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Chapter 17 - Fourth Hymn And The Bishop

The President of the Republic, as a new broom, had been sweeping perhaps a little too clean for the common liking, so there was a 'rebellion.' It was not a very large one. But it meant, of course, banditry, robbery, and cowed villages.

Ramón was determined to keep free from the taint of politics. But already the Church, and with the Church the Knights of Cortés and a certain 'black' faction, was preparing against him. The priests began to denounce him from the pulpits - but not very loudly - as an ambitious Anti-Christ. With Cipriano beside him, however, and with Cipriano the army of the west, he had not much to fear.

But it was possible Cipriano would have to march away in defence of the Government.

'Above all things,' said Ramón, 'I don't want to acquire a political smell. I don't want to be pushed in the direction of any party. Unless I can stand uncontaminated, I had better abandon everything. But the Church will push me over to the socialists - and the socialists will betray me on the first opportunity. It is not myself. It is the new spirit. The surest way to kill it - and it can be killed, like any other living thing - is to get it connected with any political party.'

'Why don't you see the Bishop?' said Cipriano. 'I will see him too. Am I to be chief of the division in the west for nothing?'

'Yes,' said Ramón slowly, 'I will see Jimenez. I have thought of it. Yes, I intend to use every means in my power. - Montes will stand for us, because he hates the Church and hates any hint of dictation from outside. He sees the possibility of a "national" church. Though myself, I don't care about national churches. Only one has to speak the language of one's own people. You know the priests are forbidding the people to read the Hymns?'

'What does that matter?' said Cipriano. 'These people are nothing if not perverse, nowadays. They will read them all the more.'

'Maybe! - I shall take no notice. I'll let my new legend, as they call it, grow while the earth is moist. But we have to keep our eye very close on all the little bunches of "interests".'

'Ramón!' said Cipriano. 'If you can turn Mexico entirely into a Quetzalcoatl country, what then?'

'I shall be First Man of Quetzalcoatl - I know no more.'

'You won't trouble about the rest of the world?'

Ramón smiled. Already he saw in Cipriano's eye the gleam of a Holy War.

'I would like,' he said, smiling, 'to be one of the Initiates of the Earth. One of the Initiators. Every country its own Saviour, Cipriano: or every people its own Saviour. And the First Men of every people, forming a Natural Aristocracy of the World. One must have aristocrats, that we know. But natural ones, not artificial. And in some way the world must be organically united: the world of man. But in the concrete, not in the abstract. Leagues and Covenants and International Programmes. Ah! Cipriano! it's like an international pestilence. The leaves of one great tree can't hang on the boughs of another great tree. The races of the earth are like trees; in the end they neither mix nor mingle. They stand out of each other's way, like trees. Or else they crowd on one another, and their roots grapple, and it is the fight to the death. - Only from the flowers there is commingling. And the flowers of every race are the natural aristocrats of that race. And the spirit of the world can fly from flower to flower, like a humming-bird, and slowly fertilize the great trees in their blossoms. Only the Natural Aristocrats can rise above their nation; and even then they do not rise beyond their race. Only the Natural Aristocrats of the World can be international, or cosmopolitan, or cosmic. It has always been so. The peoples are no more capable of it than the leaves of the mango-tree are capable of attaching themselves to the pine. - So if I want Mexicans to learn the name of Quetzalcoatl, it is because I want them to speak with the tongues of their own blood. I wish the Teutonic world would once more think in terms of Thor and Wotan, and the tree Igrasil. And I wish the Druidic world would see, honestly, that in the mistletoe is their mystery, and that they themselves are the Tuatha De Danaan, alive, but submerged. And a new Hermes should come back to the Mediterranean, and a new Ashtaroth to Tunis; and Mithras again to Persia, and Brahma unbroken to India, and the oldest of dragons to China. Then I, Cipriano, I, First Man of Quetzalcoatl, with you, First Man of Huitzilopochtli, and perhaps your wife, First Woman of Itzpapalotl, could we not meet, with sure souls, the other great aristocrats of the world, the First Man of Wotan and the First Woman of Freya, First Lord of Hermes, and the Lady of Astarte, the Best-Born of Brahma, and the Son of the Greatest Dragon? I tell you, Cipriano, then the earth might rejoice, when the First Lords of the West met the First Lords of South and East, in the Valley of the Soul. Ah, the earth has Valleys of the Soul, that are not cities of commerce and industry. And the mystery is one mystery, but men must see it differently. The hibiscus and the thistle and the gentian all flower on the Tree of Life, but in the world they are far apart; and must be. And I am hibiscus and you are a yucca flower, and your Caterina is a wild daffodil, and my Carlota is a white pansy. Only four of us, yet we make a curious bunch. So it is. The men and women of the earth are not manufactured goods, to be interchangeable. But the Tree of Life is one tree, as we know when our souls open in the last blossoming. We can't change ourselves, and we don't want to. But when our souls open out in the final blossoming, then as blossoms we share one mystery with all blossoms, beyond the knowledge of any leaves and stems and roots: something transcendent.

'But it doesn't matter. At the present time I have to fight my way in Mexico, and you have to fight yours. So let us go and do it.'

He went away to his workshops and his men who were labouring under his directions, while Cipriano sat down to his correspondence and his military planning.

They were both interrupted by the thudding of a motor-boat entering the little bay. It was Kate, escorted by the black-scarved Juana.

Ramón, in his white clothes, with the blue-and-black figured sash and the big hat with the turquoise-inlaid Eye of Quetzalcoatl, went down to meet her. She was in white, too, with a green hat and the shawl of pale yellow silk.

'I was so glad to come again,' she said, holding out her hand to him. 'Jamiltepec has become a sort of Mecca to me, my inside yearns for it.'

'Then why don't you come oftener? I wish you would come.'

'I am afraid of intruding.'

'No! You could help if you would.'

'Oh!' she said. 'I am so frightened, and so sceptical of big undertakings. I think it is because, at the very bottom of me, I dislike the masses of people - anywhere. I'm afraid I rather despise people; I don't want them to touch me, and I don't want to touch them. - So how could I pretend to join any - any - any sort of Salvation Army? - which is a horrid way of putting it.'

Don Ramón laughed.

'I do myself,' he said. 'I detest and despise masses of people. But these are my own people.'

'I, ever since I was a child, since I can remember. - They say of me, when I was a little girl of four, and my parents were having a big dinner-party, they had the nurse bring me in to say good night to all the people they had there dressed up and eating and drinking. And I suppose they all said nice things to me, as they do. I only answered: You are all monkeys! It was a great success! - But I felt it even as a child, and I feel it now. People are all monkeys to me, performing in different ways.'

'Even the people nearest you?'

Kate hesitated. Then she confessed, rather unwillingly:

'Yes! I'm afraid so. Both my husbands - even Joachim - they seemed, somehow, so OBSTINATE in their little stupidities - rather like monkeys. I felt a terrible revulsion from Joachim when he was dead. I thought: What peaked monkey is that, that I have been losing my blood about. - Do you think it's rather awful?'

'I do! But then I think we ALL feel like that, at moments. Or we would if we dared. It's only one of our moments.'

'Sometimes,' said she, 'I think that is my PERMANENT feeling towards people. I like the world, the sky and the earth and the greater mystery beyond. But people - yes, they are all monkeys to me.'

He could see that, at the bottom of her soul, it was true.

'Puros monos!' he said to himself in Spanish. 'Y lo que hacen, puras monerías.'

'Pure monkeys! And the things they do, sheer monkeydom!' Then he added: 'Yet you have children!'

'Yes! Yes!' she said, struggling with herself. 'My first husband's children.'

'And they? - monos y no más?'

'No!' she said, frowning and looking angry with herself. 'Only partly.'

'It is bad,' he said, shaking his head. 'But then!' he added. - 'What are my own children to me, but little monkeys? And their mother - and their mother - Ah, no! Señora Caterina! It is no good. One must be able to disentangle oneself from persons, from people. If I go to a rose-bush, to be intimate with it, it is a nasty thing that hurts me. One must disentangle oneself from persons and personalities, and see people as one sees the trees in the landscape. People in some way DOMINATE you. In some way, humanity dominates your consciousness. So you must hate people and humanity, and you want to escape. But there is only one way of escape: to turn beyond them, to the greater life.'

'But I do!' cried Kate. 'I do nothing else. When I was with Joachim absolutely alone in a cottage, doing all the work myself, and knowing nobody at all, just living, and FEELING the greater thing all the time; then I was free, I was happy.'

'But he?' said Ramón. 'Was he free and happy?'

'He was REALLY. But that's where the monkeyishness comes in. He wouldn't let himself be content. He insisted on having PEOPLE and a CAUSE, just to torture himself with.'

'Then why didn't you live in your cottage QUITE alone, and without him?' he said. 'Why do you travel and see people?'

She was silent, very angry. She knew she could not live quite alone. The vacuity crushed her. She needed a man there, to stop the gap, and to keep her balanced. But even when she had him, in her heart of hearts she despised him, as she despised the dog and the cat. Between herself and humanity there was the bond of subtle, helpless antagonism.

She was naturally quite free-handed and she left people their liberty. Servants would get attached to her, and casual people all liked and admired her. She had a strong life-flow of her own, and a certain assertive joie de vivre.

But underneath it all was the unconquerable dislike, almost DISGUST of people. More than hate, it was disgust. Whoever it was, wherever it was, however it was, after a little while this disgust overcame her. Her mother, her father, her sisters, her first husband, even her children whom she loved, and Joachim, for whom she had felt such passionate love, even these, being near her, filled her with a certain disgust and repulsion after a little while, and she longed to fling them down the great and final oubliette.

But there is no great and final oubliette: or at least, it is never final, until one has flung ONESELF down.

So it was with Kate. Till she flung herself down the last dark oubliette of death, she would never escape from her deep, her bottomless disgust with human beings. Brief contacts were all right, thrilling even. But close contacts, or long contacts, were short and long revulsions of violent disgust.

She and Ramón had sat down on a bench under the white-flowering oleander of the garden downstairs. His face was impassive and still. In the stillness, with a certain pain and nausea, he realized the state she was in, and realized that his own state, as regards PERSONAL people, was the same. Mere PERSONAL contact, mere human contact filled him, too, with disgust. Carlota disgusted him. Kate herself disgusted him. Sometimes, Cipriano disgusted him.

But this was because, or when, he met them on a merely human, personal plane. To do so was disaster: it filled him with disgust of them and loathing of himself.

He had to meet them on another plane, where the contact was different; intangible, remote, and without INTIMACY. His soul was concerned elsewhere. So that the quick of him need not be bound to anybody. The quick of a man must turn to God alone: in some way or other.

With Cipriano he was most sure. Cipriano and he, even when they embraced each other with passion, when they met after an absence, embraced in the recognition of each other's eternal and abiding loneliness; like the Morning Star.

But women would not have this. They wanted intimacy - and intimacy means disgust. Carlota wanted to be eternally and closely identified with Ramón, consequently she hated him and hated everything which she thought drew him away from this eternal close identification with herself. It was just a horror and he knew it.

Men and women should know that they cannot, absolutely, meet on earth. In the closest kiss, the dearest touch, there is the small gulf which is none the less complete because it is so narrow, so NEARLY non-existent. They must bow and submit in reverence, to the gulf. Even though I eat the body and drink the blood of Christ, Christ is Christ and I am I, and the gulf is impassable. Though a woman be dearer to a man than his own life, yet he is he and she is she, and the gulf can never close up. Any attempt to close it is a violation, and the crime against the Holy Ghost.

That which we get from the beyond, we get it alone. The final me I am, comes from the farthest off, from the Morning Star. The rest is assembled. All that of me which is assembled from the mighty cosmos can meet and touch all that is assembled in the beloved. But this is never the quick. Never can be.

If we would meet in the quick, we must give up the assembled self, the daily I, and, putting off ourselves one after the other, meet unconscious in the Morning Star. Body, soul, and spirit can be transfigured into the Morning Star. But without transfiguration we shall never get there. We shall gnash at the leash.

Ramón knew what it was to gnash at his leashes. He had gnashed himself almost to pieces, before he had found the way to pass out in himself, in the quick of himself, to the Quick of all being and existence, which he called the Morning Star, since men must give all things names. To pass in the quick of himself, with transfiguration, to the Morning Star, and there, there alone meet his fellow man.

He knew what it was to fail even now, and to keep on failing. With Carlota he failed absolutely. She claimed him and he restrained himself in resistance. Even his very naked breast, when Carlota was there, was self-conscious and assertively naked. But then that was because she claimed it as her property.

When men meet at the quick of all things, they are neither naked nor clothed; in the transfiguration they are just complete, they are not seen in part. The final perfect strength has also the power of innocence.

Sitting on the seat beside Kate, Ramón was sad with the sense of heaviness and inadequacy. His third Hymn was angry and bitter. Carlota almost embittered his soul. In Mexico, turbulent fellows had caught at his idea and burlesqued it. They had invaded one of the churches of the city, thrown out the sacred images, and hung in their place the grotesque papier-mâché Judas figures, which the Mexicans explode at Easter time. This of course made a scandal. And Cipriano, whenever he was away on his own for some time, slipped back into the inevitable Mexican General, fascinated by the opportunity for furthering his own personal ambition and imposing his own personal will. Then came Kate, with this centre of sheer repudiation deep in the middle of her, the will to explode the world.

He felt his spirits sinking again, his limbs going like lead. There is only one thing that a man really wants to do, all his life; and that is, to find his way to his God, his Morning Star, and be alone there. Then afterwards, in the Morning Star, salute his fellow man, and enjoy the woman who has come the long way with him.

But to find the way, far, far along, to the bright Quick of all things, this is difficult, and requires all a man's strength and courage, for himself. If he breaks a trail alone, it is terrible. But if every hand pulls at him, to stay him in the human places; if the hands of love drag at his entrails and the hands of hate seize him by the hair, it becomes almost impossible.

This was how Ramón felt at the moment: - I am attempting the impossible. I had better either go and take my pleasure of life while it lasts, hopeless of the pleasure which is beyond all pleasures. Or else I had better go into the desert and take my way all alone, to the Star where at last I have my wholeness, holiness. The way of the anchorites and the men who went into the wilderness to pray. For surely my soul is craving for her consummation, and I am weary of the thing men call life. Living, I want to depart to where I AM.

Yet, he said to himself, the woman that was with me in the Morning Star, how glad I should be of her! And the man that was with me there, what a delight his presence would be! Surely the Morning Star is a meeting-ground for us, for the joy!

Sitting side by side on the bench, Ramón and Kate forgot one another, she thinking back on the past, with the long disgust of it all, he thinking on into his future, and trying to revive his heavy spirits.

In the silence, Cipriano came out on to the balcony above, looking around. He almost started as he saw the two figures seated on the bench below, under the white oleander tree, miles apart, worlds apart, in their silence.

Ramón heard the step, and glanced up.

'We are coming up!' he called, rising and looking round at Kate. 'Shall we go upstairs? Will you drink something cool, tepache, or squeezed oranges? There is no ice.'

'I would like orange juice and water,' she said.

He called to his servant and gave the order.

Cipriano was in the white pantaloons and blouse, like Ramón. But his sash was scarlet, with black curves, something like the markings on a snake.

'I heard you come. I thought perhaps you had gone away again,' he said, looking at her with a certain black reproachfulness: an odd, hesitating wistfulness of the barbarian, who feels himself at a loss. Then also a certain resentment.

'Not yet,' she said.

Ramón laughed, and flung himself into a chair.

'The Señora Caterina thinks we are all monkeys, but perhaps this particular monkey-show is the most amusing after all,' he said. 'So she will see a little more of it.'

Cipriano, a real Indian, was offended in his pride, and the little black imperial on his chin seemed to become portentous.

'That's RATHER an unfair way of putting it!' laughed Kate.

The black eyes of Cipriano glanced at her in hostility. He thought she was laughing at him. And so, at the depths of her female soul, she was. She was jeering at him inwardly. Which no man can stand, least of all a dark-skinned man.

'No!' she said. 'There's something else beside that.'

'Ah!' said Ramón. 'Take care! A little mercy is a dangerous thing.'

'No! Not mercy!' she said, flushing. 'Why are you being horrid to me?'

'Monkeys always end by being horrid to the spectators,' said Ramón.

She looked up at him, and caught the flash of anger in his eyes.

'I came,' she said, 'to hear about the Mexican pantheon. I was even given to understand I might be admitted.'

'Ah, that is good!' laughed Ramón. 'A rare specimen of the female monkey has been added to the Ramón menagerie! I am sure you would be a good draw. There have been some pretty goddesses, I assure you, in the Aztec pantheon.'

'How horrid!' she said.

'Come! Come!' he cried. 'Let us keep to the bedrock of things, Señora mía. We are all monkeys. Monos somos. - Ihr seid alle Affen! Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings was it spoken, as Carlota said. You see that little male monkey, Cipriano. He had the monkey's idea of marrying you. Say the word. Marriage is a monkey's game. Say the word. He will let you go when you've had enough; and he's had enough. He is a GENERAL and a very great jefe. He can make you monkey-queen of monkey-Mexico, if it please you. And what should monkeys do, but amuse themselves! Vamos! Embobémonos! Shall I be priest? Vamos! Vamos!'

He rose with sudden volcanic violence, and rushed away.

Cipriano looked at Kate in wonder. She had gone pale.

'What have you been saying to him?' he asked.

'Nothing!' she said, rising. 'I'd better go now.'

Juana was collected; and Alonso and Kate set off back down the lake. She sat with a certain obstinate offendedness under the awning of the boat. The sun was terrifically hot, and the water blinded her. She put on black spectacles, in which she looked a monster.

'Mucho calor, Niña! Mucho calor!' Juana was repeating behind her. The criada had evidently imbibed tepache.

On the pale-brown water little tufts of water-hyacinth were vaguely sailing, holding up the hand of a leaf for a sail. Everywhere the lake was dotted with these sailing tufts. The heavy rains had washed in flood down the Lerma river into the lake, washing the acres of lirio loose from the marshy end of the waters, thirty miles away, and slowly setting them travelling over all the expanse of the inland sea, till the shores began to be piled, and the far-off Santiago river, which flowed out of the lake, was choked.

That day Ramón wrote his Fourth Hymn.

WHAT QUETZALCOATL SAW IN MEXICO

Who are these strange faces in Mexico? Palefaces, yellowfaces, blackfaces? These are no Mexicans! Where do they come from, and why?

Lord of the Two Ways, these are the foreigners. They come out of nowhere. Sometimes they come to tell us things, Mostly they are the greedy ones.

What then do they want?

They want gold, they want silver from the mountains, And oil, much oil from the coast. They take sugar from the tall tubes of the cane, Wheat from the high lands, and maize; Coffee from the bushes in the hot lands, even the juicy rubber. They put up tall chimneys that smoke, And in the biggest houses they keep their machines, that talk And work iron elbows up and down, And hold myriad threads from their claws! Wonderful are the machines of the greedy ones!

And you, Mexicans and peons, what do you do?

We work with their machines, we work in their fields, They give us pesos made of Mexican silver. They are the clever ones.

Do you love them then?

We love them not, and never. Their faces are ugly, yet they make wonderful things. And their wills are like their machines of iron. What can we do?

I see dark things rushing across the country.

Yea, Lord! Even trains and camiones and automobiles.

Trains and camiones, automobiles and aeroplanes. How nice! says the peon, to go rushing in a train! How nice, to get in the camion, and for twenty centavos, to be gone! How nice, in the great cities, where all things rush, and huge lights flare bright, to wander and do nothing! How nice to sit in the cine, where the picture of all the world dances before the eyes! How nice if we could take all these things away from the foreigners, and possess them! Take back our lands and silver and oil, take the trains and the factories and the automobiles And play with them all the time! How nice!

Oh, fools! Mexicans and peons! Who are you, to be masters of machines which you cannot make? Which you can only break! Those that can make are masters of these

machines. Not you, poor boobs.

How have these palefaces, yellowfaces crossed the waters of the world? Oh, fools! Mexicans and peons, with muddy hearts! Did they do it by squatting on their hams? You do nothing but squat on your hams, and stare with vacant eyes, and drink fire-waters, and quarrel and stab. And then run like surly dogs at the bidding of paleface masters.

Oh, dogs and fools, Mexicans and peons! Watery-hearted, with wishy-washy knees. Sulky in spirit, and inert. What are you good for, but to be slaves, and rot away?

You are not worth a god! Lo! the universe tangles its great dragons, The dragons in the cosmos are stirring with anger again. The dragon of the disappointed dead, that sleeps in the snow-white north is lashing his tail in his sleep; the winds howl, the cold rocks round. The spirits of the cold dead whistle in the ears of the world. Prepare for doom.

For I tell you, there are no dead dead, not even your dead. There are dead that sleep in the waves of the Morning Star, with freshening limbs. There are dead that weep in bitter rains. There are dead that cluster in the frozen north, shuddering and chattering among the ice And howling with hate. There are dead that creep through the burning bowels of the earth, Stirring the fires to acid of bitterness. There are dead that sit under the trees, watching with ash-grey eyes for their victims. There are dead that attack the sun like swarms of black flies, to suck his life. There are dead that stand upon you, when you go in to your women, And they dart to her womb, they fight for the chance to be born, they struggle at the gate you have opened, They gnash when it closes, and hate the one that got in to be born again, Child of the living dead, the dead that live and are not refreshed. I tell you, sorrow upon you; you shall all die. And being dead, you shall not be refreshed. There are no dead dead. Being dead, you shall rove like dogs with broken haunches Seeking the offal and garbage of life, in the invisible lanes of the air.

The dead that have mastered fire live on, salamanders, in fire. The dead of the water-lords rock and glimmer in the seas. The dead of the steel machines go up in motion, AWAY! The dead of electric masters are electricity itself.

But the dead of those who have mastered nothing, nothing at all, Crawl like masterless dogs in the back streets of the air, Creeping for the garbage of life, and biting with venomous mouths.

Those that have mastered the forces of the world, die into the forces, they have homes in death. But you! what have you mastered, among the dragon hosts of the cosmos? There are dragons of sun and ice, dragons of the moon and the earth, dragons of salty waters, dragons of thunder; There is the spangled dragon of the stars at large. And far at the centre, with one unblinking eye, the dragon of the Morning Star.

Conquer! says the Morning Star. Pass the dragons, and pass on to me. For I am sweet, I am the last and the best, the pool of new life. But lo! you inert ones, I will set the dragons upon you. They shall crunch your bones. And even then they shall spit you out, as broken-haunched dogs, You shall have nowhere to die into.

Lo! in the back streets of the air, dead ones are crawling like curs! Lo! I release the dragons! The great white one of the north, Him of the disappointed dead, he is lashing and turning round. He is breathing cold corruption upon you, you shall bleed in your chests.

I am going to speak to the dragon of the inner fires, He who housels the dead of the guns, To withdraw his warmth from your feet, so your feet turn cold with death.

I am about to tell the dragon of the waters to turn round on you And spew out corrosion into your streams, on your rains.

And I wait for the final day, when the dragon of thunder, waking under the spider-web nets Which you've thrown upon him, shall suddenly shake with rage, And dart his electric needles into your bones, and curdle your blood like milk with electric venom.

Wait! Only wait! Little by little it all shall come upon you.

Ramón put on his black city clothes, and a black hat, and went himself with this hymn to the printer in the city. The sign of Quetzalcoatl he had printed in black and red, and the sign of the dragon, at the end, in green and black and red. And the sheet was folded.

Six soldiers of Cipriano's command took the bundles of hymns by train; one to the capital, one to Puebla and Jalapa, one to Tampico and Monterrey, one to Torreon and Chihuahua, one to Sinaloa and Sonora, and one to the mines in Pachuca, Guanajuato, and the central region. Each soldier took only a hundred sheets. But in every town there was a recognized Reader of the Hymns; or two, or three, or four, or even ten Readers in one city. And readers who went round to the villages.

Because there was a strange, submerged desire in the people for things beyond the world. They were weary of events, and weary of news and the newspapers, weary even of the things that are taught in education. Weary is the spirit of man with man's impotency. Of all things human, and humanly invented, we have had enough, they seemed to say. And though they took not much active notice of the Hymns, they craved for them, as men crave for alcohol, as a relief from the weariness and ennui of mankind's man-made world.

Everywhere, in all the towns and villages, at night-time the little flames would be seen flickering, a cluster of people was seen, sometimes standing, sometimes sitting upon the ground, listening to the slow voice of some Reader.

More rarely, in some small, out-of-the-way plaza, would sound the sinister thud of the tom-tom, beating out of the hollow of the ages. And there would be two men with white serapes with the blue edges. Then the singing of the Songs of Quetzalcoatl, and perhaps the slow round dance, with the ancient rhythm of the feet on the earth, belonging to aboriginal America.

For the old dances of the Aztecs and the Zapotecs, of all the submerged Indian races, are based upon the old, sinking bird-step of the Red Indians of the north. It is in the blood of the people; they cannot quite forget it. It comes back to them, with a sense of fear, and joy, and relief.

Of themselves, they dared not revive the old motion, nor stir the blood in the old way. The spell of the past is too terrible. But in the Songs and the Hymns of Quetzalcoatl there spoke a new voice, the voice of a master and authority. And though they were slow to trust, the slowest and the most untrusting, they seized upon the new-old thrill, with a certain fear, and joy, and relief.

The Men of Quetzalcoatl avoided the great market-places and centres of activity. They took their stand in the little side places. On the rim of a fountain a man in a dark blanket with blue borders, or with the sign of Quetzalcoatl in his hat, would sit down and begin to read aloud. It was enough. The people lingered to listen. He would read to the end, then say: 'I have finished this reading of the Fourth Hymn of Quetzalcoatl. Now I will begin again.'

In this way, by a sort of far-away note in the voice, and by the slow monotony of repetition, the thing would drift darkly into the consciousness of the listeners.

Already in the beginning there had been the scandal of the Judases. Holy Week, in Mexico City, is, to all appearance, the great week of Judas. Everywhere you see men carrying home in triumph the great, gaudily-varnished dolls of papier-mâché. They are all men-dolls, more or less life-like grotesque. Most frequently it is a fat Mexican-

Spanish hacendado, landowner and big farmer, who is represented with his tight trousers, sticking-out belly, and huge upturned mustaches. The old-fashioned patró. Some of the figures are like Punch, some are like harlequin. But they all have rosy faces and the white man's get-up. You never see the dark- faced image of a native-blooded Mexican; always a stiff, haughty grotesque of a white man.

And all these are Judases. Judas is the fun of the fair, the victim, the big man of Holy Week, just as the Skeleton, and the skeleton on horseback, is the idol of the first week in November, the days of the dead and of all the saints.

On Easter Saturday the Judases are hung from the balconies, the string is lighted, and at length, bang! Shrieks of joy, Judas has exploded into nothingness, from a big cracker in the middle of him! - All the town is popping with Judases.

There was the scandal of the Holy Images thrown out of one of the churches in Mexico City, and these Judases put in their place. The Church began to move.

But then the Church in Mexico has to move gingerly; it is not popular, and its claws are cut. The priest may not ring the church bells for more than three minutes. Neither priests nor monks may wear any habit in the street, beyond the hideous black vest and white collar of the Protestant clergy. So that the priest shows himself as little as possible in the street, and practically never in the chief streets and the chief plazas.

Nevertheless, he still has influence. Processions in the streets are forbidden, but not sermons from the pulpit, nor advice from the confessional. Montes, the President, had no love for the Church, and was meditating the expulsion of all foreign priests. The Archbishop himself was an Italian. But he was also a fighter.

He gave orders to all the priests, to forbid the people from listening to anything concerned with Quetzalcoatl, to destroy any hymn-sheet that might fall into their hands, and to prevent as far as possible the Hymns from being read, and the Songs from being sung, in the parishes.

But Montes had given orders to the police and the military to afford such protection to the Men of Quetzalcoatl as was accorded to any other law-abiding citizen.

Mexico is not Mexico for nothing, however, and already blood had been shed on both sides. This Ramón particularly wanted to avoid, as he felt that violent death was not so easily wiped out of the air and out of the souls of men, as spilt blood was washed off the pavements.

Therefore, when he was in the City, he asked the Bishop of the West if he would consent to an interview with himself and Don Cipriano, and would he name the place. The Bishop - who was an old friend and adviser of Carlota, and who knew Ramón well enough - replied that he would be pleased to see Don Ramón and the Señor General the next day, if they would be so good as to come to his house.

The Bishop no longer occupied the great episcopal palace. This was turned into the post-office building. But he had a large house not far from the Cathedral, which had been presented by the faithful.

Ramón and Cipriano found the thin old man in a dusty, uninteresting library, waiting. He wore a simple black cassock, not too clean, with purple buttons. He received Ramón, who was in a black town suit, and Cipriano, who was in uniform, with an affable manner and suspicious looks. But he played at being the lively, genial old bird.

'Ah, Don Ramón, it is long since I saw you! How goes it, eh? Well, well? That is good! That is very good!' And he patted Ramón on the sleeve like a fussy old uncle. 'Ah, my General, much honour, much honour! Welcome to this poor house of yours. It is the house of your Honour! To serve you! Gentlemen! Won't you take a seat?'

They all sat down, in the dusty, dreary room, in the old leather chairs. The Bishop nervously looked at his thin old hands, at the fine, but rather dull amethyst ring he wore.

'Good! Señores!' he said, glancing up with his little black eyes. 'At your service! Entirely at the service of your Honours.'

'Doña Carlota is in the city, Father. You have seen her?' said Ramón.

'Yes, son of mine,' said the Bishop.

'Then you know the latest news about me. She told you everything.'

'Somewhat! Somewhat! She spoke somewhat of you, the poor little thing. Thanks to God she has her sons with her. They are safely back in their native country, in good health.'

'Did you see them?'

'Yes! yes! Two of my dearest children! Very sympathetic, very intelligent, like their father; and, like him, promising to be of very handsome presence. Yes! yes! Smoke if you will, my General. Don't hesitate.'

Cipriano lit a cigarette. From old associations, he was nervous, albeit amused.

'You know all about what I want to do, Father?' said Ramón.

'I don't know all, son of mine, but I know enough. I wouldn't want to hear more. Eh!' he sighed. 'It is very sad.'

'Not so very sad, Father, if we don't make it sad. Why make a sad thing out of it, Father? We are in Mexico for the most part Indians. They cannot understand the high Christianity, Father, and the Church knows it. Christianity is a religion of the spirit, and must needs be understood if it is to have any effect. The Indians cannot understand it, any more than the rabbits of the hills.'

'Very good! Very good! Son of mine! But we can convey it to them. The rabbits of the hills are in the hands of God.'

'No, Father, it is impossible. And without a religion that will connect them with the universe, they will all perish. Only religion will serve; not socialism, nor education, nor anything.'

'Thou speakest well,' said the Bishop.

'The rabbits of the hills may be in the hands of God, Father. But they are at the mercy of men. The same with Mexico. The people sink heavier and heavier into inertia, and the Church cannot help them, because the Church does not possess the key-word to the Mexican soul.'

'Doesn't the Mexican soul know the Voice of God?' said the Bishop.

'Your own children may know your voice, Father. But if you go out to speak to the birds on the lake, or the deer among the mountains, will they know your voice? Will they wait and listen?'

'Who knows? It is said they waited to listen to the Holy Francisco of Assisi.'

'Now, Father, we must speak to the Mexicans in their own language, and give them the clue-word to their own souls. I shall say Quetzalcoatl. If I am wrong, let me perish. But I am not wrong.'

The Bishop fidgeted rather restlessly. He didn't want to hear all this. And he did not want to answer. He was impotent anyhow.

'Your Church is the Catholic Church, Father?'

'Surely!' said the Bishop.

'And Catholic Church means the Church of All, the Universal Church?'

'Surely, son of mine.'

'Then why not let it be really catholic? Why call it catholic, when it is not only just one among many Churches, but is even hostile to all the rest of the churches? Father, why not let the Catholic Church become really the Universal Church?'

'It is the Universal Church of Christ, my son.'

'Why not let it be the Universal Church of Mohammed as well; since ultimately, God is One God, but the peoples speak varying languages, and each needs its own prophet to speak with its own tongue. The Universal Church of Christ, and Mohammed, and Buddha, and Quetzalcoatl, and all the others - THAT would be a Catholic Church, Father.'

'You speak of things beyond me,' said the Bishop, turning his ring.

'Not beyond any man,' said Don Ramón. 'A Catholic Church is a church of all the religions, a home on earth for all the prophets and the Christs, a big tree under which every man who acknowledges the greater life of the soul can sit and be refreshed. Isn't THAT the Catholic Church, Father?'

'Alas, my son, I know the Apostolic Church of Christ in Rome, of which I am a humble servant. I do not understand these clever things you are saying to me.'

'I am asking you for peace, Father. I am not one who hates the Church of Christ, the ROMAN Catholic Church. But in Mexico I think it has no place. When my heart is not bitter, I am grateful forever to Christ, the Son of God. The affair of the Judases grieves me more than it does you, and the affairs of bloodshed are far bitterer to me.'

'I am no innovator, my son, to provoke bloodshed.'

'Listen! I am going to remove the holy images from the church at Sayula, with reverence, and with reverence burn them upon the lake. Then I shall put the image of Quetzalcoatl in the church at Sayula.'

The Bishop looked up furtively. For some moments he said nothing. But his silence was furtive, cornered.

'Would you dare do that, Don Ramón?' he said.

'Yes! And I shall not be prevented. General Viedma is with me.'

The Bishop glanced sideways at Cipriano.

'Certainly,' said Cipriano.

'Nevertheless it is illegal,' said the Bishop, with acid bitterness.

'What is illegal in Mexico?' said Ramón. 'What is weak is illegal. I will not be weak, My Lord.'

'Lucky you!' said the Bishop, lifting his shoulders.

There was a break of silence.

'No!' said Ramón. 'I come to ask you for peace. Tell the Archbishop what I say. Let him tell the Cardinals and the Pope that the time has come for a Catholic Church of the Earth, the Catholic Church of All the Sons of Men. The Saviours are more than one, and let us pray they will still be increased. But God is one God, and the Saviours are the Sons of the One God. Let the Tree of the Church spread its branches over all the earth, and shelter the prophets in its shade, as they sit and speak their knowledge of the beyond.'

'Are you one of these prophets, Don Ramón?'

'I surely am, Father. And I would speak about Quetzalcoatl in Mexico, and build his Church here.'

'Nay! You would invade the Churches of Christ and the Blessed Virgin, I heard you say.'

'You know my intentions. But I do not want to quarrel with the Church of Rome, nor have bloodshed and enmity, Father. Can you not understand me? Should there not be peace between the men who strive down their different ways to the God-Mystery?'

'Once more desecrate the altars! Bring in strange idols. Burn the images of Our Lord and Our Lady, and ask for peace?' said the poor Bishop, who helplessly longed to be left alone.

'All that, Father,' said Ramón.

'Son, what can I answer? You are a good man smitten with the madness of pride. Don Cipriano is one more Mexican general. I am the poor old Bishop of this diocese, faithful servant of the Holy Church, humble child of the Holy Father in Rome. What can I do? What can I answer? Take me out to the cemetery and shoot me at once, General!'

'I don't want to,' said Cipriano.

'It will end like that,' said the Bishop.

'But why?' cried Don Ramón. 'Is there no sense in what I say? Cannot you understand?'

'My son, my understanding goes no farther than my faith, my duty, will allow. I am not a clever man, I live by faith and my duty to my sacred office. Understand that I do not understand.'

'Good-day, Father!' said Ramón, suddenly rising.

'Go with God, my son,' said the Bishop, rising and lifting his fingers.

'Adiós, Señor!' said Cipriano, clicking his spurs, and putting his hand on his sword as he turned to the door.

'Adiós, Señor General,' said the Bishop, darting after them his eyes of old malice, which they could feel in their backs.

'He will say nothing,' said Cipriano, as he and Ramón went down the steps. 'The old Jesuit, he only wants to keep his job and his power, and prevent the heart's beating. I know them. All they treasure, even more than their money, is their centipede power over the frightened people; especially over the women.'

'I didn't know you hated them,' laughed Ramón.

'Waste no more breath on them, my dear one,' said Cipriano. 'Go forward, you can walk over broken snakes such as those.'

As they went on foot past the post-office square, where the modern scribes at little tables under the arches sat tapping out letters on their typewriters for the poor and illiterate, who waited with their few centavos to have their messages turned into florid Castilian, Ramón and Cipriano met with an almost startled respect.

'Why talk to the Bishop? - he doesn't exist any more. I hear his Knights of Cortés had a big dinner the other evening, and it is said - I don't believe it - that they drank oaths in blood to have my life and yours. But I think the oaths of the Catholic Dames would frighten me more. Why, if a man stops to unfasten his trousers to make water, the Knights of Cortés run for their lives, thinking the pistol is pointed at them. Don't think about them, man! Don't try to conciliate them. They will only puff up and become insolent, thinking you are afraid of them. Six soldiers will trample down all that dirt,' said the General.

It was the city, and the spirit of the city.

Cipriano had a suite in the big Palace on the Plaza de Armas.

'If I marry,' he said, as they passed into the stone patio, where soldiers stood at attention, 'I shall take a house in the colony, to be more private.'

Cipriano in town was amusing. He seemed to exude pride and arrogant authority as he walked about. But his black eyes, glancing above his fine nose and that little goat beard, were not to be laughed at. They seemed to get everything, in the stab of a glance. A demoniacal little fellow.