

## CHAPTER X

### THE GREAT HORROR

The day of the new moon came and with it the great horror that caused all the Empire of Tavantinsuyu to tremble, fearing lest Heaven should be avenged upon it.

Since Upanqui had found his elder son again he began to dote upon him, as in such a case the old and weak-minded often do, and would walk about the gardens and palaces with his arm around his neck babbling to him of whatever was uppermost in his mind. Moreover, his soul was oppressed because he had done Kari wrong in the past, and preferred Urco to him under the urging of that prince's mother.

"The truth is, Son," I myself heard him say to Kari, "that we men who seem to rule the world do not rule it at all, because always women rule us. This they do through our passions which the gods planted in us for their own ends, also because they are more single in their minds. The man thinks of many things, the woman only thinks of what she desires. Therefore the man whom Nature already has bemused, only brings a little piece of his mind to fight against her whole mind, and so is conquered; he who was made for one thing only, to be the mate of the woman that she may mother more men in order to serve the wills of other women who yet seem to be those men's slaves."

"So I have learned, Father," answered the grave Kari, "and for this reason having suffered in the past, I am determined to have as little to do with women as is possible for one in my place. During my travels in other lands, as in this country, I have seen men great and noble brought to nothingness and ruin by their love for women; down into the dirt, indeed, when their hands were full of the world's wealth and glory. Moreover, I have noticed that they seldom learn wisdom, and that what they have done before, they are ready to do again, who believe anything that soft lips swear to them. Yes, even that they are loved for themselves alone, as I own to my sorrow, once I did myself. Urco could not have taken that fair wife of mine, Father, if she had not been willing to go when she saw that I had lost your favour and with it the hope of the Scarlet Fringe."

Here Kari looked at me, of whom I knew he was thinking all this time, and seeing that I could overhear his talk, began to speak of something else.

On the appointed day there was a great gathering of the nobles of the land, especially of those of the Inca blood, and of all that were "earmen," a class of the same rank as our peers in England, to hear the proclamation of Kari as the Inca's heir. It was made before this gorgeous company in the Great Temple of the Sun, which now I saw for the first time.

It was a huge and most wondrous place well named the "House of Gold." For here everything was gold. On the western wall hung an image of the Sun twenty feet or more across, an enormous graven plate of gold set about with gems and having eyes and teeth of great emeralds. The roof, too, and the walls were all panelled with gold, even the cornices and column heads were of solid gold.

Opening out of this temple also were others dedicated to the Moon and Stars, that of the Moon being clothed in silver, with her radiant face shaped in silver fixed to the western wall. So it was with the temple of the Stars, of the Lightnings and of the Rainbow, which perhaps with its many colours that sprang from jewels, was the most dazzling of them all.

The sight of so much glory overwhelmed me, and it came into my mind that if only it were known of in Europe, men would die by the ten thousand on the chance that they might conquer this country and make its wealth theirs. Yet here, save for these purposes of ornament and to be used as offerings to the gods and Incas, it was of no account at all.

But in this temple of the Sun was a marvel greater than its gold. For on either side of the carved likenesses of the sun, seated upon chairs of gold, sat the dead Incas and their queens. Yes, clothed in their royal robes and emblems, with the Fringe upon their brows, there they sat with their heads bent forward, so wonderfully preserved by the arts these people have, that except for the stamp of death upon their countenances,

they might have been sleeping men and women. Thus in the dead face of the mother of Kari I could read her likeness to her son. Of these departed kings and queens there were many, since from the first Inca of whom history told all were gathered here in the holy House and under the guardianship of the effigy of their god, the Sun, from whom they believed themselves to be descended. The sight was so solemn that it awed me, as it did all that congregation, for I noted that here men walked with unsandalled feet and that in speaking none raised their voices high.

The old Inca, Upanqui, entered, gloriously apparelled and accompanied by lords and priests, while after him came Kari with his retinue of great men. The Inca bowed to the company whereon everyone in the great temple, save myself alone whose British pride kept me on my feet, standing like one left living on a battlefield among a multitude of slain, prostrated himself before his divine majesty. At a sign they rose again and the Inca seated himself upon his jewelled golden throne beneath the effigy of the Sun, while Kari took his place upon a lesser throne to the Inca's right.

Looking at him there in his splendour on this day when he came into his own again, I bethought me of the wretched, starving Indian marked with blows and foul with filth whom I had rescued from the cruel mob upon the Thames-side wharf, and wondered at this enormous change of fortune and the chain of wonderful events by which it had been brought about.

My fortune also had changed, for then I was great in my own fashion, who now had become but a wanderer, welcomed indeed in this glittering new world of which yonder we knew nothing, because I was strange and different, also full of unheard-of learning and skilled in war, but still nothing but an outcast wanderer, and so doomed to live and die. And as I thought, so thought Kari, for our glances met, and I read it in his eyes.

Yonder sat my servant who had become my lord, and though he was still my friend, soon I felt he would be lost in the state matters of that great empire, leaving me more lonely than before. Also his mind was not as my mind, as his blood was not my blood, and he was the slave of a faith that to me was a hateful superstition doubtless begotten by the Devil, who under the name of Cupay, some worshipped in that land, though others declared that this Cupay was the God of the Dead.

Oh! that I could flee away with Quilla and at her side live out what was left to me of life, since of all these multitudes she alone understood and was akin to me, because the sacred fire of love had burned away our differences and opened her eyes. But Quilla was snatched from me by the law of their accursed faith, and whatever else Kari might give, he would never give me this lady of the Moon, since, as he had said, to him this would be sacrilege.

The ceremonies began. First Larico, the high-priest of the Sun, clothed in his white sacerdotal robes, made sacrifice upon a little altar which

stood in front of the Inca's throne.

It was a very simple sacrifice of fruit and corn and flowers, with what seemed to be strange-shaped pieces of gold. At least I saw nothing else, and am sure that nothing that had life was laid upon that altar after the fashion of the bloody offerings of the Jews, and indeed of those of some of the other peoples of that great land.

Prayers, however, were spoken, very fine prayers and pure so far as I could understand them, for their language was more ancient and somewhat different to that which was used in common speech; also the priests moved about, bowing and bending the knees much as our own do in celebrating the mass, though whether these motions were in honour of the god or of the Inca, I am not sure.

When the sacrifice was over, and the little fire that burned upon the altar had sunk low, though I was told that for hundreds of years it had never been extinguished, suddenly the Inca began to speak. With many particulars that I had not heard before he told the tale of Kari and of his estrangement from him in past years through the plottings of the mother of Urco who now was dead, like the mother of Kari. This woman, it would appear, had persuaded him, the Inca, that Kari was conspiring against him, and therefore Urco was ordered to take him prisoner, but returned only with Kari's wife, saying that Kari had killed himself.

Here Upanqui became overcome with emotion as the aged are apt to do,

and beat his breast, even shedding tears because most unjustly he had allowed these things to happen and the wicked triumph over the good, for which sin he said he felt sure his father the Sun would bring some punishment on him, as indeed was to chance sooner than he thought. Then he continued his story, setting out all Urco's iniquities and sacrileges against the gods, also his murders of people of high and low degree and his stealing of their wives and daughters. Lastly he told of the coming of Kari who was supposed to be dead, and all that story which I have set out.

Having finished his tale, with much solemn ceremonial he deposed Urco from his heirship to the Empire which he gave back to Kari to whom it belonged by right of birth and calling upon his dead forefathers, one by one, to be witness to the act, with great formality once more he bound the Prince's Fringe about his brow. As he did this, he said these words:

"Soon, O Prince Kari, you must change this yellow circlet for that which I wear, and take with it all the burden of empire, for know that as quickly as may be I purpose to withdraw to my palace at Yucay, there to make my peace with God before I am called hence to dwell in the Mansions of the Sun."

When he had finished Kari did homage to his father, and in that quiet, even voice of his, told his tale of the wrongs that he had suffered at the hands of Urco his brother and of how he had escaped, living but maddened, from his hate. He told also how he had wandered across the

sea, though of England he said nothing, and been saved from misery and death by myself, a very great person in my own country. Still, since I had suffered wrong there, as he, Kari, had in his, he had persuaded me to accompany him back to his own land, that there my wisdom might shine upon its darkness, and owing to my divine and magical gifts hither we had come in safety. Lastly, he asked the assembled priests and lords if they were content to accept him as the Inca to be, and to stand by him in any war that Urco might wage against him.

To this they answered that they were content and would stand by him.

Then followed many other rites such as the informing of the dead Incas, one by one, of this solemn declaration, through the mouth of the high-priest, and the offering of many prayers to them and to the Sun their father. So long were these prayers with the chants from choirs hidden in side chapels by which they were interspersed, that the day drew towards its close before all was done.

Thus it came about that the dusk was gathering when the Inca, followed by Kari, myself, the priests, and all the congregation, left the temple to present Kari as the heir to the throne to the vast crowd which waited upon the open square outside its doors.

Here the ceremony went on. The Inca and most of us, for there was not space for all, although we were packed as closely together as Hastings herrings in a basket, took our stand upon a platform that was surrounded



by a marvellous cable made of links of solid gold which, it was said, needed fifty men to lift it from the ground. Then Upanqui, whose strength seemed restored to him, perhaps because of some drug that he had eaten, or under the spur of this great event, stepped forward to the edge of the low platform and addressed the multitude in eloquent words, setting out the matter as he had done in the temple. He ended his speech by asking the formal question:

"Do you, Children of the Sun, accept the prince Kari, my first-born, to be Inca after me?"

There was a roar of assent, and as it died away Upanqui turned to call Kari to him that he might present him to the people.

At this very moment in the gathering twilight I saw a great fierce-faced man with a bandaged head, whom I knew to be Urco, leap over the golden chain. He sprang upon the platform and with a shout of "I do not accept him, and thus I pay back treachery," plunged a gleaming copper knife or sword into the Inca's breast.

In an instant, before any could stir in that packed crowd, Urco had leapt back over the golden chain, and from the edge of the platform, to vanish amongst those beneath, who doubtless were men of his following disguised as citizens or peasants.

Indeed all who beheld seemed frozen with horror. One great sigh went up

and then there was silence, since no such deed as this was known in the annals of that empire. For a moment the aged Upanqui stood upon his feet, the blood pouring down his white beard and jewelled robe. Then he turned a little and said in a clear and gentle voice:

"Kari, you will be Inca sooner than I thought. Receive me, O God my Father, and pardon this murderer who, I think, can be no true son of mine."

Then he fell forward on his face and when we lifted him he was dead.

Still the silence hung; it was as though the tongues of men were smitten with dumbness. At length Kari stepped forward and cried:

"The Inca is dead, but I, the Inca, live on to avenge him. I declare war upon Urco the murderer and all who cling to Urco!"

Now the spell was lifted, and from those dim hordes there went up a yell of hatred against Urco the butcher and parricide, while men rushed to and fro searching for him. In vain! for he had escaped in the darkness.

On the following day, with more ceremonies, though many of these were omitted because of the terror and trouble of the times, Kari was crowned Inca, exchanging the yellow for the crimson Fringe and taking the throne name of Upanqui after his father. In Cuzco there was none to say him nay for the whole city was horror-struck because of the sacrilege that had

been committed. Also those who clung to Urco had fled away with him to a town named Huarina on the borders of the great lake called Titicaca, where was an island with marvellous temples full of gold, which town lay at a distance from Cuzco.

Then the civil war began and raged for three whole months, though of all that happened in that time because of the labour of it, I set down little, who would get forward with my story.

In this war I played a great part. The fear of Kari was that the Chancas, seeing the Inca realm thus rent in two, would once more attack Cuzco. This it became my business to prevent. As the ambassador of Kari I visited the camp of Huaracha, bearing offers of peace which gave to him more than he could ever hope to win by strength of arms. I found the old warrior-king still sick and wasted because of the hurt from Urco's club, though now he could walk upon crutches, and set out the case. He answered that he had no wish to fight against Kari who had offered him such honourable terms, especially when he was waging war against Urco whom he, Huaracha, hated, because he had striven to poison his daughter and dealt him a blow which he was sure would end in his death. Therefore he was ready to make a firm peace with the new Inca, if in addition to what he offered he would surrender to him Quilla who was his heiress and would be Queen of the Chancas after him.

With these words I went back to Kari, only to find that on this matter he was hard as a rock of the mountains. In vain did I plead with him, and in vain did the high-priest, Larico, by subtle hints and arguments, strive to gentle his mind.

"My brother," said Kari in that soft even voice of his, when he had heard me patiently to the end, "forgive me if I tell you that in advancing this prayer, for one word you say on behalf of King Huaracha, you say two for yourself, who having unhappily been bewitched by her, desire this Virgin of the Sun, the lady Quilla, to be your wife. My brother, take everything else that I have to give, but leave this lady alone. If I handed her over to Huaracha or to you, as I have told you before, I should bring upon myself and upon my people the curse of my father the Sun, and of Pachacamac, the Spirit who is above the Sun. It was because Upanqui, my father according to the flesh, dared to look upon her after she had entered the House of the Sun, as I have learned he did, that a bloody and a cruel death came upon him, for so the magicians and the wise men have assured me that the oracles declare. Therefore, rather than do this crime of crimes, I would choose that Huaracha should renew the war against us and that you should join yourself to him, or even to Urco, and strive to tear me from the Throne, for then even if I were slain, I should die with honour."

"That I could never do," I answered sadly.

"No, my brother Hubert (for now he called me by my English name again),

that you could never do, being what you are, as I know well. So like the rest of us you must bear your burden. Mayhap it may please my gods, or your gods in the end, and in some way that I cannot foresee, to give you this woman whom you seek. But of my free will I will never give her to you. To me the deed would be as though in your land of England the King commanded the consecrated bread and cups of wine to be snatched from the hands of the priests of your temples and cast to the dogs, or given to cheer the infidels within your gates, or dragged away the nuns from your convents to become their lemans. What would you think of such a king in your own country? And what," he added with meaning, "would you have thought of me if there I had stolen one of these nuns because she was beautiful and I desired her as a wife?"

Now although Kari's words stung me because of the truth that was in them, I answered that to me this matter wore another face. Also that Quilla had become a Virgin of the Sun, not of her own free will, but to escape from Urco.

"Yes, my brother," he answered, "because you believe my religion to be idolatry, and do not understand that the Sun to me is the symbol and garment of God, and that when we of the Inca blood, or those of us who have the inner knowledge, talk of him as our Father, we mean that we are the children of God, though the common people are taught otherwise. For the rest, this lady took her vows of her own free will and of her secret reasons I know nothing, any more than I know why she offered herself in

marriage to Urco before she found you upon the island. For you I grieve, and for her also; yet I would have you remember that, as your own priests teach, in every life that is not brutal there must be loss, sorrow, and sacrifice, since by these steps only man can climb towards the things of the spirit. Pluck then such flowers as you will from the garden that Fate gives you, but leave this one white bloom alone."

In such words as these he preached at me, till at length I could bear no more, and said roughly:

"To me it is a very evil thing, O Inca, to separate those who love each other, and one that cannot be pleasing to Heaven. Therefore, great as you are, and friend of mine as you are, I tell you to your face that if I can take the lady Quilla out of that golden grave of hers I shall do so."

"I know it, my brother," he answered, "and therefore, were I as some Incas have been, I should cause this holy Spouse to travel more quickly to the skies than Nature will take her. But this I will not do because I know also that Destiny is above all things and that which Destiny decrees will happen unhelped by man. Still I tell you that I will thwart you if I can and that should you succeed in your ends, I will kill you if I can and the lady also, because you have committed sacrilege. Yes, although I love you better than any other man, I will kill you. And if King Huaracha should be able to snatch her away by force I will make war on him until either I and my people or he and his people are destroyed.

And now let us talk no more of this matter, but rather of our plans against Urco, since in these at least, where no woman is concerned, I know that you will be faithful to me and I sorely need your help."

So with a heavy heart I went back to the camp of Huaracha and told him Kari's words. He was very wroth when he heard them, since his gods were different to those of the Incas and he thought nothing of the holiness of the Virgins of the Sun, and once again talked of renewing the war. Still it came to nothing for sundry reasons of which the greatest was that his sickness increased on him as the days went by. Also I told him that much as I desired Quilla, I could not fight upon his side since I was sworn to aid Kari against Urco and my word might not be broken. Moreover, the Yuncas who had been our allies, wearying of their long absence from home and satisfied with the gentle forgiveness and the redress of their grievances which the new Inca had promised them, were gone, having departed on their long march to the coast, while many of the Chancas themselves were slipping back to their own country. Therefore Huaracha's hour had passed by.

So at length we agreed that it would be foolish to attack Cuzco in order to try to rescue Quilla, since even if Huaracha won in face of a desperate defence, probably it would be only to find that his daughter was dead or had vanished away to some unknown and distant convent. All that we could do was to trust to fortune to deliver her into our hands.

We agreed further that, having obtained an honourable peace and all else that he desired, it would be well for Huaracha to return to his own land, leaving me a body of five thousand picked men who were willing to serve under me, to assist in the war against Urco, to be my guard and that of Quilla, if perchance I could deliver her from the House of the Sun.

When this was known five thousand of the best and bravest of the Chancas, young soldiers who sought adventure and battle and whom I had trained, stepped forward at once and swore themselves to my service. Bidding farewell to Huaracha, with these troops I returned to Cuzco, sending messengers ahead to explain the reason of their coming to Kari, who welcomed them well and gave them quarters round the palace which was allotted to me.

A few days later we advanced on the town Huarina, a great host of us, and outside of it met the yet greater host of Urco in a mighty battle that endured for a day and a night, and yet, like that of the Field of Blood, remained neither lost nor won. When the thousands of the dead had been buried and the wounded sent back to Cuzco, we attacked the city of Huarina, I leading the van with my Chancas, and stormed the place, driving Urco and his forces out on the farther side.

They retreated to the mountains and there followed a long and tedious war without great battles. At length, although the Inca's armies had



suffered sorely, we forced those of Urco to the shores of the Lake Titicaca, where most of them melted away into the swamps and certain tree-clad, low-lying valleys. Urco himself, however, with a number of followers, escaped in boats to the holy island in the lake.

We built a fleet of balsas with reeds and blown-out sheepskins, and followed him. Landing on the isle we stormed the city of temples which were more wondrous and even fuller of gold and precious things than those of Cuzco. Here the men of Urco fought desperately, but driving them from street to street, at length we penned them in one of the largest of the temples of which by some mischance a reed roof was set on fire, so that there they perished miserably. It was a dreadful scene such as I never wish to behold again. Also, after all Urco and some of his captains, breaking out of the burning temple under cover of the smoke escaped, either in balsas or, as many declare, by swimming the lake. At least they were gone nor search as we might on the mainland could they be found.

So all being finished, except for the escape of Urco, we returned to Cuzco which Kari entered in triumph, I marching at his side, wearied out with war and bloodshed.