storm of her emotions left her pale and distraught. Again she was blaming herself bitterly for having dealt so hardly with Master Anson since their arrival among the Salish. Resolutely she had rejected his love, in the belief that it would detract from her life-work. Having started upon the long road of self-development by means of the ascetic discipline of the old Aztec schools, she felt constrained to continue. Her power over the tribes was unbounded for good or evil. This power she looked upon as a trust to be held for them. Yet the English adventurer had awakened the woman soul in her. She loved him but refused human expression to her love. The gulf between them seemed impassable. To him her world was a chimera of the imagination. If now he were dead, might he not know the reality of her realm of the spirit? If alive, might he not benefit by the help which her presence could give him? She remembered the touch of his hand, the passionate undertones in his voice which had stirred the primitive in her. How her blood had sung in answer to the simple words, "I love you"! And now ... she might never again hear those words upon human lips. She buried her face in her hands.

A sound of someone entering the room caused her to turn her back to the great entrance door while she quickly removed traces of her grief. It was the priestess, serene, gracious, who faced the handmaiden who spoke to her. The girl's eyes were shining with excitement.

"My queen, I have news! We have captured a Haida spy. Even now your warriors are dragging him here. They would know your will. He may know..."

Auria checked her suddenly.

"Nothing or everything!"

Iala, the handmaiden, stood silently before her mistress awaiting her commands. Her head was bowed, her hands crossed over her bosom. When the priestess spoke, Auria was in place of God to her servant.

"Tell Na-tatl that I would speak with him alone."

Na-tatl, in Anson's absence, was her foremost warrior and, indeed, had always been admitted to her councils when the Englishman had been forced to wait without her lodge for his orders. Presently the great Salish brave entered and, gliding swiftly to her side, knelt at her feet. Only to her maidens was it permitted to stand in her presence.

"Tell me, Na-tatl—this Haida spy—where did you come by him? Have you questioned him?"

The man answered hurriedly. It was difficult to follow the swift Salish tongue which clicked and slid over the torrent of breath.

"Many nights, O Great One, have our canoes slipped through the shadows in the Northern waters. As nearly as we dared, we searched the land of the Haida devils for the white chief. None of our own people have seen aught of the Haidas on our coasts of late—and we were too few to attack them in their own villages. But, on the nearby shores, we lurked by day and searched by night. Then, knowing that you waited for word from us, we turned homeward. On our way we captured a Haida. Dumb as a snake he has been since first we bound him and threw him into our canoe. But he will speak under torture."

"He has not spoken, then?"

"No word has passed his lips."

Auria paused before giving her order.

"Bring him here—at once."

When the captured Haida was brought to her, she was standing upon the lower steps leading to her private apartment. Between the totem poles, clad in her flowing robes and glittering jewels, the sunlight from the grand entrance to the lodge fell full upon her. Radiant, cold fire incarnate in flesh, she was truly a Daughter of the Sun.

If awed by the strange sight of her magnificence, the spy betrayed no hint of it as he stood before her. He was a powerfully built savage, evidently one used to command by right of blood. Even the frayed and soiled bark-cloth robe which he held about his body could not conceal the touch of the leader in the set of his shoulders and his erect, unbending carriage. His hands were securely bound behind him by a plaited cord.

"Release him, Na-tatl, and leave us. I will speak to him alone." Auria caught the look of hesitation in the eyes of the Salish. "Have no fear. The Great God who delivered him into our hands is stronger than a Haida. Go now. I will question him."

Auria had too recently been shaken by her personal feelings towards Master Anson. Something might betray to the Salish brave a human reason for her anxiety in regard to the white chief. If he had met death by the cruel hands of the Northern savages, she was not certain of her self-control.

Reluctantly Na-tatl cut the cord binding the Haida's hands. He then retired sullenly through the door. To plunge a knife into the spy's heart would have been more to his liking than to leave him as he did.

When released, the Haida folded his arms across his breast and, with head thrown back, looked up at Auria. His lynx-like eyes were full, the pupils round and filled with tawny light. His immobile face showed no sign of astonishment nor of fear. The priestess shuddered inwardly at the evil power, the untamed ferocity of will, which radiated from the man. This was, assuredly, no ordinary spy. She drew her breath sharply. The sunlight flooding the centre of the hall seemed suddenly dimmed. But her voice remained under control.

"You speak Salishan?"

"Yes."

"Who are you?"

She was startled by the man's action. With a swift gesture he slipped the robe from his shoulders and threw it at her feet. His head was bowed momentarily before her, his arms outstretched in worship. Then he stood erect, clothed only in his close-fitting tunic and beaded belt.

"One who has dared death to look upon the face of the Sun! A Son of the Dark Wisdom seeks the light. Tik-atl has paid the price. But, of late, his eyes have been darkened by a star greater than his own. His people perish for he can aid them no longer. For them he has come."

The fame of the mighty magician of the North was common talk among the Salish tribes. His name was familiar to Auria. Could it be possible that this was he? How improbable that he would venture alone into an enemy's country when he could have come in force! Yet—what was this wall of impenetrable darkness which suddenly blotted him from sight? Her will fought desperately for mastery and, instantly, the room was light again—the man facing her as before. She knew now.

"I have heard of your fame. But why have you come? You have not told me all."

The Haida spoke deliberately, choosing his words. The Salishan tongue was causing him some difficulty.

"For many suns Tik-atl ruled supreme. All power was given to him because his heart had no fear. The Ravens were his and the Great One blessed our hunting. The sea gave us its silver spoil of salmon and our enemies were as dust before the wind of our wrath. But now our lodges are desolate. Our young men return with empty hands from the hills. Our nets bring only seaweed from the deeps. Our warriors are weak and have no will to take what is theirs nor to hold what they have. Why? The Daughter of the Sun has been with their enemies. Have we of the North not more need of Her light than these children who have no winter? Come to us! I speak with the voice of my people."

Could this man, who was evil incarnate, have a heart? Auria doubted it, but yet the fact that he was here present seemed proof of a devotion to his kinsmen. Was it merely the long-standing feud of the tribes that had poisoned the minds of the Salish until they had believed that no good could exist in the soul of a Haida?

"It was not my will," she said, "but the will of the Great Spirit that sent me to the Salish. To Him, the Haidas are as dear as any of His children. But if I leave these whom He has given to me—if I go to the Haida lodges, who will take my place while I am gone?"

"Hearken," retorted the shaman, "hearken to my lesser wisdom. The hatred of Salish for Haida is long and an evil thing. Why should not all the children of the Great Spirit live at peace? Together, the Daughter of the Sun as High Priestess, and Tik-atl as her spokesman, can unite the peoples from here to the farthest North where the sky is streaked with crackling fire. The white chief waits in my lodge to hear the mighty news that you will help him in this great work for the welfare of all."

Auria started. Tik-atl's last sentence had been delivered casually. But a momentary gleam in his eyes showed that he knew the import of his words. With an effort, she said calmly:

"The white chief is in your lodges? Does he know that you are here?"

"He has sent me," replied the Haida.

Auria remained silent for a space.

"I do not believe you." She spoke quietly.

For the first time during the interview, the face of the man was stirred from its passivity. His eyes flashed angrily but his lips smiled.

"Does the great white magician need to believe me? Her eyes may be opened. The water will tell no lies."

"You have spoken well, O Haida," murmured Auria; "the water may reveal things as they are, although it has hitherto given no sign. We shall see!"

While still speaking, the woman turned and, quickly mounting the steps leading to the adytum, she disappeared through the doorway. Presently she returned bearing in her hands an earthen bowl ornamented with a coloured pattern of Indian design. The vessel, which was filled with water, she placed upon a stand on the landing before the door. Tik-atl mounted the steps and stood beside her.

The bowl was lined with a substance of silvery, metallic lustre so that the water formed a mirror in which were reflected the faces of Auria and the shaman. The priestess bowed her head in silence for a moment, then held her hands, with fingers slightly curved downwards, over the liquid. Tik-atl bent forward, his gaze riveted upon the water.

Very soon the faces of the two magicians disappeared from the depths of the bowl and a black surface, blank and dull, was seen in place of their images. Smoky lines, pearly grey as wisps of mist on a fir-clad slope, began to glide over the darkness at the bottom of the vessel. These, suffused with opalescent colours, arranged themselves into definite outlines, while the hues took their rightful places on tree, rock and sky, forming a bit of landscape.

Seated on a smooth-worn log beside a piece of kelp-strewn sand were two figures, one of which was familiar to Auria. Master Anson, in his semi-barbaric costume, sat idly engaged in whittling a bit of red cedar-wood with his sheath-knife. At his side, her arm laid caressingly across his bent shoulders, was an Indian girl of more than ordinary beauty. The maiden presently laid her head against the man's arm.

Auria in vain tried to stem the sudden storm of pain that arose in her heart. It welled through her being, paling her lips and dimming her sight, so that she no longer saw the picture below her. In that instant, the austere Daughter of the Sun was banished and, in her place, the woman who loved and would possess reigned with undisputed sway. If he had died, she could have worshipped his memory; if he had lived, cherishing only the thought of her, she could have mourned for him, but the knowledge that there was another woman brought only the old, fierce, primitive pain of loss and despair. Blindly, she struck at the thing nearest to her.

"In this you have not lied, O Father of Serpents! Nevertheless, you are a liar. You can harbour no thought of good to the people who are mine. Why you have come I know not, but this I know: you shall return no more to work your evil upon others. I shall destroy you as I would a foul carrion bird that hovered above my little ones!"

At the moment, Tik-atl had no clue to the wrath of the princess who stood before him quivering with anger. A wounded tigress, there was menace only in the words which she flung at him. Her grey eyes were the colour of polished steel, hard and deadly.

Without, he heard the merry laughter of children who played in the sun. His mind saw the village of the Haidas, lithe brown mothers nursing their babes by the lodges, withered crones plaiting baskets in the shade of the great firs. It was a long way to them.

He faced Auria across the water that held their images—the white, proud face of the priestess and the bronzed, scarred countenance of himself, with neck muscles swollen, the veins on his forehead throbbing as he pitted his will against that of his opponent. For a space there was complete silence. Auria could hear the muffled beating of her own heart.

Then a smile, sinister and triumphant, curved the lips of the shaman.

"I will go back to my people. You are powerless to stay my will! Ugh!..."

Tik-atl raised his hand in a threatening gesture. "I was a fool to fear the might of a squaw whose face is as soft as snow."

Desperately Auria strove to call aloud. The eyes of the Haida held her as a helpless bird in their toils. The great darkness which she had experienced when she first saw him was before her again, about her as an impenetrable wall—a Power that pressed in upon her, paralysing her.... She heard the voice of Tik-atl receding, rising and falling like a tempest in a forest far above her upon some inaccessible height.

"I go, but I will return. The great white queen shall go as a squaw to our villages. The tribes of the South will be a memory. Ashes will mark the place where their shrines were built to a Sun which has set."

Iala, the little maiden, venturing to peer into the great council-house when the guards were not looking, saw her mistress lying upon the steps of the sanctuary. With a cry she ran to her side. In answer to her caresses, Auria opened her eyes. There were very human tears in them—a woman's tears. The Priestess of the Sun had been conquered by the woman who loved as the daughters of men.

"Take me in, Iala—into my own place. I am tired. No ... no questions, little one. I will not see Na-tatl."

CHAPTER XVIII

THE GATHERING OF THE WOLVES

Through the blue haze of smoke in the great council-house of the Haidas, the faces of the warriors shone like bronze idols ranged in rows in an Oriental bazaar. Seated in tiers about the long hall, they alternately beat upon their deerhide drums and howled together like were-wolves driving through a storm in some lone mountain pass. Down the centre of the chamber fires of fir-knots crackled and blazed, while, about them, the squaws wove in and out in the mazes of a dance that seemed a repression rather than an expression of the savage joy that filled their hearts. Bodies swayed, the black locks strewn with swans-down glittered in the ruddy light, but hands and feet moved slowly and rhythmically as if restrained from an abandonment that would, if released, have torn flesh and limb. Occasionally a woman would fall, her form would stiffen, foam would gather about her rigid lips and then the men would carry her out of the lodge to recover in the cool air blowing up from the sea.

Without, the stars were shining in the patches of blue sky between the tops of the Douglas firs and, through the dim aisles of the forest, a light breeze stirred the tangled growth of salal and fern. The murmur of the surf meant that the sea, though hidden by the timber, was not far away. Peace reigned without the council-house, but within there was a gathering storm of war that would carry desolation to far-away places. That day had marked the return to the village of Tik-atl, the despot of the North.

Meanwhile, into the bay below the encampment a lone canoe was making its way, bearing Keet-sa-o and Master Anson. Early in the morning of that day they had stocked their boat with bread made from the sweet roots of clover and fritillary, with candle-fish oil and dried salmon, and had set out to their favourite fishing-grounds. The weather had been favourable for their sport, so that they had been unwilling to return until the twilight warned them that time was passing. It was long after nightfall ere they had sighted the fires of the lodges as they rounded the headlands enclosing the Haida harbour.

In the bottom of the canoe a shining pile of flounders and rock cod slid backwards and forwards as their little craft breasted the waters. Keet-sa-o was paddling, her slim, young body swinging easily as her blade cut its shining way

through the stars reflected in the tide which was bearing them shoreward. Master Richard, seated in the stern of the canoe, was ostensibly steering but in reality was more engrossed in watching the lithe figure of the girl before him.

As the boat drew within hearing distance of the beach, the throbbing of drums and the intermittent yelling from savage throats arrested their attention. Keet-sa-o ceased paddling.

"What is it, girl?"

She did not answer immediately but leaned forward listening intently, her hands clasping the paddle which lay across the gunwales. Anson was startled by the sudden vigour with which the maiden raised the blade and drove the craft violently forward.

"It is war—a big war! Let us seek the shadows by the shore. My father is not here. They dare not hold councils without him. I must know."

The man had little opportunity for questions as the canoe was impelled towards the beach by the swift, sure strokes of the girl.

They landed some distance from the shingle where the Haida fleet lay at rest. Their boat was drawn up and left beneath the overshadowing branches of a cypress whose lace-like fronds formed an effectual screen. Keet-sa-o intimated that it would be wiser for her to go forward alone. She would reconnoitre and, having learned the reason for the sudden summons to war, would return to him with the news.

Across the shoulder of the neighbouring cliffs the moon was rising, a silvery shield gleaming behind the black outlines of the fir-trees. Its radiance cast a shimmering path of light through the darkness veiling the waters of the bay. The silence, unbroken save by the gentle lapping of the waves about the roots of the cedar which projected beyond the tide-mark, was oppressive. The war drums in the village had ceased for the moment. Anson was consumed by loneliness. The presence of the girl during the day had prevented him from dwelling upon his own problem. His thoughts were all with Auria now. Could this rising of the Northern tribes bode aught of danger to her? Had he not deserted her, leaving her to the mercy of the enemies of the Salish?

There was little opportunity to think clearly. The forest was thrilling with the weird, wolf-like howling of the Haida braves. The roar of the deerhide drums rose and fell like approaching thunder. The man rose and drew his sword as he marked an unwonted motion of the dense shrubbery on the bank above his hiding-place. Keet-sa-o dropped lightly upon the sand at his side.

Eagerly he grasped the meaning of the swift sibilants of the Indian tongue. The girl was trembling with excitement, breathless from her haste.

"My father has returned. It is a great—a very great war. All of the islands are here. The Salish are to be wiped out, women, children ... all! Upon her own altar, dyed with the blood of her own people, the white priestess will be slain. He has sworn it. The Great Ones of the earth and water have sworn it shall be."

Keet-sa-o winced with pain as Anson grasped her fiercely by the arm. Her woman-heart did not ask why the pain was sweet to her. His gentleness hitherto had drawn her at times to wonder if the warrior was in him. Her primitive soul rejoiced that here was a strong man who could crush and rend if need be.

"Keet-sa-o, listen! It shall not be. My gods are stronger than the devils of your father. You must help me. The white priestess is a friend of all peoples ... yours, too. She is beautiful and good. We must stop this madness!"

The Haida stood before him with bended head. Was she not his to do with as he willed? Yet, why did he want, first of all, to save the white woman? Ah—he was white, of the race of the Sun! But then, too, he had said that she was beautiful. A quick pang of jealousy stabbed her. If he went away through the treacherous waters to the land of the golden-haired princess, would he come back to her? The old, eternal instinct of her sex prompted her reply.

"Can the hand of a woman stay the wrath of the storm? Can one warrior prevail over hundreds? Not to-night must

you seek my father. Wait. When he has slept, he may hear other counsel."

"Wait ... wait? When all that is dear to me in life is in danger? Nay, God forgive me not, if my sword is sheathed in this hour!"

The agony in his voice whipped her like a lash. But within her a sullen indomitable storm was gathering. She would not part with him. The white priestess, the shadowy power that would drag him from her side, was hated at that moment with all the savagery of her untutored heart. Her words were calm. Her slight form was tense—unmoved by the violence of the man who stood over her.

"I know my people. If you would act wisely, wait. They would kill you to-night. To-morrow you may have a chance to see my father alone."

The hellish din above them in the village redoubled its volume. The great wolves of the Northern forests tearing their quarry with slavering jaws could sound no more of pitiless blood-lust than the throats of the Ravens who screamed in their longing to rend the flesh of their enemies. The dim forest rocked tremblingly before the impact of their fury. The darkness was palpitant with repressed hatred and omen of impending horrors.

Anson leaned feebly upon the gnarled roots of the tree above him.

"Yes, you know them. You may be right. Lead me to my lodge."

Keet-sa-o turned and, climbing the precipitous bank, pushed her way through fern and salal until they emerged into a well-beaten trail. Silently they wound their way among the firs until they came to the edge of the clearing where lay the houses of the village. Master Anson's lodge was near and the surrounding spaces deserted. Keet-sa-o left him, stealing quietly through the shadows cast by the rude wall of hewn timber, until she gained the shelter of her own dwelling. Apparently everyone in the place was about the council-house or part of the throng within it.

A couch covered with untanned deerhides stood in the room, where the Haida maiden paused for an instant listening to the frenzied yells of the braves who circled the fires where Tik-atl presided. For a moment only she waited, then cast herself down upon the bed, closing her ears with her hands. Her body was shaken by a passionate sobbing, tearless and terrible to hear. Her instinct, primitive but certain, told her that her world had suddenly been shattered. She had lived in the present, deliberately barring out all disturbing dreams. Now, the truth had come home to her that she was an alien in the realm where her lord and master moved and had his being. His one thought had been for the safety of the white priestess. For the woman of his race he would risk life and dare the tortures that were worse than death. What manner of woman was this pale-faced sorceress who had power to wring Keet-sa-o's heart with a pain greater than she had ever known?

Without, the wild din of the orgy in the council-house had ceased, but when she raised her head to listen she could hear a voice which she knew to be her father's. He was a famous orator. She could not hear the words, but the rising and falling inflections of his powerful tones came to her clearly through the silence. She could picture the throng of glittering eyes drawn together by his eloquence unto one keen shaft to smite and slay.

Softly the Haida girl rose and stole out into the night. She would hear more of the white witch, Auria. This, too, was her battle. The yellow stars above the dark firs were like the eyes of the wild things that watched her from the thickets when she wandered alone in the forest. They were curious but unkind. They, also, were not of her world, but of kin to the Sun whose child she had loved too well.

Keet-sa-o moved like a shadow on noiseless feet to the back of the house where the tribesmen were assembled. Here a small cedar-tree leaned against the wall of the building. Under its friendly branches she could remain unseen and yet, through the spaces between the big timbers of the wall, she could see the interior of the place. At first the smoke from the fires blurred her vision, but a momentary opening of the great door at the front of the lodge allowed a draught of air to clear the haze away. In serried rows, the fierce countenances of the Northern warriors, hideous in their paint and trappings of war, were ranged about the sides of the room. The fires gleamed upon their copper-coloured skin like sunlight on polished metal. Their eyes, red and baleful, were all bent upon Tik-atl who addressed them from the centre of

the hall.

The great magician was arrayed in the full ceremonial robes of his office. A painted head-dress of spruce-root, finely woven, covered his thick, coarse hair. His arms and body were bare but for a collar of baleen and an apron of leather which hung from his waist. From the necklace were suspended puffin bills and grizzly-bear claws which rattled as he swayed from side to side, while the apron, red and black, bore the design of the sea-bear. In his right hand he held a long probe of pointed bone which, from time to time, he raised and lowered to emphasise the periods in his oration. His deep voice, chanting his phrases, was like a storm wind gathering in the mountains. He was speaking now of the white priestess. Keet-sa-o bent forward in her eagerness to hear.

"Glittering like the great King Salmon, smooth, shining as the Sun, is this serpent of the Salish who has bewitched our warriors. Idle they sit, like women weaving baskets in the shade, while her guile poisons the air and the waters. Her eyes, coloured like the waves that carry our war canoes, are pale because of long hating and desire to despoil our strength. Her tongue is subtle, dripping with sweetness like the honeycombs, and before it have many warriors stood entranced, but not I, your chief and Son of the Raven, who shelters his people with wide, almighty wings. Alone, I dared her might. Alone, unharmed, I return to you. The voices of the Sea and the Air troubled me day and night until I should carry their command to you—that you slay this foul snake that nurses the Salish until their arms are strong enough to make our lodges desolate."

Curses multiform and various were outlined as the fate of those who remained behind while the tribes of the North swept down upon their ancient enemies to destroy and pillage. The vehemence of Tik-atl's hatred stirred even the grim stolidity of the Haidas, who glared like famished wolves as he spoke of the spoiling of the Southerners.

Keet-sa-o shuddered. Once she had heard an eagle scream before plunging its talons into the back of a wounded deer which had dragged itself away to die. Her father's closing sentences were fraught with the same pitiless note of triumph. She crouched low in the darkness beside the wall while the Haidas filed out to rest before resuming their warlike preparations.

In her heart there was no sorrow for the Daughter of the Sun. If the witch were dead, her warrior might forget and turn to the arms that hungered for him, that would hold him fiercely and tenderly as they had often done in bashful dreams. A golden star he might be, but she would draw him to earth into her world and hold him fast forever. It was her own pain that deafened her ears to approaching footsteps. When she rose from her cramped position by the wall, she faced the angry eyes of the magician. As a bird before a serpent, she awaited the fate which she saw in his gleaming eyes.

"Ha ... another of the serpent breed! A squaw who slinks like a fox in the shadows. Where is the white devil? Did he send you here? Speak!"

The girl's instinct was to shield her lover.

"Nay, I did not know that you had returned, O Mighty One. I feared that, in your absence, some evil was afoot. Should not the daughter think for the father when he is far away?"

Something in her voice and manner aroused suspicion in Tik-atl. He seized the girl by the throat and, bending her backward in his powerful grasp, he hissed through clenched teeth:

"You lie!"

He held her until her body grew suddenly limp in his hands and, like a crumpled brown leaf, she slid gently to the ground. The shaman bent over her. He felt her heart, but there was no noticeable motion there. She had apparently ceased to breathe. His evil brain quickly determined that if she were dead no blame would be laid at his door. It would mean a more horrible death for the white man who had been her companion during the day. In the morning the Haidas would find the body. Meantime, he would secure the person of Anson who was doubtless awaiting Keet-sa-o in his lodge. In the demon soul of him there was no compassion for the daughter of his body whom he left lying where she had fallen under his hands.

Acting under orders from Tik-atl, the Haidas searched the lodge of the white man. They found it empty. Unable to sleep because of the uproar in the council-house, Anson had returned to the beach to gather up the utensils and gear which he had left in his canoe. The emissaries of the shaman next visited the house of Keet-sa-o, where they found the old crone whom the girl claimed as her former mother. She explained to them the absence of the shaman's daughter by telling them that she had gone with the white man to fish and had not returned. It was then determined to await the return of the absent ones. Torture of the follower of the white priestess would be an interesting diversion for the coming day.

When Keet-sa-o opened her eyes, she saw only the stars that had seemed to her like eyes that watched her without feeling, uncompassionate and remote. Her body was racked by pains shooting through it from the base of her skull where the terrible clutch of her father had wrenched bone and muscle. Dew lay upon the moss beside her and, drenching her hands in its coolness, she drew them across her forehead and face. All was quiet in the village now. The stirring of a night bird in the branches of the cedar above her, and her own heart, beating irregularly and loudly, were the sole sounds which broke the stillness. She grasped the grass roots closely as a child might cling to a mother's breast and lay without moving while her bewildered mind tried to comprehend the thing that had come to her.

She had no real affection for Tik-atl, but had been bound to him by the instinctive tie of blood. She had not known him as a father. But through her fear of him she had longed, at times, for a kindness which had been denied to her. Now, he had with his own hands irretrievably broken the slight thread that might have drawn her to him. Her savage blood called only for revenge. She would thwart him, break him, if at the cost of her own life. In her extremity her mind reverted to the only human being from whom she had ever received affection—to him whom her primitive soul worshipped as a star in a heaven beyond her ken. Even her jealousy of Auria, the sorceress, was submerged by the desire to find and save the white man and, through him, to wreak vengeance upon her father.

By a supreme effort of her will the girl staggered to her feet. Blindly, because of her pain and yet with native stealth and caution, she made her way towards Anson's lodge. He had not yet returned. Immediately Keet-sa-o concluded that he had betaken himself to the sea—had escaped in a mad attempt to reach the South before the Haidas. Her strength had partially returned now and she glided swiftly through the spaces between the lodges where the Indians were sleeping heavily after their emotional debauch. Seeking the trail to the beach where they had left their canoe, she rushed wildly through the dense undergrowth. Her breath came quickly. Pain—her very self was forgotten in her despair. Unnoticed, the wire-like branches of the vine maple slashed her face until the blood sprang to the surface and trickled down her cheeks. The sharp thorns of the devil club impaled her fingers as she grasped for support in the surrounding darkness. It was as if a thousand unseen hands were reaching in to impede her haste.

Master Anson stood warily, his arms filled with nets and fishing-gear, as the girl half scrambled and half fell through the thick foliage to his feet. He had felt that it could only be Keet-sa-o who would come without caution. Nevertheless, he was on guard as became a man surrounded by enemies.

She knelt beside him, her arms clasping his knees. As she looked up at him, the moon emerging from behind a cloud lighted her face streaked with blood and her dishevelled hair. A wild and pitiful figure she was and yet one to make a man's heart beat fast, for her beauty was out of the ordinary—a lure which had often stirred the primal deeps in the soul of the Englishman. Gently he laid his hands upon her shoulders and drew her blanket about her, hiding the slim, brown body which was trembling like that of a frightened bird.

"Why have you come, Keet-sa-o? I had thought you were sleeping. What has happened? Your face is bleeding and your hands ... why ... what have they done to you?"

Be it to Master Anson's credit that, in the days which followed, he bowed his head silently at the memory of that strange revelation of the woman heart. For we have not come so very far from the forest as yet, and the great primitive man and woman lies very close to the surface veneer of our civilised selves. Its power often rebukes our littleness of soul.

"I know nothing—nothing, O great white chief, except that I would be your slave! Beat me, if you will; drive me from you into the forest and the lonely mountain places. I will return to you. No mother or father or kinsman in the world have I but you—only you. Take me. I am yours. We will go to your people. Keet-sa-o will guide you over the waters. Her hand is strong and she knows the ways of the sea and the wind. Together we will help the white queen."

Before the dawn had silvered the firs of Masset Inlet, a long Haida canoe stole softly along shore and out upon the waste of treacherous waters that lay to southward. Long was the road across the white-crested waves and fraught with dangers darker than clouds and storm, but Love was strong to save and to destroy.

CHAPTER XIX

BELEAGUERED

Summer, at its height, is a mellow season on the Pacific Coast. The glare and hardness of more tropic skies is lacking there. The humidity of the air means softer colourings and more delicate tintings of sea and mountain in the dawns and sunsets of the pleasant Arcadian days which blend imperceptibly into the rainy months of winter.

However, during late July and August the fir-clad slopes are dry, their carpeting of resinous needles and the brown tangle of last year's bracken forming a dangerous setting for forest fires which rage fiercely in the dense timber until extinguished by the autumn rains. With good reason the natives have always feared these visitations of flame which desolate their villages and lay bare their hunting-grounds.

Now a cordon of blazing forest surrounded the citadel of the Salish. The great trees were Titan torches lighting the nights with lurid terrors and veiling the days with an impenetrable pall of acrid, stifling smoke. To add to the impending destruction by fire there was the red flame of war which crept hourly closer to their lodges by the sea. The bloody annals of their tribe bespoke the pitiless nature of the enemy at their gates. The Haidas of the North, hated and feared, in numbers never seen before, were in undisputed possession of their shores, cutting off all access to the waters and the salmon grounds whence came their food. Northern canoes, lean and sinister as marauding Wolves, haunted creek and bay, blockading their village to seaward as surely as the great fire formed their ring-pass-not by land.

In their dire extremity, the peaceful Salish would have utterly despaired but for the faith which centred in the might of their beloved queen and priestess, Auria. Daughter of the Sun, all-powerful source of life, she would triumph over the clouds that veiled her sanctuary. Into her council-house, by day and night, the tribe crowded to hear from her lips the comfort and assurance denied elsewhere. At all times, the women and children were near her. The men came when their duties of fire-fighting and defence permitted.

On the evening of a day late in the month of August, a wind in the upper air about the heights where the citadel lay had cleared away some of the smoke. The lower slopes and valleys were hidden by blue-grey clouds, thick and opaque, but over the mountain-tops the sun was seen blood-red through the haze. It seemed, indeed, a god of war which glistened in crimson panoply, pulsing with lambent flame, over the rim of the western hills.

At Auria's command, a huge altar had been erected in the space before her lodge. The heat was too oppressive to permit of holding her ceremonials entirely within-doors. Upon the top of the altar, which was composed of a flat rock supported upon pillars of wood and footed with stone, fire was smouldering, filling the air with fragrance strong enough to overpower the tang of the forest's smoke. Upon the steps of the structure, facing the sun, Auria was standing, while below her the assembled tribes knelt in silent adoration.

The priestess was indeed an object to call forth the worship of her people. A light veil lay upon her head and was draped over her shoulders. This was bound about her forehead by a simple band of cloth of gold which supported the jewelled emblem of the twin serpents. A white robe, flowing in graceful lines to her feet, was girdled at the waist by a belt of Indian manufacture, soft and pliant cloth woven from the inner bark of the cypress. Auria was not above average height, but her snowy-white vesture caused her to appear tall, while the dignity of her carriage added to the impression that she was of a superior race. To the Indians she was golden, ethereal, an embodied ray of the Sun whom they worshipped.

She was standing now, with outstretched arms, intoning in a low vibrant voice an invocation to the Sun-god before he disappeared below the horizon. As her accents flowed in the music of a tongue unknown to the Salish, the worshippers before her swayed their bodies rhythmically in time to the cadence of her words. A subtle bond seemed to exist between the priestess and her auditors. It was as if they breathed in unison, were one entity gathering, from some unseen source, power which was theirs to use or to store away until it was needed for life's purposes.

Then, without warning, came a rude interruption of the ceremony. A warrior dashed from the smoke-filled aisles of the forest skirting the village. His clothing was torn, his face bleeding and blackened. He shouted as he ran through the ranks of the assembled devotees.

"The Haida! The Haida! They are coming up the creek-beds—in the water! To arms—everyone!"

Confusion followed. Auria assisted in gathering together the children and older women and, taking them into her own dwelling, endeavoured to allay their terror. The others, armed with various weapons, hastened with the messenger to defend the pass up which the enemy was approaching. Although the fires were raging in the timber, the rocky bed of a mountain stream which descended precipitously to the sea near the village formed a narrow pathway unscathed by flame. Up this defile the Northern tribesmen were fighting their way to the citadel.

In her retreat, Auria was kept advised of the progress of the conflict by runners who from time to time brought her news. The Haidas were labouring under a disadvantage in the narrow pass, from the sides of which the Salish could shower them with arrows and missiles, but she well knew the renowned fighting qualities of her foes. Their blood-lust was ravenous and their endurance that of the treacherous Northern reefs which spawned them. The sun set beyond the mountain rims. The night was illumined by the leaping flames from a thousand blazing tree-tops, but still the struggle continued with unabated fury. The wounded were borne to the council-house where Auria directed the binding and dressing of their injuries. Among the groans of the fallen and wailings of those who mourned, she moved calmly—a very human helper—whose touch was healing and whose face promised hope and victory.

Even when a messenger, with trembling lips, said, "A little while ... they are too many ... we cannot do more!" the woman did not falter. She stopped to dress the runner's wounds before retiring to her inner chamber. There, out of sight of her broken people, she knelt and prayed. To the Sun-god? Nay, but for the restoration of the strong arm of Master Anson, for the brave English heart that had dared the terrors of Anian in a mad attempt to win through to life and love. In the weary months since he had disappeared, Auria had probed the secrets of her soul, and knew that, bound as she was to the service of unseen powers, at times she would have forsworn heaven for a touch of his hand upon her own. It seemed that fate had forever removed him from her life. Yet, if he lived, how, in this hour, would his counsel and sword have been of aid to deliver her people from their oppressors?

Blent with her desire which was entirely human was a certain disquiet, also womanly and not pertaining to her priestly office. The entry of another into his life had never occurred to her except as a dream. From the adytum of her impersonal self she could serenely contemplate his happiness with a woman more of his own world—in all sincerity, she had often prayed that this might come to him in due time. However, when faced with the reality, she discovered that the primitive feminine instinct of possession was existent in herself. Her care for Anson's happiness was not maternal, but of a different order. The mating love cannot contemplate, without suffering, the transference of its object into another universe. Its end and justification is union. The daughter of Tik-atl was beautiful. Was she, Auria, less desirable than this untutored maiden of the wilderness? Yet in her heart she did not blame the man. She had made no effort to retain his affections. Now that the woman was dominant in her once more, she knew that if he turned to her she would willingly forgive and forget.

Recalling her battle with the powers of darkness incarnate in the great Haida magician, she realised that he had defeated her because of her love for Anson. A very human jealousy had overpowered her will and unsteadied the mind that was usually her servant. To her own surprise, she found that she rather gloried in the fact that she had discovered a force greater than herself—a love that could sweep away the foundations of her life and abandon her to the perils of the unknown. A new strength, over-flowing, fluctuant, exuberant, coursed through her being with a strange quality which could transfigure and transmute ordinary, every-day life into an importance and high value which she thought pertained only to spiritual things.

Her fingers caressed the glowing jewel of the Incas which lay upon her bosom, while her thoughts were intent upon the present.

In this, her hour of peril, there was no vestige of human assurance that she could win through to victory. Perforce she turned inward to that world of the unseen which she had made her own.

Sitting down, she placed before her a lighted lamp. With hands folded upon her lap, she gazed steadily at the flame until her eyes grew fixed, while her body ached with the effort to maintain its rigidity. The cries in the room without swirled into a unison of sound that beat upon her inner ear like the far-off surges on a distant shore. Darkness and silence followed, and then ... the Light! The body remained inert, motionless, dead, while the soul, released, sought counsel of the gods.

Iala, her maid, tending a wounded Salish brave, heard Auria's voice calling to her from the entrance to the inner chamber. Turning, she saw her mistress standing upon the threshold of her room, a wraith-like figure holding a burned-out candle in her hand. The face of the priestess was more colourless than her raiment, which bore in places ghastly red stains from the blood of her warriors.

"Thy will, O queen, is mine! Thy people perish! What can one maiden do?"

With widening eyes of wonder the girl watched the lips of the priestess, as they strove to form the words which came from within.

"Iala! Iala! Our people are saved if there be one man who, for the love of all, will lay himself upon the altar!"

CHAPTER XX

THE KINGDOM OF THE SUN

While Auria sought counsel from her gods, the battle, bloody and terrible in its savagery, continued between the Northern warriors and their beleaguered enemies. In the rocky ravine, devoid of vegetation or trees, which formed a pass through the flaming forest, the Haidas, headed by the ferocious Tsik-an, struggled to reach the citadel of the Salish. The precipitous sides of the defile forced them to remain in the bed of the stream. Wading in the brown pools, dodging from boulder to boulder which afforded them partial shelter, they fought their way upward through the showers of arrows and the avalanches of rocks and earth poured upon them by the Salish forces. On the rim of the canyon, the blazing trees, from which flames shot upward as from gigantic torches, partly lighted the depths below and, at the same time, threw portions of it into denser shadow. Pausing in the darkness, dashing through the spaces red-lit by the fires, the Northern braves answered the enemy's assaults with blood-curdling yells and derisive taunts. No Salish who appeared for a moment escaped the unerring marksmanship of the kin of the Raven. Steadily the dark serpent of the Haida vanguard wound its way up the mountain slope, writhing in increasing rage as it neared its goal.

Tik-atl had remained upon the beach below, where, by the light of the forest fire, he had spread his instruments of magic. By incantations and the intricacies of his black art, he sought to bring the demons of sea and air to the aid of his kinsmen. Now he was facing the gleaming stretches of the bay where the ruddy reflection from the hillside mingled with the black waters. Erect, tense, his will concentrated in a focal point of terrific power, he was bending all of his being to his dark task.

It was while thus engaged that his eye, trained to note the slightest movement in his natural surroundings, suddenly sighted the dark form of a canoe some distance from the shore. For an instant the strange craft appeared in the light, as a burning tree, on the slopes above him, shot its flames skyward before its final fall. Then it was submerged in the surrounding darkness. The magician turned instantly to where a camp-fire smouldered near him and scattered the brands, extinguishing them in the edge of the surf at his feet. Silently he glided into the shrubbery overhanging the bank which

fringed the beach. Here a border of deep shade separated the illumined shingle from the burning timber.

Presently, his wisdom was rewarded by another glimpse of the approaching canoe. It was well within the light now, heading straight for the landing-place where the Haida war fleet was lying. As its long, slim shape rose and fell upon the waves, the shaman saw that there were two occupants. The taller figure in the centre of the vessel was propelling it swiftly forward while, in the stern, one who appeared to be a boy directed its course with skilful care. In a very few moments thereafter, the strangers landed among the war canoes at a distance but little removed from Tik-atl's hiding-place. The man sprang first to the shore and, as he faced the light while dragging his canoe up the shingle, the Haida, to his amazement, recognised the Englishman, Anson. He had long ere this concluded that the white man had rejoined his Salish friends, or had perished, more probably, in the treacherous straits of the Northern coast. On the journey to the South, the Haidas had failed to find any traces of the fleeing ones, although, as time permitted, they had searched with all possible thoroughness.

Rage and a ferocious joy filled the heart of Tik-atl. His gods were indeed kind to him. At the moment when his warriors were dragging the white witch from her lair, they had delivered the greatest of her chieftains into his hands. Here, too, was the daughter who had betrayed him. For, despite her garb, he had recognised that Anson's companion was Keet-sa-o, whom he had left stricken in the shadow of his council-house. He weighed a heavy stone war-club caressingly in his hands.

While Keet-sa-o began to remove portions of the meagre cargo from the canoe, Master Richard moved among the enemy's fleet examining it closely. His steps brought him gradually nearer to the spot where the shaman lay crouched like a panther ready to spring. Having completed her task, the girl endeavoured to pull their craft farther forward. This was too much for her strength and she turned to call her companion. Her first impulse was to cry aloud. Her Indian blood saved her from this folly. Behind Anson, who was stooping over one of the Haida vessels, she saw the dark form of Tik-atl, who had glided silently over the stones of the beach. Keet-sa-o, her heart pounding violently but her hand steady, seized a bow from the ground at her feet. An arrow sang through the air and the shaman with a hoarse, guttural cry stood suddenly erect with his arms extended upwards. His face was hideous—a destroying demon's, distorted and evil, gnarled as the roots of his native cedars. An instant his giant body swayed, then collapsed upon the shingle.

Master Anson stood helpless before the unnatural horror of what followed. The girl rushed forward to where her father lay in his death-throes and, breaking off the arrow which had transfixed his body, she struck him with it repeatedly, using its splintered end to gash his face and bosom. She sobbed hysterically while her hands plied their terrible task. Still moaning and crying, she flung away the weapon and, turning to Richard, she flung herself at his feet, clasping his knees in an ecstasy of emotion. The man grasped her firmly by the wrists and lifted her to her feet. He shook her roughly.

"Keet-sa-o, be quiet! Be quiet, I say!"

"He is a devil—a devil," panted Keet-sa-o. "He will come alive again!"

Gently Anson drew the frenzied girl away from the fallen magician.

"God knoweth, he was evil enow; but, child, there are other tasks to our hand. Methinks we are sore needed elsewhere. But how to win through, I know not!"

He paused, listening intently. Down from the heights above him, on a veering wind, was blown the faint sound of the yelling of the wolf-packs of the Haidas. He shuddered but his eyes lighted.

"They have gone, I doubt not, by way of the stream. We too will follow. It is the only path free from the flames."

At Anson's bidding, Keet-sa-o gathered a great store of arrows, both their own and some from the canoes, and, hastily skirting the shore, they entered the pass of the creek bed leading to the plateau above them. As they went, the air, hot as from a furnace by reason of the great fires, was suddenly cleft by a breeze that swept in from the sea. Faint, but unmistakable, a peal of distant thunder made them pause.

"God is with us," muttered Master Richard. "May He send His rains speedily!"

In a short space of time they were upon the heels of the enemy. The ascent through the ravine had been made without thought of the roughness of the path. They had torn through the thickets and had plunged recklessly forward until within bowshot of the rear of the Haidas. The uncertainty of the light in the canyon favoured their movements. As soon as they had reached a place where they might be observed, they took their cue from the fighting-men, slipping from rock to rock and discharging occasional arrows at the heights. Gradually they made their way among the besieging forces until they were in the front of the battle, where their progress was fraught with danger from the Salish who were launching their volleys at every moving shadow in the pass. Together they were now lying in the shelter of a fallen cedar which bridged the stream at this point. The defile was exceedingly narrow here, so that a tree precipitated from above had broken in two. The lower half of it lay at right angles across the stream. The other portion, heavy with foliage, leaned against the steep wall of the ravine. Above the conical top of the fallen fir-tree the cliff shelved backwards less vertically, making it possible for a man, if unmolested, to scale the height. Evidently this very thing had been attempted in the fight, for the bodies of two Haida warriors lay in the shallow water at their feet.

Hurriedly Master Anson disclosed a desperate plan to Keet-sa-o. Lying close to the tree trunk which stood erect, they climbed cautiously towards its summit. It was raining heavily now and the pass was enshadowed, except when a flare from a burning snag lit the gloom. Reaching the topmost branches, Richard boldly exposed himself, shouting as he did so in the Salish tongue. At the same time he pulled Keet-sa-o up beside him and dashed forward up the declivity before them. The eyes of the Haida wolves were upon them, however. Their yelling ceased momentarily. Then, as the light revealed the trunks and hose of Master Anson and the sword which hung from his side, a howl of rage went up through the darkness below. A flight of arrows fell about the struggling forms of the climbers. Richard turned at a quick cry from Keet-sa-o. A shaft had grazed her shoulder, drawing blood. Frantically she motioned to him to go on. In another instant, they were over the brow of the cliff and standing in a group of the Salish who had risen from behind rocks and bushes to welcome their white chief.

In the council-house, Iala still knelt at the feet of Auria who stood, the words of her oracle fresh upon her lips. The eyes of the priestess, filled by the shadows of the world where our light is darkness, hardly took note of the little maiden whose love and adoration was poured out before her.

"Where—ah, where shall such an one be found? The Salish fight only when forced to defend their lives. They are a quiet people who do not love death. They are..."

Iala's words were interrupted by a startled exclamation from her mistress. The hands of the princess were clasped tightly together above her heart, while she gazed with slowly widening eyes towards the great entrance to the hall. The maiden turned and saw Master Richard who had entered quietly. He was leaning for support against the carven lintel of the doorway, silently gazing at Auria who stood as if suddenly turned to stone.

Remnants only of his former finery were left. His velvet trunks and doublet still hung together, smirched and patched in divers places, but his hose had been supplemented by leggings and buskins of deerhide, while from his leathern belt was still suspended his trusty sword of English steel. Matted locks and a beard partially concealed the finely chiselled features and the dauntless blue eyes which looked forward always in search of great adventures. Bewildered by strange fates these eyes might be, but the light in them did not quail before the terror of the unknown.

Gracefully, with the ease of the courtier which he was, the man moved forward, picking his way gently among the wounded who lay upon the floor. Still speechless, Auria mechanically extended her hand to him as he stood before her, starting and withdrawing it quickly when he raised it to his lips. The past closed about her as a kindly arm when she heard his familiar tones:

"Yes, Auria, by God's grace, it is I ... and none other."

Mate and mother stormed within her for utterance. The priestess was caught, bound, whirled away into some remote region of her being while the woman cried inwardly, "My love—my love!" Outwardly, she retained her serenity, the ineffable dignity which had awed and baffled his ardour in days long past.

"I do not ask whence nor how you have come. You are here in the dark hour when my people are perishing. Ah, Master Richard, if only that sword had been here ... when it was needed. It is too late, I fear."

Richard smiled.

"Too late ... can that be? The battle is not ended."

"You do not know, then? Our warriors are few. The Haida is in force. We are outnumbered ten to one and it is only a question of hours now. No human help can save my people—not even your arm, Master Richard."

The man spoke quickly and eagerly, "Are you so sure of this, Auria?"

"I am certain. If we could have kept them to the pass, there was hope. But, when the fires are out in the forest, they will descend upon us like wolves. Our food has been cut off for many days, our warriors weakened by hunger and watching. Those left alive are few in numbers, weary and with little heart to resist a doom which they know is certain."

She turned towards the door of her chamber. "Yet, the gods have spoken. A way remains. You may find a man among them who is great enough. Who knows?"

With bowed head and dejected mien, Master Anson followed her into her sanctuary. It was his first entrance there, but he was too perturbed to marvel that it had come to pass.

Once within, Auria closed the door behind them. The walls were thick. The moans of the wounded without were not audible. They might have been in a world leagues removed from the carnage and suffering about them. The room itself was without noteworthy adornment. The only furnishings were a couch, a few rugs and a table, upon which stood some candles and a broken cross about which was twined a brazen serpent. Anson glanced curiously at the strange crucifix but, in the next instant, he had no eyes for anything but Auria. In the dim light, she was glowing with all the witchery which had held him captive from the day when he had first seen her. The white curve of her breast beneath her clinging robe was shadowed by the hair of wondrous gold which had been the web of illusion in which his heart had remained willingly a prisoner. Of the Sun she might well be, but she was also of the earth, for he saw in her commingled the magic of its seasons of sowing and reaping, cool radiance of April dawns and warmth of summer noons.

All of the man in him was for instant possession, an essay in which all should be lost or won. He stepped towards her.

"Auria!"

Her raised hand checked him. "Nay. We are here to take counsel for the people—my children! In my extremity I sought the Inner Light which shines for all men. There it was written that there was a way of escape. I said that you might help me to find a brave man among my poor warriors."

"What is this way of which you speak? Always riddles, my Auria?"

"If there be one who, by his own hand, will die that the others may live, we will prevail. The gods have spoken!"

The voice of the priestess was passionless and even, but carried conviction beyond human reckoning. He would as soon have doubted his God. In the ears of Master Anson, as he gazed upon the white, ethereal beauty before him, there rang as the chime of a distant bell, "If he be true and brave—if his love be great enough—he will find her in the Kingdom of the Sun." Kate-o'-the-Mill had said that. The room, the woman before him, seemed swaying dimly in waves of light which finally obliterated them from sight, leaving only the prospect of a golden sea which flowed beneath and about him, while his ears were filled by the murmuring of a wind which flooded him with unutterable desire—the call of the unending quest of what was sweet and precious beyond all life. He heard his own voice saying:

"Why, Auria, it is simply done. I am your man."

Was it merely illusion? From out the radiance about him, white arms drew him closely into their embrace. Eyes more beautiful than any on earth reflected the love and longing in his own soul. Peace, beyond any he had dreamed, possessed him utterly.

Auria stood before him with head bent and folded hands. The candlelight glinted softly in the folds of the brazen serpent on the table beside her. Not the Priestess of the Sun but the woman was saying simply:

"Take me, Richard. I am yours."

He knew, as the spirit in man knows, that all Life was One, the Reality of which we are but the passing shadows.

CHAPTER XXI

THE ALTAR

"Greater love hath no man"—yet how few of the living or those called dead have won through to this peace. Over trackless wastes of space, through red hells of peril and doom, in the strife of swirling atom or starry galaxy, Life moves to this fulfilment of its being. It is the Law. To withhold for the separate self is death. And in the hour when Master Anson, adventurer upon unknown seas, renounced life and love, he found them in all their glorious perfection.

It was now past midnight. The rain had ceased but the sky was still obscured by clouds. The darkness, in which the Salish with the last grim effort of desperation sought to withstand their enemy, was intense, oppressive and fraught with impending horror. Like the echoes wafted through the half-opened doors of some inferno in a world of dream, the war-cries of the Haidas and the answering yells of their opponents came up from the canyon, chilling the blood of the women who watched and waited. These, the squaws, and the children too young to bear arms, were now gathered in the open space where the ceremonial altar had been erected at Auria's command. In groups, clinging to each other, they stood. All eyes were directed towards the entrance to the lodge of their priestess.

Nor were their eyes the only ones which gazed in silent wonder. In the place of concealment which had sheltered him upon a previous occasion, crouched behind a thick curtain of cedar boughs, Tsik-an lay like a panther awaiting his prey.

Blackened snags upon which the red flames, unextinguished by the rain, still flickered like serpents' tongues together with light from the opened doorways of the smaller lodges illumined the scene, so that he was able to perceive that some unusual event was impending.

Trusting to his knowledge of the formation of the country which he had gained upon his previous visit, the Snake had dared the peril of fire and the enemy's sentries in order to make certain of the strength of the beleaguered garrison. He had been baffled and enraged by the unexpected ferocity of the Salish resistance, and suspected that their forces had been augmented by warriors from surrounding villages or the great island to westward. Otherwise he could not account for their prolonged endurance of famine, terror and siege. Before leading the Haidas to a final assault, he must be certain that victory and not death would be their reward. Now, having seen that only women and children were here to oppose his designs, he still lingered. The great altar, piled with faggots in preparation for burning, the assembled crowd of silent squaws, the tense air of expectancy—all held him, although he was chafing to appease his lust for blood.

Presently the door leading through the totem before Auria's lodge swung open and a flood of light therefrom made a pathway through shadows and the more feeble beams from the village streets. Into the radiance there emerged the forms of eight women who bore between them a rude litter covered with a white blanket. An evil smile distorted the face of the concealed Snake. Doubtless some great Salish chief had bitten the dust before the arrows of the Haidas. His gloating was most quickly submerged by a feeling of intense curiosity mingled with alarm. Behind the pall-bearers moved two figures so majestic, so amazing to the eyes of Tsik-an, that he involuntarily shrank back into the sheltering darkness of his leafy screen.

Anson, the white chief, he had indeed seen before, but his lithe figure, erect and commanding, now seemed to be surrounded with an ineffable dignity which was more than human. The Englishman's face, always strange to the Indian,

was, at this instant, a mystery. A conqueror was betokened by the proud lift of his head; a worshipper in the presence of a beauty not of this earth shone in his eyes.

By the man's side moved one whom the Haida knew must be the priestess, Daughter of the Sun. Auria was clad in some soft, white material which, after the manner of ancient Greece, left bare her arms and shoulders. Framed by the glory of her hair, her face was glowing as if some hidden sun burned within her so that flesh became a translucent veil. The light flashed, as she walked, with a dazzling brilliance from the jewelled serpent brooch upon her bosom. The amulet of the Peruvian king had achieved its destiny and, once again in the possession of its rightful owner, had drawn together and held fast the threads of fate. Upon the highroads of eternity the lovers had met, and the Law had been fulfilled. Regally, wrapt in her dream, the princess went with eyes oblivious to her surroundings.

Before the altar the procession halted. The bearers of the litter deposited it upon the ground and retired to mingle with the other women who filled the square before the temple, while Auria and her companion mounted the footing of one of the massive pillars supporting the great rock which formed the top of the structure. As they stood facing the assembly, there was a pause so intense in its silence that breathing was almost audible. Then, loud in that momentary hush, there sounded the eerie whine of an arrow, the twang of a bowstring released. A swaying movement of the crowd, a low shuddering cry as it swept forward, followed, and Auria's white-robed figure bent above the huddled form of Richard Anson which lay upon the turf before the rock of sacrifice.

If invisible hands had halted them, the women could not have been more effectually restrained than by the face of their priestess, as she stood slowly erect. Daughter of the Sun they had called her, but she, who was dumb before them now, was lightning and the fury of the tempest incarnate. They quailed before the concentrated power in her eyes. Her gaze was directed beyond them, over their heads, to the precipitous hills which formed the farther wall of the pass in which her warriors were making their last stand.

The Snake of the Haidas felt suddenly chilled as if unseen arms were reaching from the gloom above and behind him—arms which were stronger, more implacable than the hate in his own heart. He was startled by a sound that obliterated the war-cries in the canyon and the crackling of the forest fire. It had swelled now to the semblance of distant thunder. Seized by an inexplicable terror, he leaned forward, gazing at the white priestess who still faced the east, rigid, motionless as a statue. He followed her glance and the bow which had sped the fatal arrow dropped from his hand. It seemed to him that the sparse forest clothing the opposite wall of the war-stricken pass was moving, flowing downward as water might glide over a mountain barrier which had held it imprisoned. A hollow rumbling, underlying sharper detonations, shook the tree to which he was clinging, while a blast of cold air swept across the plateau, tossing the flames upon the altar into a twisting pyramid of fire.

This further illumination showed him the dreadful fact. The rocky declivity, the entire side of the pass, was actually sliding forward, taking with it the trees that had found their meagre sustenance among its boulders. Those who fought in the canyon would be buried beneath the avalanche.

With a yell of terror, the Snake swung downwards from his hiding-place and, like a beast pursued, blinded by fear, plunged into the dense underbrush beneath the blazing trees. Hot ashes seared his flying feet, cinders flared momentarily in his hair, while the smouldering forest pressed in upon him as if to smother him in its embrace. Somewhere below lay the sea and the canoes that had brought his warriors—and Tik-atl. Scorched and bleeding, he finally felt the sea air in his nostrils as he crawled out upon the beach where the fleet had landed.

The sky was clear now, lighted by stars. The Snake stumbled over the body of the magician, turning up the gashed and disfigured face of his chief so that, through war-paint and clotted blood, it stared at him with glassy, unseeing eyes. With a howl that echoed through the woods above him, Tsik-an raced for the nearest canoe. His yell was answered by others. A few minutes later, the remnants of the rear-guard of the Haidas gathered their sparse forces and, without waiting to collect their equipment, sought safety upon the sea.

In the Salish encampment there was a sound of great rejoicing. Those of Auria's brave defenders who had survived the siege and the women who had fought side by side with the men, or had done their duty within-doors, found their strength renewed by the miraculous cessation of peril. Savage joy was not to be repressed. About leaping fires piled high with branches of fir and cedar, those who were sound in body danced while the war-drums woke the echoes in the

surrounding forest. To-morrow they could sleep free from the terror which had threatened to crush their nation out of existence. The constant shadow of fear cast by the Northern raiders would not, in all likelihood, darken their shores again for many suns. To confirm their faith, the Great Spirit had spoken through the lips of their beloved priestess and had crowned their people with victory. Carved and emblazoned upon their totems it would go down to their descendants that they had triumphed, once in the long years, over the hated Haidas.

Within the silent council-lodge, in her inner chamber, the Princess Auria knelt beside her couch. Her golden head rested upon her arms, her eyes hidden from sight. Beneath the folds of her white robe, her shoulders trembled as she was swept by the storm of her weeping. She paused to drag her body forward while she pressed her lips to the pillow at the head of her bed. Her widowed heart rebelled at the fate which had set her feet upon the thorn-strewn path of the saviours of men. As a woman, she knew that she had been more gloriously crowned than if the impersonal Love of the spirit world had wrapped her in flaming ecstasy. Not Master Anson only had learned life's supreme lesson in that night of triumph and terror. Auria knew now that no discernible line could be drawn between the human and the divine.

Like a thunderbolt the reaction had come when the woman within her arose and pointed with accusing finger at the priestess. A wild tempest of pain assailed the citadel of her faith. In the struggle she was torn inwardly, until her body threatened to succumb before the conflict of spirit which was prisoned within it. Then, through the darkness and anguish, there stole a ray from the Inner Light. Love could never lose its own. In the eternal ways she, Auria, the woman, and Richard Anson, adventurer, would meet again, and, hand in hand, would take up their task once more. With this knowledge came an abiding peace. It would hold body and soul together until her work was completed.

To her, thus wrapt in her sorrow, there was borne the sound of footsteps, soft and hesitating, which paused at her side. Surprised that any should, without permission, enter her sanctuary, Auria raised her head. Through the mist of her tears she saw Keet-sa-o, the Haida maiden, standing silently with bowed head and hands folded before her. The rebuke upon the lips of the princess remained unuttered. Nevertheless she roused herself to say:

"Why have you come? You are a stranger, if I mistake not."

"I am Keet-sa-o, the daughter of Tik-atl."

Auria marvelled at the rich beauty of the girl's voice. Her eyes widened with a sudden thrill of surprise mingled with apprehension. Yet, in this maiden's gentle bearing and soft beauty there was nothing to hint of hatred.

"Tik-atl's daughter! A Haida! How..."

The girl interrupted, her tones even and without emotion. "He is dead. I killed him."

The woman, shocked into temporarily forgetting her own grief, arose slowly and confronted the girl. Then, involuntarily, she drew a little away from where Keet-sa-o stood with hands quietly folded.

"You killed him—and you are his daughter?"

The little maiden glanced quickly at the woman who shrank from her. There was a sudden flame which smouldered in the depths of her dark eyes.

"Keet-sa-o hears your lips. Can the heart of the white queen say that she has never killed? I hated my father. He was a bad spirit. I would not kill that which I love."

Like an arrow, keen-tipped, her words quivered instantly in Auria's bosom.

"Why do you come to me? Why do you tell me this?" she cried.

"Because," Keet-sa-o looked straight into the eyes of the princess, "I loved the white chief."

Into Auria's mind there flashed the picture shown her by the fates when the Northern magician stood at her side. A strip of brown sand—a sea-worn log—Richard Anson smiling into black eyes dangerously near his own. Why had she

not recognised the girl at the first glance?

"I do not understand. How come you to be in our village?" Into the voice of the woman there was creeping the old note of command belonging to her rank.

"Keet-sa-o came to tell you that she was with the white chief. It was my hand that guided him over the waters that he might save you and your people. Why did I come? That he might be happy—that he might live in happiness with you who were the light of his heart. And now—he is dead! If I had known—if my eyes could have seen what the days would bring—I would not have brought him to his death. He would have learned to forget." She continued fiercely, "I would have made him forget!"

The girl, who had stepped forward, moved by the intensity of her passion, stopped abruptly.

"I have done my duty to my people," said Auria, "and, having done the highest and best that I know, the results may be left to the gods. Love cares for its own. Master Anson and I will meet again."

Keet-sa-o's eyes flashed dangerously. "These things I do not understand. You speak of your people. I, too, have my people, but—I left them for him. Only his happiness mattered. I could even have been content as his slave while he lived with you. I have done a great wrong. I should not have given him to you to sacrifice upon the altar of your duty. I should have saved him—kept him from this fate."

The princess sank again to her knees by the couch. As she wept, the girl's voice came to her, a despairing cry that was agony to hear, "But—no—he would not have forgotten. He loved only you!"

The greater woman in Auria, in that instant, took possession of her. She rose and gently drew the little brown maid to her, forcing her to sit at her side upon the bed. Love, if it be worthy of the name, brings a deeper wisdom than any in the world of mind. So it transpired that while the Salish rejoiced without, the two women who had loved sat with each other until the light of a greater understanding made the way clear before them.

The noise of the villagers had abated. Exhausted, the warriors and women had retired to their lodges. Auria was speaking.

"The Haidas are the strongest of the tribes. If only they had a great leader and wise to teach them the better way, they could join together all of our people into one nation. Then, in the dark days to come, when the white men find your shores, you will not fail. You can meet wisdom with wisdom, and live. Before day breaks I shall have gone. Nor shall I return. My gift of vision means that I know certainly of these things which are a woman's mysteries. When my hour has come, Keet-sa-o, I shall send for you. The child will be the saviour of your race."

After a pause she continued. It was not only the High Priestess of Mysteries who spoke but rather the woman, chastened by the flame of supreme sacrifice.

"My child—my sister—your woman heart will tell you that I speak truly. For my people I have given all that life holds dear. I have paid the price. Love always demands that, be it the love of the many or of one. For the future, I have done well, but for the present—oh, Keet-sa-o—I am but a woman—a broken woman for whom Death, when he comes, will wear the face of a friend!"

The Haida maiden placed her hand lovingly upon the arm of the princess. Her voice was beseeching—not to be denied.

"If it is not forbidden, Keet-sa-o will go with you."

* * * * *

A white dawn silvered the tops of the fir-trees about the capital of the Salish. The air, after rain, was sweet with the fragrance of brown earth and green, growing things. Before the council-lodge, men, women and children stood about the smoking embers of the great altar. Iala, the handmaiden, was speaking.

"Before the sun, when the last stars were shining, she went away. Into the forest," pointing upward through the blackened and smouldering timber towards the snow-clad peaks, "she went, and with her went the Haida girl who came with the white chief. It is the will of the great queen that his ashes be scattered upon the waves of the sea over which the Northern wolves fled to their homes."

A year of peace and plenty passed in the Southern country. The glittering salmon came in quantity to their nets. Brown-eyed children laughed in the sun while their fathers returned laden with meat from the hills. Among the Salish, the measure of prosperity was overflowing.

Then, down through the black straits to northward, there came a strange rumour which set all tongues talking. The Haidas boasted of a white chief, a "Child of the Sun." They had found him, so the tale had been told, in a war canoe beached at a landing below one of their villages. With all due reverence and appropriate ceremony, they had hailed his advent as a sign from the Great Raven that they were to have, once more, a mighty magician to restore their supremacy and to make them perpetual Lords of the Sea and Air.

THE END

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