

CHAPTER V.

THE HATRED OF THE INDIANS.

Since the Colombian troops, confided by Bolivar to the orders of General Santa Cruz, had been driven from lower Peru, this country, which had been incessantly agitated by pronunciamientos, military revolts, had recovered some calmness and tranquillity.

In fact, private ambition no longer had any thing to expect; the president Gambarra seemed immovable in his palace of the Plaza-Mayor. In this direction there was nothing to fear; but the true danger, concealed, imminent, was not from these rebellions, as promptly extinguished as kindled, and which seemed to flatter the taste of the Americans for military parades.

This unknown peril escaped the eyes of the Spaniards, too lofty to perceive it, and the attention of the mestizoes, who never wished to look beneath them.

And yet there was an unusual agitation among the Indians of the city; they often mingled with the serranos, the inhabitants of the mountains; these people seemed to have shaken off their natural apathy. Instead of rolling themselves in their ponchos, with their feet turned to the spring sun, they were scattered throughout the country, stopping

one another, exchanging private signals, and haunting the least frequented pulperias, in which they could converse without danger.

This movement was principally to be observed on one of the squares remote from the centre of the city. At the corner of a street stood a house, of only one story, whose wretched appearance struck the eye disagreeably.

A tavern of the lowest order, a chingana, kept by an old Indian woman, offered to the lowest zambos the chica, beer of fermented maize, and the quarapo, a beverage made of the sugar-cane.

The concourse of Indians on this square took place only at certain hours, and principally when a long pole was raised on the roof of the inn as a signal of assemblage, then the zambos of every profession, the capataz, the arrieros, muleteers, the carreteros, carters, entered the chingana, one by one, and immediately disappeared in the great hall; the padrona (hostess) seemed very busy, and leaving to her servant the care of the shop, hastened to serve herself her usual customers.

A few days after the disappearance of Martin Paz, there was a numerous assembly in the hall of the inn; one could scarcely through the darkness, rendered still more obscure by the tobacco-smoke, distinguish the frequenters of this tavern. Fifty Indians were ranged around a long table; some were chewing the coca, a kind of tea-leaf, mingled with a

little piece of fragrant earth called manubi; others were drinking from large pots of fermented maize; but these occupations did not distract their attention, and they were closely listening to the speech of an Indian.

This was the Sambo, whose fixed eyes were strangely wild. He was clad as on the Plaza-Mayor.

After having carefully observed his auditors, the Sambo commenced in these terms:

"The children of the Sun can converse on grave affairs; there is no perfidious ear to hear them; on the square, some of our friends, disguised as street-singers, will attract the attention of the passers-by, and we shall enjoy entire liberty."

In fact the tones of a mandoline and of a viguela were echoing without.

The Indians within, knowing themselves in safety, lent therefore close attention to the words of the Sambo, in whom they placed entire confidence.

"What news can the Sambo give us of Martin Paz?" asked an Indian.

"None--is he dead or not? The Great Spirit only knows. I am expecting

some of our brethren, who have descended the river to its mouth, perhaps they will have found the body of Martin Paz."

"He was a good chief," said Manangani, a ferocious Indian, much dreaded; "but why was he not at his post on the day when the schooner brought us arms?"

The Sambo cast down his head without reply.

"Did not my brethren know," resumed Manangani, "that there was an exchange of shots between the Annonciation and the custom-house officers, and that the capture of the vessel would have ruined our projects of conspiracy?"

A murmur of approbation received the words of the Indian.

"Those of my brethren who will wait before they judge will be the beloved of my heart," resumed the Sambo; "who knows whether my son Martin Paz will not one day re-appear? Listen now; the arms which have been sent us from Sechura are in our power; they are concealed in the mountains of the Cordilleras, and ready to do their office when you shall be prepared to do your duty."

"And what delays us?" said a young Indian; "we have sharpened our knives and are waiting."

"Let the hour come," said the Sambo; "do my brethren know what enemy their arms should strike first?"

"Those mestizoes who treat us as slaves, and strike us with the hand and whip, like restive mules."

"These are the monopolizers of the riches of the soil, who will not suffer us to purchase a little comfort for our old age."

"You are mistaken; and your first blows must be struck elsewhere," said the Sambo, growing animated; "these are not the men who have dared for three hundred years past to tread the soil of our ancestors; it is not these rich men gorged with gold who have dragged to the tomb the sons of Manco-Capac; no, it is these proud Spaniards whom Fate has thrust on our independent shores! These are the true conquerors of whom you are the true slaves! If they have no longer wealth, they have authority; and, in spite of Peruvian emancipation, they crush and trample upon our natural rights. Let us forget what we are, to remember what our fathers have been!"

"Anda! anda!" exclaimed the assembly, with stamps of approbation.

After a few moments of silence, the Sambo assured himself, by interrogating various conspirators, that the friends of Cusco and of all Bolivia were ready to strike as a single man.

Then, resuming with fire:

"And our brethren of the mountains, brave Manangani, if they have all a heart of hatred equal to thine, a courage equal to thine, they will fall on Lima like an avalanche from the summit of the Cordilleras."

"The Sambo shall not complain of their boldness on the day appointed. Let the Indian leave the city, he shall not go far without seeing throng around him zambos burning for vengeance! In the gorges of San Cristoval and the Amancaës, more than one is couched on his poncho, with his poignard at his girdle, waiting until a long carbine shall be confided to his skillful hand. They also have not forgotten that they have to revenge on the vain Spaniards the defeat of Manco-Capac."

"Well said! Manangani; it is the god of hatred who speaks from thy mouth. My brethren shall know before long him whom their chiefs have chosen to lead this great vengeance. President Gambarra is seeking only to consolidate his power; Bolivar is afar, Santa Cruz has been driven away; we can act with certainty. In a few days, the fête of the Amancaës will summon our oppressors to pleasure; then, let each be ready to march, and let the news be carried to the most remote villages of Bolivia."

At this moment three Indians entered the great hall. The Sambo hastened to meet them.

"Well?" said he to them.

"The body of Martin Paz has not been recovered; we have sounded the river in every direction; our most skillful divers have explored it with religious care, and the son of the Sambo cannot have perished in the waters of the Rimac."

"Have they killed him? What has become of him? Oh! wo, wo to them if they have killed my son! Let my brethren separate in silence; let each return to his post, look, watch and wait!"

The Indians went out and dispersed; the Sambo alone remained with Manangani, who asked him:

"Does the Sambo know what sentiment conducted his son to San Lazaro? The Sambo, I trust, is sure of his son?"

The eyes of the Indian flashed, and the blood mounted to his cheek. The ferocious Manangani recoiled.

But the Indian controlled himself, and said:

"If Martin Paz has betrayed his brethren, I will first kill all those to whom he has given his friendship, all those to whom he has given his love! Then I will kill him, and myself afterward, that nothing may be left beneath the sun of an infamous, and dishonored race."

At this moment, the padrona opened the door of the room, advanced toward the Sambo, and handed him a billet directed to his address.

"Who gave you this?" said he.

"I do not know; this paper may have been designedly forgotten by a chica-drinker. I found it on the table."

"Have there been any but Indians here?"

"There have been none but Indians."

The padrona went out; the Sambo unfolded the billet, and read aloud:

"A young girl has prayed for the return of Martin Paz, for she has not forgotten that the young Indian protected her and risked his life for her. If the Sambo has any news of his poor son, or any hope of finding him, let him surround his arm with a red handkerchief; there are eyes which see him pass daily."

The Sambo crushed the billet in his hand.

"The unhappy boy," said he, "has suffered himself to be caught by the eyes of a woman."

"Who is this woman?" asked Manangani.

"It is not an Indian," replied the Sambo, observing the billet; "it is some young girl of the other classes. Martin Paz, I no longer know thee!"

"Shall you do what this woman requests?"

"No," replied the Indian, violently; "let her lose all hope of seeing him again; let her die, if she will."

And the Sambo tore the billet in a rage.

"It must have been an Indian who brought this billet," observed Manangani.

"Oh, it cannot have been one of ours! He must have known that I often came to this inn, but I will set my foot in it no more. We have occupied ourselves long enough with trifling affairs," resumed he, coldly; "let my brother return to the mountains; I will remain to watch over the city. We shall see whether the fête of the Amancaës will be joyous for the oppressors or the oppressed!"

The two Indians separated.

The plan of the conspiracy was well conceived and the hour of its

execution well chosen. Peru, almost depopulated, counted only a small number of Spaniards and mestizoes. The invasion of the Indians, gathered from every direction, from the forests of Brazil, as well as the mountains of Chili and the plains of La Plata, would cover the theatre of war with a formidable army. The great cities, like Lima, Cusco, Puña, might be utterly destroyed; and it was not to be expected that the Colombian troops, so recently driven away by the Peruvian government, would come to the assistance of their enemies in peril.

This social overturn might therefore have succeeded, if the secret had remained buried in the hearts of the Indians, and there surely could not be traitors among them?

But they were ignorant that a man had obtained private audience of the President Gambarra. This man informed him that the schooner Annonciation had been captured from him by Indian pirates! That it had been laden with arms of all sorts; that canoes had unloaded it at the mouth of the Rimac; and he claimed a high indemnity for the service he thus rendered to the Peruvian government.

And yet this man had let his vessel to the agents of the Sambo; he had received for it a considerable sum, and had come to sell the secret which he had surprised.

By these traits the reader will recognize the Jew Samuel.