

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE FIELD OF BLOOD

When on the morrow Huaracha, King of the Chancas, heard all this story and that Urco had given poison to his daughter Quilla, who, if she still lived at all, did so, it was said, as a blind woman, a kind of madness took hold of him.

"Now let war come; I will not rest or stay," he cried, "till I see this hound, Urco, dead, and hang up his skin stuffed with straw as an offering to his own god, the Sun."

"Yet it was you, King Huaracha, who sent the lady Quilla to this Urco for your own purposes," said Kari in his quiet fashion.

"Who and what are you that reprove me?" asked Huaracha turning on him. "I only know you as the servant or slave of the White-Lord-from-the-Sea, though it is true I have heard stories concerning you," he added.

"I am Kari, the first-born lawful son of Upanqui and by right heir to the Inca throne, no less, O Huaracha. Urco my brother robbed me of my wife, as through the folly of my father, upon whose heart Urco's mother worked, he had already robbed me of my inheritance. Then, to make sure, he strove to poison me as he has poisoned your daughter, with a poison that would make me mad and incapable of rule, yet leave me

living--because he feared lest the curse of the Sun should fall upon him if he murdered me. I recovered from that bane and wandered to a far land. Now I have returned to take my own, if I am able. All that I say I can prove to you."

For a while Huaracha stared at him astonished, then said:

"And if you prove it, what do you ask of me, O Kari?"

"The help of your armies to enable me to overthrow Urco, who is very strong, being the Commander of the Quichua hosts."

"And if your tale be true and Urco is overthrown, what do you promise me in return?"

"The independence of the Chanca people, who otherwise must soon be destroyed, and certain other added territories which you covet, while I am Inca."

"And with this my daughter, if she still lives?" asked Huaracha looking at him.

"Nay," replied Kari firmly. "As to the lady Quilla I promise nothing. She has vowed herself to my Father the Sun, and what I have already told the Lord Hurachi here, who loves her I tell you. Henceforward no man may look upon her, who is the Bride of the Sun, for if I suffered this,

certainly the curse of the Sun would fall upon me and upon my people. He who lays a hand upon her I will strive to slay"--here he looked at me with meaning--"because I must or be accurst. Take all else, but let the lady Quilla be. What the Sun has, he holds forever."

"Perhaps the Moon, her mother, may have something to say in that matter," said Huaracha gloomily. "Still, let it lie for the while."

Then they fell to discussing the terms of their alliance and, when it came to battle, what help Kari could bring from among those who clung to him in Cuzco.

After this Huaracha took me to another chamber, where we debated the business.

"This Kari, if he be Kari himself, is a bigot," he said, "and if he has his way, neither you nor I will ever set eyes on Quilla again, because to him it is sacrilege. So, what say you?"

I answered that it would be best to make an alliance with Kari, whom I knew to be honest and no Pretender, since without his help I did not think that it would be possible to defeat the armies of the People of the Incas. For the rest, we must trust to chance, making no promises as to Quilla.

"If we did they would avail little," said Huaracha, "seeing that without

doubt she is dead and only vengeance remains to us. There is more poison in Cuzco, White Lord!"

Eight days later we were marching on Cuzco, a great host of us, numbering at least forty thousand Chancas and twenty-five thousand of the rebellious Yuncas, who had joined our standard.

On we marched by the great road over mountains and across plains, driving with us numberless herds of the native sheep for food, but meeting no man, since so soon as we were out of the territory of the Chancas all fled at our approach. At length one night we camped upon a hill named Carmenca and saw beneath us at a distance the mighty city of Cuzco standing in a valley through which a river ran. There it was with its huge fortresses built of great blocks of stone, its temples, its palaces, its open squares, and its countless streets bordered by low houses. Moreover, beyond and around it we saw other things, namely, the camps of a vast army dotted with thousands of white tents.

"Urco is ready for us," said Kari to me grimly as he pointed to these tents.

We camped upon the hill Carmenca and that night there came to us an embassy which spoke in the names of Upanqui and Urco, as though they reigned jointly. This embassy of great lords who all wore discs of

gold in their ears asked us what was our purpose. Huaracha answered--to avenge the murder of the lady Quilla, his daughter, that he heard had been poisoned by Urco.

"How know you that she is dead?" asked the spokesman.

"If she is not dead," replied Huaracha, "show her to us."

"That may not be," replied the spokesman, "since if she lives, it is in the House of the Virgins of the Sun, whence none come out and where none go in. Hearken, O Huaracha. Go back whence you came, or the countless army of the Incas will fall upon you and destroy you, you and your handful together."

"That is yet to be seen," answered Huaracha, and without more words the embassy withdrew.

That night also men crept into our camp secretly, who were of the party of Kari. Of Quilla they seemed to know nothing, for none spoke of those over whom the veil of the Sun had fallen. They told us, however, that the old Inca, Upanqui, was still in Cuzco and had recovered somewhat from his sickness. Also they said that now the feud between him and Urco was bitter, but that Urco had the upper hand and was still in command of the armies. These armies, they declared, were immense and would fight us on the morrow, adding, however, that certain regiments of them who were of the party of Kari would desert to us in the battle. Lastly, they

said that there was great fear in Cuzco, since none knew how that battle would end, which was understood by all to be one for the dominion of Tavantinsuyu.

They had nothing more to say except that they prayed the Sun for our success to save them from the tyranny of Urco. This prince, it appeared, suspected their conspiracy, for now the rumour that Kari lived was everywhere, and having obtained the names of some who were connected with it through his spies, he pursued them with murder and sudden death. They were poisoned at their food; they were stabbed as they walked through the streets at night; their wives, if young and fair, vanished away, as they believed into the houses of those who desired them; even their children were kidnapped, doubtless to become the servants of whom they knew not. They had complained of these things to the old Inca Upanqui, but without avail, since in such matters he was powerless before Urco who had command of the armies. Therefore they would even welcome the triumph of Huaracha, which meant that Kari would become Inca if with lessened territory.

Before they parted to play their parts, Kari brought them before me, whom in their foolishness they worshipped, believing me to be in truth a god. Then he told them to have no fear, since I would command the armies of Huaracha in the battle.

Having surveyed the ground while the light lasted, for the most of that

night, together with Huaracha and Kari, I toiled, making plans for the great fight that was to come. All being ready, I lay down to sleep awhile, wondering whether it were the last time I should do so upon the earth and, to tell the truth, not caring overmuch who, believing that Quilla was dead, had it not been for my sins which weighed upon me with none to whom I might confess them, should have been glad to leave the world and its troubles for whatever might lie beyond, even if it were but sleep.

There comes a time to most men when above everything they desire rest, and now that hour was with me, the exiled and the desolate. Here in this strange country and among these alien people I had found one soul which was akin to mine, that of a beautiful woman who loved me and whom I had come to love and desire. But what was the end of it? Owing to the necessities of statecraft and her own nobleness, she had been separated from me and although, as it would seem, she had as yet escaped defilement, was spirited away into the temple of some barbarous worship where I was almost sure death had found her.

At the best she was blinded, and where she lay in her darkness no man might come because of the superstitions of these folk. Even if Kari became Inca, it would not help me or her, should she still live, since he was the fiercest bigot of them all and swore that he would kill me, his friend, rather than that I should touch her, the vowed to his false gods.

Or perhaps, through the priests, to save himself such sorrow, he would kill her. At the least, dead or not, she was lost to me, while I--utterly alone--must fight for a cause in which I had but one concern, to bring some savage prince to his end because of his crime against Quilla. And, if things went well and this chanced, what of the Future? Of what use to me were rewards that I did not want, and the worship of the vulgar which I hated? Rather would I have lived out my life as the humblest fisherman on Hastings beach, than be made a king over these glittering barbarians with their gold and gems which could buy nothing that I needed, not even a Book of Hours to feed my soul, or the sound of the English tongue to comfort my empty heart.

At length I fell asleep, and as it seemed but a few minutes later, though really six hours had gone by, was awakened by Kari, who told me that the dawn was not far off and came to help me to buckle on my armour. Then I went forth and together with Huaracha arranged our army for battle. Our plan was to advance from our rising ground across a great plain beneath us which was called Xaqui, but afterwards became known by the name of Yahuar-pampa, or Field of Blood.

This plain lay between us and the city of Cuzco, and my thought was that we would march or fight our way across it and rush into the city which was unwallled, and there amidst its streets and houses await the attack of the Inca hosts that were encamped upon its farther side, for thus protected by their walls we hoped that we should be more equal to them. Yet things happened otherwise, since with the first light, without which

we did not dare to move over unknown ground, we perceived that during the darkness the Inca armies had moved round and through the town and were gathered by the ten thousand in dense battalions upon the farther side of the plain.

Now we took council together and in the end decided not to attack as we had proposed, but to await their onslaught on the rocky ridge up which they must climb. So we commanded that our army, which was marshalled in three divisions abreast and two wings with the Yuncas as a reserve behind, should eat and make ready. In the centre of our main division, which numbered some fifteen thousand of the Chanca troops, and a little in front of it, was a low long hill upon the highest point of which I took my place, standing upon a rock with a group of captains and messengers behind me and a guard of about a thousand picked men massed upon the slopes and around the hill. From this high point I could see everything, and in my glittering armour was visible to all, friends and foes together.

After a pause, during which the priests of the Chancas and of the Yuncas behind us sacrificed sheep to the moon and the many other gods they worshipped, and those of the Quichuas, as I could see from my rock, made prayers and offerings to the rising sun, with a mighty shouting the Inca hosts began to advance across the plain towards us. Reckoning them with my eye I saw that they outnumbered us by two or three to one; indeed their hordes seemed to be countless, and always more of them came on

behind from the dim recesses of the city. Divided into three great armies they crept across the plain, a wild and gorgeous spectacle, the sunlight shining upon the forest of their spears and on their rich barbaric uniforms.

A furlong or more away they halted and took counsel, pointing to me with their spears as though they feared me. We stood quite still, though some of our generals urged that we should charge, but this I counselled Huaracha not to do, who desired that the Quichuas should break their strength upon us. At length some word was given; the splendid "rainbow Banner" of the Incas was unfurled and, still divided into three armies with a wide stretch of plain between each of them they attacked, yelling like all the fiends of hell.

Now they had reached us and there began the most terrible battle that was told of in the history of that land. Wave after wave of them rolled up against us, but our battalions which I had not trained in vain stood like rocks and slew and slew and slew till the dead could be counted by the thousand. Again and again they strove to storm the hill on which I stood, hoping to kill me, and each time we beat them back. Picking out their generals I loosed shaft after shaft from my long bow, and seldom did I miss, nor could their cotton-quilted armour turn those bitter arrows.

"The shafts of the god! The shafts of the god!" they cried, and shrank back from before me.

There appeared a man with a yellow fillet on his head and a robe that was studded with precious stones; a huge man with great limbs and flaming eyes; a loose-mouthed, hideous man who wielded a big axe of copper and carried a bow longer than any I had seen in that land.

Hooking the axe to his belt, he set an arrow on the bow and let drive at me. It sped true and struck me full upon the breast, only to shatter on the good French mail, which copper could not pierce.

Again he shot, and this time the arrow glanced from my helm. Then I drew on him and my shaft, that I had aimed at his head, cut away the fringe about his brow and carried it far away. At this sight a groan went up from the lords about him, and one cried:

"An omen, O Urco, an evil omen!"

"Aye," he shouted, "for the White Wizard who shot the arrow."

Dropping the bow, he rushed up the hill at me roaring, axe aloft, and followed by his company. He smote, and I caught the blow upon my shield, and striking back with Wave-Flame, shore through the shaft of the axe that he had lifted to guard his head as though it had been made of reed, aye, and through the quilted cotton on his shoulder strengthened with strips of gold, and to the bone beneath.

Then a man slipped past me. It was Kari, striking at Urco with Deleroy's

sword. They closed and rolled down the slope locked in each other's arms. What chanced after this I do not know, for others rushed in and all grew confused, but presently Kari limped back somewhat shaken and bleeding, and I caught sight of Urco, little hurt, as it seemed, amidst his lords at the bottom of the slope.

At this moment I heard a great shouting and looking round, saw that the Quichuas had broken through our left and were slaughtering many, while the rest fled, also that our right was wavering. I sent messengers to Huaracha, bidding him call up the Yunca rear guard. They were slow in coming and I began to fear that all was lost for little by little the hordes of the men of Cuzco were surrounding us.

Then it was that Kari, or some with him, lifted a banner that had been wrapped upon a pole, a blue banner upon which was embroidered a golden sun. At the sight of it there was tumult in the Inca ranks, and presently a great body of men, five or six thousand of them that had seemed to be in reserve, ran forward shouting, "Kari! Kari!" and fell upon those who were pursuing our shattered left, breaking them up and dispersing them. Also at last the Yuncas came up and drove back the regiments that assailed our right, while from Urco's armies there rose a cry of "Treachery!"

Trumpets blew and the Inca host, gathering itself together and abandoning its dead and wounded, drew back sullenly on to the plain, and there halted in three bodies as before, though much lessened in number.

Huaracha appeared, saying:

"Strike, White Lord! It is our hour! The heart is out of them."

The signal was given, and roaring like a hurricane, presently the Chancas charged. Down the slope they went, I at the head of them with Huaracha on one side and Kari on the other. The swift-footed Chancas outran me who was hindered by my mail. We charged in three masses as we had stood on the ridge, following those open lanes of ground up which the foe had not come, because these were less cumbered with dead and wounded. Presently I saw why those of Cuzco had left these lanes untrod, for of a sudden some warriors, who had outstripped me, vanished. They had fallen into a pit covered over with earth laid upon canes, of which the bottom was set with sharp stakes. Others, who were running along the lanes of open ground to right and left, also fell into pits of which there were scores all carefully prepared against the day of battle. With trouble the Chancas were halted, but not before we had lost some hundreds of men. Then we advanced again across that ground over which the Inca host had retreated.

At length we reached their lines, passing through a storm of arrows, and there began such a battle as I had never heard of or even dreamed. With axes, stone-headed clubs and spears, both armies fought furiously, and though the Incas still outnumbered us by two to one, because of my training our regiments drove them back. Lord after lord rushed at me

with glaring eyes, but my mail turned their copper spears and knives of flint. Oh! Wave-Flame fed full that day, and if Thorgrimmer my forefather could have seen us from his home in Valhalla, surely he must have sworn by Odin that never had he given it such a feast.

The Inca warriors grew afraid and shrank back.

"This Red-Beard from the sea is indeed a god. He cannot be slain!" I heard them cry.

Then Urco appeared, bloody and furious, shouting:

"Cowards! I will show you whether he cannot be slain."

He rushed onward to meet--not me, but Huaracha, who seeing that I was weary, had leapt in front of me. They fought, and Huaracha went down and was dragged away by some of his servants.

Now Urco and I were face to face, he wielding a huge copper-headed club with which, as my mail could not be pierced, he thought to batter out my life. I caught the blow upon my shield, but so great was the giant's strength that it brought me to my knees. Next second I was up and at him. Shouting, I smote with both hands, for my shield had fallen. The thick, turban-like headdress that Urco wore was severed, cut through as the axe had been, and Wave-Flame bit deep into the skull beneath.

Urco fell like a stunned ox and I sprang upon him to make an end. Then it was that a rope was flung about my shoulders, a noosed rope that was hauled tight. In vain I struggled. I was thrown down; I was seized by a score of hands and dragged away into the heart of Urco's host.

Waiting till a litter could be brought, they set me on my feet again, my arms still bound by the noose that these Indians call laso, which they know so well how to throw, the red sword Wave-Flame still hanging by its thong from my right wrist. Whilst I stood thus, like a bull in a net, they gathered round, staring at me, not with hate as it seemed to me, but in fear and with reverence. When at length the litter came they aided me to enter it quite gently.

As I did so I looked back. The battle still raged but it seemed to me with less fury than before. It was as though both sides were weary of slaughter, their leaders being fallen. The litter was borne forward, till at length the noise of shouting and tumult grew low. Twisting myself round I peered through the back curtains and saw that the Inca host and that of the Chancas were separating sullenly, neither of them broken since they carried their wounded away with them. It was plain that the battle remained drawn for there was no rout and no triumph.

I saw, too, that I was entering the great city of Cuzco, where women and children stood at the doors of the houses gazing, and some of them wringing their hands with tears upon their faces.

Passing down long streets and across a bridge, I came to a vast square round which stood mighty buildings, low, massive, and constructed of huge stones. At the door of one of these the litter halted and I was helped to descend. Men beautifully clad in brodered linen led me through a gateway and across a garden where I noted a marvellous thing, namely: that all the plants therein were fashioned of solid gold with silver flowers, or sometimes of silver with golden flowers. Also there were trees on which were perched birds of gold and silver. When I saw this I thought that I must be mad, but it was not so, for having no other use for the precious metals, of which they had so much abundance, thus did these Incas adorn their palaces.

Leaving the golden garden, I reached a courtyard surrounded by rooms, to one of which I was conducted. Passing its door, I found myself in a splendid chamber hung with tapestries fantastically wrought and having cushioned seats, and tables of rich woods incrustated with precious stones. Here servants or slaves appeared with a chamberlain who bowed deeply and welcomed me in the name of the Inca.

Then, as though I were something half divine, gently enough, they loosed the sword from my wrist, took the long bow from my back, with the few arrows that remained, also my dagger, and hid them away. They unbound me, and freeing me from my armour, as I told them how, and the garments beneath, laved me with warm, scented water, rubbed my bruised limbs, and clothed me in wonderful soft garments, also scented and fastened about my middle with a golden belt. This done, food and spiced drinks of their

native wine were brought to me in golden vessels. I ate and drank and, being very weary, laid myself down upon one of the couches to sleep. For now I no longer took any thought as to what might befall me, but received all as it came, good and ill together, entrusting my body and soul to the care of God and St. Hubert. Indeed, what else could I do who was disarmed and a prisoner?

When I awoke again, very stiff and bruised, but much refreshed, night had fallen, for hanging lamps were lit about the room. By their light I saw the chamberlain of whom I have spoken standing before me. I asked him his errand. With many bows he said that if I were rested the Inca Upanqui desired my presence that he might speak with me.

I bade him lead on, and, with others who waited without, he conducted me through a maze of passages into a glorious chamber where everything seemed to be gold, for even the walls were panelled with it. Never had I dreamt of so much gold; indeed the sight of it wearied me till I could have welcomed that of humble brick or wood. At the end of this chamber that was also lit with lamps, were curtains. Presently these were drawn by two beautiful women in jewelled skirts and head-dresses, and behind them on a dais I saw a couch and on the couch the old Inca Upanqui looking feebler than when I had last beheld him in the Chanca city, and very simply clad in a white tunic. Only on his head he wore the red fringe from which I suppose he never parted day or night. He looked up and said:

"Greeting, White-Lord-from-the-Sea. So you have come to visit me after all, though you said that you would not."

"I have been brought to visit you, Inca," I answered.

"Yes, yes, they tell me they captured you in the battle, though I expect that was by your own will as you had wearied of those Chancas. For what laso can hold a god?"

"None," I answered boldly.

"Of course not, and that you are a kind of god there is no doubt because of the things you did in that battle. They say that the arrows and spears melted when they touched you and that you shot and cut down men by scores. Also that when the prince Urco tried to kill you, although he is the strongest man in my kingdom, you knocked him over as though he had been a little child and hacked his head open so that they do not know whether he will live or die. I think I hope he will die, for you see I have quarrelled with him."

I thought to myself that so did I, but I only asked:

"How did the battle end, Inca?"

"As it began, Lord Hurachi. A great many men have been killed on both sides, thousands and thousands of them, and neither army has the

victory. They have drawn back and sit growling at each other like two angry lions which are afraid to fight again. Indeed, I do not want them to fight, and now that Urco cannot interfere, I shall put a stop to all this bloodshed if I am able. Tell me, for you were with him, why does this Huaracha, who I hear is also wounded, want to make war on me with those troublesome Chancas of his?"

"Because your son, the prince Urco, has poisoned, or tried to poison, his only child, Quilla."

"Yes, yes, I know, and it was a wicked thing to do. You see, Lord, what happened was this: That lovely Quilla, who is fairer than her mother the Moon, was to have married Urco. But, Lord, as it chanced on our journey together, although I am old--well, she became enamoured of me, and prayed me to protect her from Urco. Such things happen to women, Lord, whose hearts, when they behold the divine, are apt to carry them away from the vulgar," and he laughed in a silly fashion like the vain old fool that he was.

"Naturally. How could she help it, Inca? Who, after seeing you, would wish to turn to Urco?"

"No one, especially as Urco is a coarse and brutal fellow. Well, what was I to do? There are reasons why I do not wish to marry again at my age; indeed I am tired of the sight of women, who want time to pray and think of holy things; also if I had done what she wished, some might

have thought that I had behaved badly to Urco. At the same time, a woman's heart is sacred and I could not do violence to that of one so sweet and understanding and lovely. So I put her into the House of the Virgins of the Sun where she will be quite safe."

"It seems that she was not safe, Inca."

"No, because that violent man, Urco, being disappointed and very jealous, through some low creature of his, who waited on the Virgins, tried to poison her with a drug which would have made her all swollen and hideous and covered her face with blotches, also perhaps have sent her mad. Luckily one of the matrons, whom we call Mama-conas, knocked the cup away before she drank, but some of the horrible poison went into her eyes and blinded her."

"So she lives, Inca."

"Certainly she lives. I have learnt that for myself, because in this country it is not wise to trust what they tell you. You know as Inca I have privileges, and although even I do not talk to them, I caused those Virgins of the Sun to be led in front of me, which in strictness even I ought not to have done. It was a dreary business, Lord Hurachi, for though those Virgins may be so holy, some of them are very old and hideous and of course Quilla as a novice came last in the line conducted by two Mama-conas who are cousins of my own. The odd thing is that the poison seems to have made her much more beautiful than before, for her

eyes have grown bigger and are glorious, shining like stars seen when there is frost. Well, there she is safe from Urco and every other man, however wicked and impious. But what does this Huaracha want?"

"He wants his blinded daughter back, Inca."

"Impossible, impossible! Who ever heard of such a thing! Why, Heaven and Earth would come together and the Sun, my father, and her husband, would burn us all up. Still, perhaps, we could come to an agreement for Huaracha must have had enough fighting and very likely he will die. Now I am tired of talking about the lady Quilla and I want to ask you something."

"Speak on, Inca."

Suddenly the old dotard's manner changed: he became quick and shrewd, as doubtless he was in his prime, for this Upanqui had been a great king. At the beginning of our talk the two women of whom I have spoken and the chamberlain had withdrawn to the end of the chamber where they waited with their hands folded, like those who adore before an altar. Still he peered about him to make sure that none were within hearing, and in the end beckoned to me to ascend the dais and sit upon the couch beside him, saying:

"You see I trust you although you are a god from the sea who has been

fighting against me. Now hearken. You had a servant with you, a very strange man, who is said also to have come out of the sea, though that I cannot believe since he is like one of our princes. Where is that man?"

"With the army of Huaracha, Inca."

"So I have heard. I heard also that in the battle he hoisted a banner with the sun blazoned on it, and that thereon certain regiments of mine deserted to Huaracha. Now, why did they do that?"

"I understand, O Inca, that the kings of this land have many children. Perhaps he might be one of them."

"Ah! You are clever as a god should be. Well, I am a god also and the same thought has come to me, although as a fact I have only had two legitimate sons and the others are of no account. The eldest of these was an able and beautiful prince named Kari, but we quarrelled, and to tell the truth there was a woman in the matter, or rather two women, for Kari's mother fought with Urco's mother whom I loved, because she never scolded me, which the other did. So Urco was named to be Inca after me. Yet that was not enough for him who remained jealous of his brother Kari who outpassed him in all things save strength of body. They wooed the same beautiful woman and Kari won her, whereon Urco seduced her from him, and afterwards he or someone killed her. At least she died, I forget how. Then the lords of the Inca blood began to turn towards Kari because he was royal and wise, which would have meant civil war when I

had been gathered to the Sun. Therefore Urco poisoned him, or so it was rumoured; at any rate, he vanished away, and often since then I have mourned him."

"The dead come to life again sometimes, Inca."

"Yes, yes, Lord-from-the-Sea, that happens; the gods who took them away bring them back--and this servant of yours--they say he is so like to Kari that he might be the same man grown older. And--why did those regiments, all of them officered by men who used to love Kari, go over to Huaracha to-day, and why do rumours run through the land like the wind that springs up suddenly in fine weather? Tell me of this servant of yours and how you found him in the sea."

"Why should I tell you, Inca? Is it because you want to kill him who is so like to this lost Kari of yours?"

"No, no--gods can keep each other's counsel, can they not? It is because I would give--oh! half my godship to know that he is alive. Hark you, Urco wearies me so much that sometimes I wonder whether he really is my son. Who can tell? There was a certain lord of the coastlands, a hairy giant who, they said, could eat half a sheep at a sitting and break the backs of men in his hands, of whom Urco's mother used to think much. But who can tell? No one except my father, the Sun, and he guards his secrets--for the present. At least Urco wearies me with his coarse crimes and his drunkenness, though the army loves him because he is a

butcher and liberal. We quarrelled the other day over the small matter of this lady Quilla, and he threatened me till I grew wrath and said that I would not hand him my crown as I had purposed to do. Yes, I grew wrath and hated him for whose sake I had sinned because his mother bewitched me. Lord-from-the-Sea," here his voice dropped to a whisper, "I am afraid of Urco. Even a god such as I am can be murdered, Lord-from-the-Sea. That is why I will not go to Yucay, for there I might die and none know it, whereas here I still am Inca and a god whom it is sacrilege to touch."

"I understand, but how can I help you, Inca, who am but a prisoner in your palace?"

"No, no, you are only a prisoner in name. At the worst Urco will be sick for a long while, since the physicians say that sword of yours has bitten deep, and during that time all power is mine. Messengers are at your service; you are free to come and go as you will. Bring this servant of yours to my presence, for doubtless he trusts you. I would speak with him, O Lord-from-the-Sea."

"If I should do this, Inca, will the lady Quilla be given back to her father?"

"Nay, it would be sacrilege. Ask what else you will, lands and rule and palaces and wives--not that. Myself I should not dare to lay a finger on her who rests in the arms of the Sun. What does it matter about this

Quilla who is but one fair woman among thousands?"

I thought awhile, then answered, "I think it matters much, Inca. Still, that this bloodshed may be stayed, I will do my best to bring him who was my servant to your presence if you can find me the means to come at him, and afterwards we will talk again."

"Yes, I am weary now. Afterwards we will talk again. Farewell, Lord-from-the-Sea."