

# 4<sup>20</sup> FERNANDO:

—OR—

## THE MOOR OF CASTILE.

A ROMANCE OF OLD SPAIN.

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BY SYLVANUS COBB, JR.  
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# FERNANDO.

## CHAPTER I.

### THE RESCUER AND THE RESCUED.

It was mid-spring. Night was falling down upon the towering summits of the Carpentani Mountains in Old Castile. The herald darkness of that night was, however, coming with untimely birth, for the sun could have hardly yet sank from its day-track. Black, massive clouds were rolling themselves up the mountain sides, and gradually reaching out from the peaks till they formed one unbroken canopy, while from out their sable lungs came the rumbling voice of the storm-spirit. Rain had long been falling upon the mountains, and as the huge drops began to patter and plash with wind-driven force upon the leaves and ground below, the new-made torrents were already rushing down the torrents and ravines, dashing in wild cascades, and emptying their floods into the broad Alberche, which rolled darkly along through the channel of its winding way towards its far Atlantic home.

Near a point where a considerable stream

emptied into the Alberche, some four leagues to the westward of El Prado, stood a powerful horse, and by his side, with his hand upon the bridle, leaned the form of a young man. He was of a medium size, as could be seen by the occasional flashes of lightning that lit up the cloud-arched heavens, and the traces of some twenty years had been left upon the features that marked his handsome countenance. His dress was that of a Spanish cavalier of the sixteenth century, and though its contour was marked by a degree of pride, yet the fabric showed long and hard use.

[SEE ENGRAVING.]

"By Saint Dominic," he muttered, "this is but a poor welcome for you and me, my good steed."

The horse pricked up his ears as he heard his master's voice, and sent forth a sharp neigh that seemed to express an acquiescence in the opinion advanced.

"After six years absence to be thus locked up in the forest among these mountain fastnesses is far from agreeable. What a place for banditti! San Jago send one this way, and I might find a shelter for the night, for should he rob me he would get but a sorry score for my lodging. Think you could cross this stream, Gilgil?"

Again the steed neighed as he heard his name thus pronounced, and impatiently he pawed the ground with his hoofs.

"By the saints, I have a mind to try it, for I cannot stand here. These murmuring rivulets behind me are gaining strength, and who knows but that they may ere long drive me hence whether I will or no? By our lady, I think, good Gilgil, these treacherous cascades are even now washing their way rather near to us. Once on the other side and we are safe, for I think I might then pick out my way to the convent of Saint Justin; but in good faith we must not stay here."

The young cavalier had indeed good occasion for the remarks he had made, for the continuous lightning that played among the clouds revealed to him the startling fact that the side of the stream upon which he stood was not only gradually gaining upon the shore, but that the whole space between himself and the mountains was being inundated.

"Come, Gilgil," he continued, as though his horse understood every word, "let us get a few rods from this sweep and we may find a better crossing. Easy, now, for over we must."

The rider leaped into his saddle, and with a light pull of the left rein he turned the head of his steed to the southward and followed the bank of the stream for some distance. At length he came to a place where he thought he might cross, though his stout heart could not but leap more fearfully in his bosom as he looked into the rushing, boiling surge. The electric glare was flashed back from the long lines of foam, and where the surface of the water was black, little sparkling towers rose and fell as the heavy rain-drops struck upon its bosom; but the opposite shore looked inviting—there was safety there—

and giving his horse the rein he urged him into the flood.

The noble steed hesitated a moment ere he let go his foothold upon the hard bottom, but 'twas only to brace himself more firmly for the task, and then he sprang forth into the hissing current. Nobly, powerfully, did the strong beast bear up against the whelming force, and firmly sat the rider in his seat. The roar of the mad surge was almost deafening, but ere half of the dubious distance was gained a sound struck upon the ears of the cavalier that made him start with horror. It was borne down from a point above him, and seemed the wild shriek of a human being! He strained his eyes up the stream, and the next flash of lightning revealed to him a horse and rider being dashed along by the torrent. He could see the agonized grasp of the ill-fated man upon the mane of his overpowered animal, and he could hear the loud cries for help that mingled with the roar of the elements.

For a single instant our cavalier allowed his own steed to keep on, but then a more noble resolution came to his soul.

"'Tis a human being," he uttered to himself, "and by San Jago I will not see him pass me if I can help it. Come, good Gilgil, brace thyself for this new trial."

Even the horse seemed to understand the state of affairs about him, for at the first pull of the rein he turned his head boldly up the stream, and though the fearful tide carried him swiftly down, yet he lost not his balance. The foam that went dashing by showed that he was breasting the current to good purpose. Nearer and still nearer came the storm-wracked horse and rider—more plainly were heard the frantic shouts, and the next lurid glow of heaven's fire revealed them but just above the struggling animal of the waiting hero.

"Hillo-ilo-ilio!" shouted the cavalier. "What ho! Hold fast! Grasp your reins!"

It was dark as Erebus, but the heroic man had gained a hold upon the bridle of the drifting horse, and though the effort had nearly proved fatal to him, yet had he turned the ani-

mal's head up the stream—and he held that bridle, too, for its sagacious wearer seemed to comprehend that he had help, and he put forth his might for one more effort.

"Can you not bear up yet a little while?" asked the cavalier.

"Thank God, I am not harmed yet, and if you can but keep that hold upon my poor nag's bridle, I may yet be saved," returned the stranger, in tones of joyful gratitude.

"Then give him the rowel—don't spare it. Better prick his hide than lose both him and yourself. Up! up! good Gilgil! Hillo-ilo-ilio!"

Heavily dragged the bridle of the stranger's panting steed upon the strength of the young cavalier, and more than once he leaned forward and grasped his own horse around the neck. Slowly they approached the shore, but O, it was a fearful distance yet, for as the current swept them down, the way grew wider and wider.

"By Saint Dominic, sir stranger," shouted the cavalier, as his hand grew painfully weak, and his powerful Gilgil began to falter, "you must spur up your animal. Give him the rowel!"

The poor jaded beast started up beneath the fierce raking that saluted his flanks, and the cavalier felt the strain upon his hand grow lighter. One more flash of heaven's light—one more reverberation of the deep-toned thunder—and a cry of joy burst from the lips of both the riders. Their horses touched the bottom—stood trembling for an instant on their new foothold, and then, with a simultaneous snort of gratitude, they leaped up the bank.

"Safe! safe!" ejaculated the stranger, leaping down from his horse and raising the cross hilt of his sword reverently before him.

He was a tall man, somewhat stoutly built, with a face of noble bearing; his dress was of black velvet studded with jet ornaments, and he appeared to be on the older side of fifty—perhaps, sixty.

"You've had a narrow escape," said the cavalier, as the stranger arose to his feet.

"In good faith I have, noble sir. For heaven, fifteen minutes since and I would not have given a ducat for my life; but your good arm has saved me."

"It came near failing me, nevertheless," returned the cavalier.

"Never mind," said the other. "Here we are upon the solid ground; but where next? This driving rain suits me not."

"Better, at all events, than a graveless death."

"True," responded the stranger. "And now whither move you? My course was for the other side of the stream. This is the same side I left when I started to cross, but I must forego the passage for the present."

"I shall seek the convent between here and Avila," answered the young man. "I had intended to have passed the mountains to the city, but if I can reach the good old abbot's hospitable walls, I'll lodge me there for the night. I think the gates of Saint Justin will open to a benighted traveller."

"That they will," said the other, "or else they do not their office."

"Of course; so let's trust the way to our horses and set forward. If we give their heads the right turn they'll steer clear of intervening obstacles, for, if I remember rightly, the path to the convent is somewhat wide."

"As good a road as any in the vicinity of these mountains," returned the stranger, and then, as he remounted his beast, he continued: "From the manner of your speech, you seem to have been absent from this section for some time."

"Six years, sir, have passed since I have been before in Old Castile."

"Do you belong here?"

The young man hesitated for some moments ere he answered, and when he spoke it was with apparent reluctance.

"I was born here, but I can hardly say I belong here now."

"Ah!—how is that? Like you not the sweet air of our mountains?"

"Business, you know, may call a man even

from a place he likes," answered the young man, seeming to have caught the idea at a happy moment, for he evidently sought to avoid further questioning on the subject of his personal affairs.

For some distance the two rode slowly along in silence, each busy with his own reflections. The sagacious beasts picked their way in perfect safety, wading carefully through the puddles that had been formed in the road, and keeping clear of the trees and rocks that flanked the passway.

"Does your family belong about here?" at length asked the stranger, in tones that plainly betrayed the interest he felt to find out something concerning his companion.

"I know not that I have a family," rather shortly replied the young man.

"But you must have had one at some time."

"O, I grant you that."

"And did they belong—"

"There, there, there—let me and my family be. It could do you no good to know, nor could it possibly benefit me to tell my pedigree."

"You know not that, young sir," returned the stranger, without appearing to be at all offended. "Even a bandit might return the benefit that had saved his life if he but knew his deliverer."

"Ha! are you there?" uttered the young man, with a start.

"Where?"

"A bandit, I mean."

"I said not that I was such."

"But you intimated as much."

"Then you can take the intimation for what it is worth; but at all events I may be able at some time to render you service if I but know your name."

"O, my name you can have—in welcome. I am called Fernando Gonzales."

"I remember a number of families of that name in Castile," said the stranger. "One in particular dwells in my mind. One Don Alfonso, who was banished the country, together with his whole household."

There was a deep meaning in the manner in which this was spoken, and it seemed to affect the cavalier not a little, for he trembled in his seat, and gazed hard upon his companion, but the darkness shut out the language of the countenance he would have read, and he half hesitatingly remarked:

"Perhaps, after all, this family of whom you speak did not deserve banishment."

"King Philip thought they did."

"And for why?"

"For simply forcibly releasing one of their relatives from the hands of the familiars of the Inquisition."

"So 'twas said," suddenly exclaimed the young man, "but by San Jago there was no—"

He stopped in his speech, and with a light laugh his companion said:

"I know who you are well enough. You are the son of Don Alfonso Gonzales; but you have nothing to fear from my knowledge, only I should advise you to keep clear of the king, for he would not look with much favor upon one whom he had banished."

"I well know that, but since you know me may I not know you?"

"If you can gain the knowledge as I did, you may."

"I told you my name—now tell me yours?"

"Well, I am simply called Montilla."

"There was a bandit by that name among our mountains."

"Ay—that I well know," said the elder rider, with another of his peculiar laughs.

"Sometimes I take a purse if I need it."

"And cut a throat, too, I suppose!"

"Why, as for that, I seldom dip my own hands in blood, though I must say I have looked calmly on and seen my followers do the thing."

"You are frank, truly."

"Yes, because I fear not."

"And yet methinks you have as much reason to keep clear of the king as I have."

"Spain affords her brave sons many places of safety from his power."

"Ay," returned Fernando Gonzales, in a

bitter tone, "there are places where a man can hide from the king; but what a state is that.

To *hide* from power is to lose the dearest boon of life. I had as lief lay in the deep, dark dungeons of the Inquisition, as to be obliged to skulk about like the creeping wolf, ever fearful of the hunter's spear, and trembling at the foot-fall of man. Then, too, there are some things dearer than life that such may never enjoy. The sacred ties of family are torn asunder—man may never know the care of parents, of brother, of wife, or of children—he dares not trust himself with a home, for fear the tyrant will scent him out and destroy all. No, no—the mountain caves and the deep forests may afford a man shelter from the king, but they cannot shelter him from persecution. Fear is still with him, and where fear is there can be no peace."

"You speak well, young man," said the other, "but yet methinks you are rushing into the very danger you depict."

"I shall not stop long," returned the young

man. "I have a friend in Avila whom I would see, and then I shall return."

"To where?"

"To my banished home in the Balearic Isles."

"Then I trust you may get back in safety," said Montilla. "Ah, see—the clouds are breaking away. We shall have the stars to guide us ere long."

"For a considerable time the two rode along in silence, and when the conversation was resumed, it was only upon ordinary matters. The clouds at length had nearly emptied themselves upon the flooded earth, and soon the travellers pricked their horses to a quicker speed. The convent of St. Justin was gained long before midnight, where the two men found the shelter they sought, and after partaking of such refreshments as the good abbot could provide at that late hour, they retired; the one to thank his fortune that he was not drowned—the other to pray Heaven to keep him out of the clutches of King Philip.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE MOTHER'S GRAVE.

**N**ESTLED in its mountain home, with the brightly flowing Adaga murmuring along by its side, and surrounded with beautiful vineyards and numerous grouped fruit trees, stands the city of Avila. At the time of which we write—during the reign of Philip II.—it was one of the most considerable cities in Spain, and though now of much importance, yet it is far from being what it then was.

It was a beautiful morning. The sun had risen in its full power of splendour, and as the trees and shrubs, the vines and flowers, awoke from the effects of the last night's storm, they sent forth upon the air such a balmy sweetness, such a fragrant power, that nature seemed laughing outright with joy while they thus paid their incense to heaven.

At a short distance from the city, where the river swept around a grove of orange trees, was a Franciscan convent, and adjoining it there was a large cemetery. Handsome tombs flanked the sides of this home of mortality, drooping shade trees grew here and there like weeping saints, while along by the gravelled walks were various flowers and running vines, some of

which were climbing up about the slabs and monuments that marked the resting places of the dead. In one corner of the enclosure, where an exotic cypress waved over a small marble monument, sat a young girl, some seventeen years of age. She was strikingly beautiful, with the rich tresses, and the large dreamy eyes of her countrywomen, and with a countenance moulded after Castile's fairest model. As she sat there now, gazing upon the flowers her own hands had planted, there were certain lines upon her brow, and circling about her finely cut mouth, that made her appear much older than she really was. They were grief-marks. She sat by the grave of her mother. And yet, when we look at the date that has been chiselled upon the marble, we might wonder that grief could last so long, for it tells us that she who sleeps beneath has been dead for over two years. There must have been other cause for those marks that still dwelt in gloom upon her countenance.

Such was Theresa de Tavora, the daughter of Don Pedro de Tavora, Count of Osma, and one of the most powerful noblemen in the kingdom. The monument bore the name of "DONNA MADALINE DE TAVORA."



DON FERNANDO, THE SPANISH CAVALIER—See Chapter I.

Theresa's hands were clasped together over her bosom, and with a sad look she gazed upon the name that dwelt on that white marble. The cypress cast a shade over her fair form, shielding her from the rays of the sun, and lending a calmer beauty to her features. A footfall broke upon her ear, but yet it aroused her not from the deep reverie into which she had fallen. She was soon aware that some one had stopped near her, and even then she might not have heeded the visitor had not a low murmur awoke the air by her side. Then she raised her head, and beheld, standing only a few feet from her, a young man of handsome form and features, whose eyes were fastened upon the same inscription she had been so earnestly regarding. He caught the motion of her head and turning his gaze upon her, he looked for some moments in silence. Theresa's eyes sank beneath the earnestness with which she was thus regarded, but in a moment more she looked up again as the stranger asked:

"Whose grave is this?"

Theresa started as she heard the sound of that voice.

"It is my mother's," she replied, in tones so sweet that their very melancholy seemed to make them more heavenly.

"This monument bears the name of Madaline de Tavora."

"Yes, and she was my mother."

"And are you Theresa?"

"That is my name," returned the girl, regarding her interlocutor with strange earnestness.

"O, is it thus I find thee, gentle friend and cousin of my own dear mother!" murmured the young man, laying his hand upon the marble, and bending his eyes to the gentle mound upon which it stood.

"*Fernando Gonzales!*" uttered Theresa, springing to her feet.

"Yes, Theresa, you do indeed behold the unfortunate friend of your childhood," returned Fernando, as he extended his hand. "I have ventured once more into Castile to see those who were dear to me. My own father and

mother are both dead, and after I saw them laid beneath the cold Balearic sod, I resolved to return here for a short time ere I sought a home among strangers; but, alas! death has been busy here, too. One of those friends sleeps here, and the only other—stands before me. The one, who might have been to me a mother, the other, who will yet feel towards me as a sister. Shall it not be so, Theresa?"

"A sister?" uttered the young girl, seeming hardly conscious of what she said.

The words had scarcely dropped from her lips ere she seemed aware of their purport, for she instantly dropped her eyes, and a deep blush suffused her cheeks, and for a few moments a dead silence ensued, during which we will state the exact relation of the parties.

Six years before, Don Alfonso Gonzales, a brave Castilian knight, had rescued from the familiars of the Inquisition a dear friend of his who had been convicted of heresy; and though he had assumed a deep disguise on the occasion, yet he was detected by the officials, and as his crime was sure to be punished by death at the stake, he collected together what little money and jewelry he could command, and, with his wife and only son, fled from the country. The king sought in vain to find him, and when he found that all his endeavors were fruitless, he contented himself with proscribing, forever, the fugitive and all his progeny, with the fixed decree that the moment one of them was found in the kingdom, he or she should be burned at the stake as a heretic. Thus it will be seen that Fernando was running a most fearful risk, in venturing upon his present visit.

The wife of Don Alfonso and the Donna Madaline were cousins, and as the two families resided near each other, they were always on the most intimate terms, though the two dons were as different in their dispositions as is daylight from darkness. Don Pedro de Tavora was haughty and overbearing, and, withal, as bigoted as a bigot could be, while Don Alfonso Gonzales was noble and generous, and far from being a friend to the inordinate love of heretical blood manifested by the Holy Inquisition.



While yet Theresa was a prattling child, and Fernando a laughing boy, the two fond mothers had determined that, if the children lived, they should become husband and wife, and this project they cherished, and the boy and girl were not only informed of it, but they were taught to love one another to that effect.

As the children grew their loves waxed warmer and more ardent. They played together, they sang together, they walked together, and together they talked of their mutual affection. The fathers took but little notice of the affair, for neither of them had any objections to the match, so the women had it all their own way.

When Don Alfonso fled from Avila, Fernando had reached the age of fourteen, and Theresa that of eleven, and even at that early age, beneath the sunny clime of Spain, this love had ripened to that ardent passion which knows no earthly death.

When Don Alfonso Gonzales was denounced for his offence against the Inquisition, de Tavora, in the fulness of his blind bigotry, had been the first to cry out against him, and he lent his whole influence towards searching him out. He forbade his wife from ever mentioning the name of the proscribed man or his wife to him again, and often did he chastise his daughter for weeping the loss of Fernando.

The young man drew Theresa nearer to him as he beheld the warm blush that mantled her cheek, and in an instant he comprehended her meaning.

"I said *sister*, Theresa, because fate has irrevocably shut out a brighter union from us. Pardon me if I am thus abrupt, if, before asking aught else, I declare to you that my heart has never left you. I love you with an ardor that can never cool; nor lives there a being, besides yourself, who can fix an image in my soul upon which my affections could fasten themselves. But I know that I must give up all hopes of that blissful union our fond mothers planned, for I am not only proscribed, but your father, I know, hates me with a perfect hatred."

"I know, I know," quickly returned There-

sa, raising her eyes to her companion's face; "but it seems, now, as though you were the only friend I had in the world. The moment I knew who you were—the moment I heard your voice, and when you leaned so mournfully over my mother's tomb, I felt that I lived in the past. I felt that we once more stood by our mothers, and they bade us love each other."

"And so we ever will," returned Fernando.

"Yes, in truth," responded the fair girl. "But we may never do more, for I shall soon lie here by the side of my mother, and then you can come and look at the flowers that grow above my grave."

"You speak wildly, Theresa. You mean not what you say."

"Do I look wild, Fernando? or does my voice sound wild?"

"No,—it sounds mournful and sad."

And O, I am sad—wretched—very, very wretched."

"But why so wretched, Theresa? Your mother, if this cold marble speaks truly, has been dead over two years. Your grief should not last so long."

Theresa de Tavora gazed a moment into the young man's face, and then her eyes filled with tears. She wept with a heaving bosom, and gently she laid her head upon Fernando's breast.

It might seem strange that a gentle maiden should thus suddenly repose such unbounded confidence in one whose face she could hardly remember, and who was, moreover, placed in so peculiar a relation towards her; but when we remember the feelings of one sunk deep in despair and anguish, we well know the power and worth of a truly sympathizing heart; and how quickly the tender vines of confidence will twine about it.

"Tell me," added Fernando, as he wound his arm about the fair form that leaned against him, "have you other cause for grief than the loss of your mother?"

"Alas! yes," she murmured.

"Then tell it to me. Come, sit we here upon this sacred mound," said the young man,

as he gently drew Theresa towards the spot where she had before reclined. "Some kind power must have directed me here."

"Did you not come, then, to seek my mother's grave?" asked Theresa, after she had seated herself upon the mound.

"No,—I arrived here only this morning, and after leaving my horse at an obscure inn, in the outskirts, I came directly here, with the intention of seeking such information as I wanted, from some of the monks. I saw you sitting here, and involuntarily I drew near; then the name of *Madaline* caught my eye, and I came to your side."

"I should think the monks of St. Francis would be the last persons of whom you would have thought of inquiring."

"O, no,—they would be the last ones to recognize me, for I never saw any of them, except at a distance. But now tell me of this grief that bears upon thee with such a overwhelming force."

"O, Fernando, you can never know how much care my poor mother suffered before she died. My father became morose and harsh towards her, and often—— But he is still my father, and I ought not thus to tell his faults."

"Go on, go on," urged Fernando. "Thy story shall be forever locked in my bosom."

"But my father is not all to blame. You remember Don Padilla?"

"Yes."

"And his wife, Donna Anita?"

"Yes; a proud, haughty woman."

"The same. Well, Padilla died shortly after your father fled, and ere long, afterwards, his widow, Anita, began to visit at our house. Soon my father grew cold and distant towards my mother, and at times really abused her, so that both she and myself were very miserable. At length my mother fell sick with a fearful epidemic, that swept through the country, and she died and was buried here. I saw her coffin lowered into the damp earth,—then I turned away and wept, and I have not smiled since."

Here the poor girl burst into a flood of tears, and deep sobs choked her utterance; but soon

she swept the gushing stream away, and in broken accents she continued:

"O, Fernando! in one short month after my mother died, my father married Donna Anita, and she came to take charge of my once happy home; and she brought with her her own daughter, Isabel, who is a year older than myself, and who is as proud and haughty as her mother. My father does not love me—me—now. O, Fernando, he has forgotten his dear Madaline, and he has forgotten that I am his daughter."

Again sobs choked the unhappy girl's utterance, and she rested her head upon her companion's bosom, where her tears flowed fast.

"And can such misery be truly thine?" uttered the young man, with a gush of tenderness. "O, can one so sweet and lovely be thus treated? Look up, Theresa."

She raised her face.

"O, I would not have believed that the wide world could furnish a soul, so dead to love as could seek pain for thee. But how, how, Theresa, do they make thee miserable?"

"In a thousand ways. They do not love me, and they are harsh and cruel. The only moments of peace I have, are those I spend upon this hallowed spot. Here I steal me away to hide my sorrow, and to commune with the spirit of my mother. Ah, there are none to love me now."

"Yes, by Saint Francis, there is *one*!" ejaculated the young man.

Theresa started and gazed into the earnest features of her companion.

"You love me, Fernando."

"I do, I do, and I ever will. O, come, fly with me to some far off country. There are a thousand bright spots where we could make a home, and where we could live in the joy of our happy loves. Come, Theresa, there's nought to bind thee here but misery, while happiness invites thee hence."

The color came and went in Theresa's face, as she heard these passionate words, and she drank them in as drops of healing nectar, but ere she spoke, she sank into a thoughtful mood,

and for some moments she dwelt amid the images of her own mind. At length she raised her eyes. Her features were calmer than before, for a light of heavenly resignation shone upon them.

"No, no," she said; "were I to go away I could not visit my mother's grave. This is to me the sweetest spot on earth."

"You are right, Theresa," immediately returned Fernando, with a peculiar frankness. "I spoke with sudden impulse; and even were you willing to go with me, Heaven only knows where I could take you, for my purse is even now well nigh empty."

"Then I will fill it."

"No, no; I have enough for mine own necessities, and—and—"

"And what?" asked the girl, as her companion hesitated.

"Ah, Theresa," he answered, with a flushed countenance, "I hardly spoke the truth."

"In what respect?"

"My purse; for when I have paid the next night's lodgings for myself and poor Gilgil, I shall not have a maravedi left."

"But who is Gilgil?"

"O, nobody but my horse," returned the young man, with a light smile.

"Then I shall certainly claim it as a favor to re-fill your purse. Ah, here are some of the monks coming this way. I must return to my home, now, for I have already staid longer

than is my wont; but you will meet me here to-morrow morning, Fernando. Say that you will."

"Indeed I will, dear Theresa," exclaimed young Gonzales. "I shall hang my hopes upon the moment that we are next to meet. For the present, then, fare thee well."

He pressed his lips to the fair hand he held, as he spoke, and on the next moment Theresa turned away. Fernando gazed after her till she disappeared from his sight, and then he, too, turned slowly from the grave.

"Thus, then, I find the only two friends whom I would have dared to meet in my native city," murmured he to himself, as he walked towards the gate. "One of them sleeps that sleep that wakes only in the other world, and the second is more miserable than myself. Alas, poor Theresa, thy lot is indeed hard, and I, with all my love, cannot aid thee. O, how that pure flame of my heart's affection burns up in my bosom, and you, too, love me as ever. Not help thee! By San Jago I'll test the point ere I give it up. Such love as mine must surely find some means of releasing its idol from the deep gulf of misery."

Fernando Gonzales spoke no more aloud, for he had drawn near a party of some half-a-dozen monks, but the workings of his countenance, as he passed out at the gate, told that his thoughts were busy within.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE MOOR.

ON the next morning Fernando was early in the Franciscan cemetery, and he sat him down by the grave of Madaline de Tavora, there to await the coming of her whom in childhood he had loved, and for whom, in her budding womanhood, he would have sacrificed even life itself.

Could even King Philip himself have seen that youth as he sat there, and read the thoughts of his noble soul, his stern purpose would have melted like the valley snow before the beams of the summer's sun. The orphaned exile, the proscribed youth, had ventured back to the land of his birth, where to reveal his name would be a cruel death—where to breathe his thoughts and feelings would have consigned him at once to that iron will that knew no mercy. And for what had he come? Just to gaze once more upon two kind friends of his childhood, ere he left Spain forever. To receive once more the warm blessing from Castilian lips, ere he threw off the thoughts and hopes of a Castilian heart; for in his native land he must evermore be a stranger.

O, what man is so much a stranger as he who is a stranger in his own country? What other heart can feel such deep, such utter loneliness as that which dares not claim a friend in the land that gave him birth?

"O!" murmured Fernando, as he cast his eyes about upon the city that lay over against him; "how oft have I strayed among yon towering walls in the days of my boyhood, and how oft have I joyed, in boysome glee, among Avila's groves and vineyards. How many hearts now beat within a spear's throw, that have been friends with me and mine, and yet I dare not grasp a hand, I dare not salute an acquaintance, nor dare I hardly raise my eyes as I walk along the streets. Alas, that such should be the fate of one like me. Dear Castile, I love thee. I love thy great cities and thy villages, thy forests and thy vineyards, and I love thy streams, thy big rivers and thy mountains; but I must leave thee and all thy loveliness, and though I pluck out all hopes of good from my birth, yet never can I forget that I am a pure Castilian."



A tear trembled like a bright diamond upon his dark lashes, as he spoke, and again he turned his gaze upon the name that was lettered upon the marble before him.

"Thou art gone, my mother's kind friend and companion, and thou art at rest from the cares of earth; but one heart is left me yet,—thou hast left thy sweet child to love me. No, no, I will not repine, for the love of Theresa is of more worth than all the rest, and though I may never possess her, yet the thought that I have the whole of her heart's purest affection, shall be to me a source of cherished joy. Castile, I give thee in exchange for thy fairest daughter's love."

Again his lips were closed in silence, and he sank into a moody, saddening reflection. He heard not the soft tread among the shrubbery behind him, nor dreamed he that other ears than his own and his God's had heard his involuntary murmurings.

At length he caught sight of Theresa coming towards her mother's grave, and, while the expression upon his features changed all to sunshine, he sprang to his feet. His sad thoughts were all forgotten, he no longer felt himself to be an outcast, nor did he then think of the dangers that encompassed him.

"Dear, dear Fernando," uttered the beautiful girl, springing forward with outstretched arms; "once more we meet again. O, why does my heart leap so joyously at seeing thee? Why is it that heaven seems smiling when I gaze upon your kind face?"

"Theresa," returned the young man, in trembling, tender accents, while his eyes beamed with fond affection, "well might I ask the same questions; but for me I could answer them. On the whole wide earth there is not one besides yourself whom I can love, not one besides yourself who knows or cares for me. Your heart alone beats in unison with mine, and amid all the flowers of my childhood's recollections, thy sweet face alone remains in the garden of memory; all others have withered and faded away. Hence, Theresa, my heart grows lighter in your presence. Dost understand me?"

"Yes, yes, Fernando," answered she, her face beaming and brightening the while, "and so range my own thoughts and feelings. You will not think me forward?"

"No, dearest."

"For," continued she, "the ties that bound us in years gone by, can never be severed, nor can I forget that our mothers smiled upon us in our loves. But they're gone now—both, both gone, and even though I have a home and a father left to me, yet they only make me more miserable."

"Let us not think of misery now," urged Fernando, as he led Theresa to the same seat they had occupied on the previous day, "for our meeting cannot last long, nor can there be many more of them. Perhaps this may be the last."

"Not the last, Fernando."

"It may be, for I dare not stay here. Yesterday I thought I would hover ever near you, and, if possible, rescue you from your misery; but I know not how I can do it. I am as the hunted wolf; every man's hand is against me, and yet I hold not evil 'gainst a living soul,—no, not even 'gainst the king himself. Why, Theresa, I dared not, this morning, when I came hither, raise my eyes to those whom I met. Every man seemed a spy, and every stone and house-door seemed to have an eye and an ear. I could face a brave death, and God knows I could unflinchingly meet a fair trial before my countrymen, but to fall into the hands of that fearful Inquisition,—O, 't would be horrible!"

Theresa shuddered at the thought of the terrible institution thus named, and she placed her arm within that of her companion, as though she would have saved him from its dread power.

"O, I would not have you peril your life, not even to save mine," she at length said. "But perhaps you may sometime be able to return to Castile in safety?"

"Ah, no, Theresa; such hope is vain. The fiat of the king is immutable. You well know his cruel, iron will. He burns men and women

at the stake with as little compunction as he would cut down a bandit, and the sentence he has passed will hang above me while I live."

"I know," returned Theresa, and with that simple answer she gazed upon her mother's monument, and mused upon the circumstances that surrounded her.

"I can hardly realize," she at length continued, in a mournful undertone, "the exact phases of my misfortune. To think that six years ago I was the happiest of the happy, and that now none could be more miserable; and yet how gradually it has all come on. Flower after flower has faded away—stem after stem has been broken off, and root after root has been plucked out from my bosom, till it is now but one dreary waste. These few moments that I have spent with you are as a small oasis in the desert of my soul; but alas! even that must soon be overcome by the burning sands, and then all will be dark again. O! spirit of my sainted mother, look down upon thy child and give her power to bear her misery. Watch over her and guide her in the darkness of her way!"

"Ay," murmured the young exile, "and watch over me also. Spirits of both our mothers, look down upon us now, and be thou mediators between us and our God."

Involuntarily Theresa laid her head upon Fernando's bosom, and though she wept, yet her tears were calmly shed, and they seemed rather the oblation of a prayerful soul than the outpouring of grief. When she once more raised her head, she remarked, with studied care:

"Fernando, I have brought you the wherewith to aid you out of danger. Here—take it, and blush not to receive it."

She placed her hand in her bosom as she spoke, and drew forth a purse of gold.

"Theresa," said the young man, with a trembling lip, "I ought not to take this."

"If you knew the feelings with which I give it, you would not dare refuse me."

"But my soul—"

"Refuse me not."

"Then, dearest Theresa, I will accept it, and

God will bless you for the deed. I do need it, indeed I do, for my purse is now entirely empty, and yet what an inheritance is rightly mine in this very city!"

As he said this he placed his hand within his doublet, and after feeling about for several moments, his face assumed a troubled, nervous expression, and in a tone of fear, he uttered:

"My purse is gone!"

"Never mind—you can keep this one."

"But, O, Theresa, 'twas my mother's gift."

"Then you may have left it at your lodging, in a state of forgetfulness. You will find it again."

"God grant that I may, for I would rather part with my noble, faithful horse, than to lose that purse. 'Tis the only outward memento I have of one who was all the world to me."

"You may well prize it, Fernando. A mother's gift! O, what can be more precious, and around what can cling more holy thoughts? I hope you may not leave Castile without it."

Fernando was about to reply, when the sound of shuffling feet startled him from his train of thought, and on turning he beheld a Moor standing almost by his side. He started suddenly to his feet, and Theresa did the same, at the same time uttering an exclamation of fear.

The Moor was gazing earnestly upon the two companions, and there was that in his appearance and bearing that at once divested Fernando and Theresa of all fear. He was a light, gracefully built man, with black, straight, flowing hair, and a countenance of exceeding beauty, over which the soft bronzed complexion threw a mellowing influence of peculiar harmony. In age he might have been thirty, and perhaps even older, though it would be hard to tell whether five years, more or less, would have come nearer to the point, for there was that in the softness of swarthy complexion, and in the peculiarity of the outline, that overcame the marks of age. He was dressed in a scarlet tunic, the bottom of which was fringed with silver, over which he wore a blue velvet jacket, reaching down in front to two deep points, and

laced together across the breast with a golden cord, but yet leaving space enough to reveal the white ruffled stuff beneath.

"Be not alarmed, my Christian friends," said he, in a soft, mellow tone, "for I mean you no harm. I have heard the whole of your conversation and—"

"Ha!" exclaimed Fernando, instinctively moving his hand towards his sword-hilt.

A peculiar look rested upon the countenance of the Moor as he saw this movement; it was not a smile, nor was it a look of fear or anger, but seemed a sort of quiet imploring, and yet there was almost a smile, too, breaking into life about the corners of the small mouth; but it passed instantly away, and the expression of earnest interest that had before rested over his features again returned.

"I have indeed listened, my friends," he returned; "and I trust that when you know my mission you will not be offended. This sacred spot has a charm for me as well as for you—a holy, hallowed charm, that I would often seek."

"Do you speak of my mother's grave?" asked Theresa, in tones of surprise and wonder.

"Yes, Theresa de Tavora, I mean the grave of Madaline."

"And how, Moor, can her cold resting place have a charm for thee?"

"Because I loved her."

"You, Moor?" uttered Fernando.

"Ay, Fernando Gonzales."

The young man was startled at hearing his name thus freely pronounced, and he gazed earnestly into the face of the strange intruder.

"I loved Madaline de Tavora," continued the Moor, "and I wept when this grave was being filled up. I stood by and saw the cold earth piled in upon her coffin, and when the last clod was laid upon this mound I turned away and felt that I was separated from the only friend I had on earth; but in my heart I swore that I would be a friend to her daughter, and watch well her interests."

"But I never knew you, never saw you before," said Theresa, now lost in wonder.

"And can you wonder at that?"

"Ay, certainly," said Fernando. "If you had been such a friend to Donna Madaline, or she a friend to you, methinks, if not myself, at least her only daughter would have known you."

"And what, think you," continued the stranger, "would have been the course of Don Pedro had he have known that his wife showed friendship towards an infidel Moor? You should certainly know his bitter, bigoted heart, Theresa."

"Indeed you speak truly," said Theresa; "but yet I cannot understand how this thing can be. How could my mother have befriended you, and how can you help me?"

"The time has not yet come for answering either of your queries, but suffice it for you to know that I speak the truth. You know how looked the affairs of your household when your mother died."

"Yes, yes," answered the fair girl, with a cold shudder.

"And you know, too, that she had reason to fear for your own future peace and comfort."

"She had reason, most truly, but she never spoke her fears to me."

"She would not have pained you by exciting unnecessary fears," resumed the Moor, "but she saw it all, and she made me promise that I would, if ever danger threatened you, rescue you from the thralldom if possible. I know that you know suffer much misery, but from that I cannot release you. The time has not yet come in which I can act."

"Moor," said Fernando, who had regarded the dark-skinned stranger with the closest scrutiny, "I have watched you well, and I believe you speak the truth, but is there not some evidence you can give us—some token by which we may know you are what you represent yourself to be?"

"I can only give you the assurance of an honest Moor, Gonzales; and I will leave it with you whether you would choose the friendship of the dark sons of the south, or that of your own Catholics."

"By San Jago, Moor, you touch me there upon a tender spot. I love my religion, and I love my holy church, but I would rather herd with the wolves, than trust myself within her knowledge. I will believe you, and when I am gone I pray that you will make good your promise to this poor girl. Protect her from the evils that beset her if you can, and you will merit my gratitude forever."

"When you are gone?" repeated the Moor. "And whither go you?"

"Where I may find a home."

"You may have a home here."

"I would seek a home where I may be in safety."

"And such a one you shall yet find in Avila."

"Now you speak wildly, Moor. You well know there is no safety for me here."

"But there is though," returned the Moor, in a confident tone, "and you must stay here. Ask me no questions, but obey me, and you shall live to thank me that I stayed your steps."

The Moor's tone and manner were so confident, so straight-forward, and, withal, so full of dignity and unmistakable kindness, that neither Fernando nor Theresa could help regarding him as one in whom they ought to trust. Yet the young man was not prepared to listen blindly to such a proposal as remaining in Avila, and after a moment's hesitation, he said:

"I will not question you, nor shall I obey you, for I like not the stake of the *auto da fe*, and well I know that to remain here will surely subject me to it."

"You shall not be burned," responded the Moor.

"And what power have you to prevent it?"

"None."

"So I thought."

"Nor said I that I had such power. I only have power to aid Theresa, but with regard to yourself I only speak from my firm belief, and I would not urge that upon a fellow being did it not in my own bosom amount to a knowledge. If you stay in Avila you shall be safe, but if

you will not stay, promise me at least this—that you will remain somewhere not far distant, where you could be found."

"But how long before such an event might transpire?"

"Perhaps not for years—perhaps in a few months."

Fernando was puzzled by the Moor's words, and though he almost believed that what he said with regard to his own safety was true, yet the inordinate fear of the dread Inquisition was not to be overcome, even by such assurance, and he was firmly resolved to leave the city as he had come, quietly and speedily. Yet he pondered more deeply upon the Moor's last request.

"Moor," he said, "tell me thy name?"

"*Abu Malec*."

"Well, now I will speak plainly with thee, I am inclined to trust thee—not to remain in Avila, remember—but to give thee information of the place to which I will go."

"Just as you please," returned the Moor, "though I tell thee now, thou hadst better remain here. I will even pledge my life for your safety."

"No, no, I cannot take such a pledge as that. I shall leave Avila, but before I go I will let you know my destination. That, even, will show you how much confidence I place in you."

"Then so be it," returned *Abu Malec*, with a slight shade of disappointment in his countenance. "But tell me, when shall you leave?"

"To-morrow."

"Then meet me here in the morning, and perhaps I may then tell thee the reasons I have for assuring you of safety here."

"Yes, meet me once more," urged Theresa.

"I will be here in the morning, dearest, for I had intended it." Then turning to the Moor, he continued:

"Will you tell me the source of the power you profess to have in behalf of Theresa?"

"Yes. I have that within my knowledge which could strike upon Don Pedro like a thunderbolt. He knows not the eye that watches

his movements, nor dreams he—. But I will say no more. I can do what I profess."

"But you will not harm my father," murmured Theresa.

"And do you love him still?" asked the Moor, in a low, meaning tone.

"He is my father," was the simple answer.

"Then God bless thy heart, and give thee a more peaceful, joyous life!" rejoined Abu Malec,

with unalloyed fervency. "And now I must go, but remember, we meet here on the morning of the morrow. If you want a pledge of my fidelity, let it be the sacred memory of her whose life is commemorated by this silent, yet significant marble. Adieu."

Thus saying the Moor turned away, and was soon lost to sight among the shrubbery next the convent.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE PROMISE.

FOR several moments after the moon disappeared from sight, Fernando and Theresa regarded each other in silence. They both seemed equally affected by the strange meeting, and both seemed to lay much importance upon the somewhat dubious, though startling developments they had heard; but Theresa, with woman's natural curiosity, was the first to speak.

"Who can he be?" she murmured, half to herself and half to her companion.

"I cannot guess," abstractedly returned the young man, regarding Theresa with a sort of vacant look.

"Do you think he speaks truly when he says you would be safe in Avila?"

This question aroused young Gonzales from his demi-reverie, and with a sudden start, he returned:

"I know not what to think, Theresa. He seems to speak the truth, and yet everything is against such a result. No, by our lady, it cannot be so. My proscription is not so easily to be overcome."

"Then perhaps he may not be able to do as he says in my behalf."

"Yes, Theresa, I think he means just what he says. He evidently possesses some strange secret by which he may hold your father in his power—not to harm him, but to sway him to his own purposes. At all events, we will suspend our judgment till we see him again, for I am confident that there is no treachery in him."

"No," responded Theresa, "there is no treachery there. I feel as though I could trust him with my life."

"I am trusting him, with my life," said Fernando.

Theresa started with a sudden thought, and then she said:

"So you are."

"Yes, indeed I am, for a breath of his might consign me to the hands of the familiars."

"But I am sure he would not harm you," Theresa said, in a sort of prayerful, hopeful tone, but yet with a tinge of fear.

"No, I will trust him," returned Fernando, and then, in a more earnest manner, he continued:

"This meeting with the Moor has put a new

train of thoughts into my mind, or, I should say, a new train of hopes. I know not how it is, but I cannot, for all my assurance to the contrary, help feeling that there may be some loop-hole through which I may escape from the fearful sentence that hangs over me. The very presence of that Moor has a charm for me, and I have, I own it, felt my resolution to leave the city growing weaker."

"O, if you only could remain! O, what joy, what happiness!" exclaimed Theresa, while her face suddenly beamed with an unwonted light. "To be ever near me, so that I could often soothe my troubled spirits beneath the influence of your kind smile."

"Theresa," and his voice sank almost to a whisper as he spoke, "my assurance of personal safety is not alone sufficient to keep me in the city of my birth. There is one other assurance I need."

"And what is that?" asked the fair girl, gazing with wonder into the strangely beaming features of her companion.

"Pardon me for asking the question, for had not this Moor, come across our path I might never have asked it. I would ask if your hand and heart are disengaged?"

"I cannot deny that my heart has long been engaged," returned Theresa, with an arch look beaming up through the blushes.

"Then it is mine."

"Yes, you know it."

"And your hand."

"Belongs to none so well as you; for she who had the right in the eye of Heaven to dispose of her daughter's fate, wished that it might be so."

Fernando repressed the passionate emotions that were rising for utterance, and taking his companion's hand in his own, he resumed:

"But have not others asked for that hand of thine?"

The fair girl trembled and turned pale as she heard this question, and a painful working of the muscles about the eyes and temples told what a chilling thought had been called up.

"Others have asked for it," she at length returned.

"And does your father look with favor upon any of them?"

Fernando trembled as he asked this question, and with painful suspense he hung upon the answer.

"Yes, yes, Fernando," murmured the maiden, in broken accents, "there is one whom he has even—"

"Speak—speak on, Theresa."

"Ordered me to marry."

"And who—who—who is it?"

"Don Juan Radigo."

"No, no, no—not that worthless fellow!" exclaimed Fernando. "He cannot mean that."

"He has indeed bidden me do it."

"It is the son of Don Alberti of whom you speak, is it not?"

"Yes."

"And to such a man your father would give your hand. O, what a heart has he!"

"It was my step-mother's doings, though 'tis true my father readily acceded to the proposal. But I will not marry him; indeed I will not."

"But how can you help it, Theresa?"

"Can they marry me against my will?"

"Alas! I fear they can. Against the will of a Spanish noble a daughter has no power."

"O!" ejaculated the poor girl, "till I saw you yesterday I cared but little whether I married Don Juan or not, for my condition could not have been made worse; but now it is different. I have seen you, and my heart is bathed once more in the sweet waters of that love that made my childhood so joyous. That love has never left my bosom, but the long absence of its object had indeed made it hopeless; now, however, I can see the goal of my soul's joy, and I will strain every nerve to reach it. I will not marry Don Juan Radigo."

"God bless you for that, Theresa! and may he enable us to grasp that bliss which our mothers had promised us! It may be foolish for us to indulge in such ideals of the future, for in truth I can see no earthly way of ever realizing

them, but still there is no use in giving up to despair. Let us yet trust in the assurance of the Moor."

"At least till the morrow," added Theresa.

"Yes, till the morrow."

"And now," continued the maiden, "we must part till then."

The kind word of farewell was spoken, the look of love was given, and they separated—those two hearts that had loved from the earliest hour of childish understanding, that had learned to look forward to a consummation of all earthly good, that had been for so long a season cast asunder, and now so strangely met—they separated; but they were to meet on the morrow.

The morrow! O, what a phantom on the great sea of eternity is the morrow! Who can tell when it cometh, or what shall be its token? Who can read the scroll of its burden, or count the hours of its coming? We say "*on the mor-*

*row!*" and we lay us down to sleep upon its threshold and wake not again to see it. We stand by its portals, anxiously waiting admission, and when the door is thrown open, lo! Eternity is there instead. We live, and move, and act the *Day*. God has given it to us for our own; but the *Morrow* is not ours. It is hidden in the vortex of the future, and is not yet born. No man can own it, no man can see it, and he who trusts it trusts only the *hope* instead of the *substance*, the *Ideal* instead of the *Real*. Between the *Day* and the *Morrow* there is a *Night*, and who shall say what the *Invisible* may do under cover of its darkness? Who shall say what mad pranks the night-spirits may play, or what work the death-angel may find to do?

"Yes, till the morrow."

Ah, Fernando Gonzales, thy heart hath spoken its promise, but remember that the promised time lies hidden in the *Morrow*!

## CHAPTER V.

DONNA ANITA.

ON the banks of the Adaga, within the most beautiful part of Avila, stood the Palace of Don Pedro de Tavora. Its architecture was somewhat after the Moorish order, though the columns of the piazza were larger and the portico more heavily constructed; but upon the interior bore all the light and slender gracefulness of the Moorish artizan. The walls were carved and painted in the most elaborate style. The ceilings, arched and vaulted with a peculiar grace, were strangely and beautifully colored, and where the rich carpet of the Saracen did not drink up the foot-fall, the pavement showed the many devices of Mosaic paving. The whole structure, with its gardens and parks, bespoke the taste of the sensualist. There was genius in the masonry, genius in the carving, genius in the paintings, and genius in the laying out of the grounds; but there was nothing in the creation of that genius to excite admiration for art, or to raise one thought in the human bosom, save that of sensual delight, of physical gratification, and of bootless ease.

Within a high, vaulted apartment, the windows of which overlooked the river, sat Theresa,

and she was weeping. Near her, upon a huge divan, sat Donna Anita, her step-mother, while by the side of the latter, reclining in an indolent attitude at the end of the divan, was Isabel, Theresa's half-sister.

Donna Anita was truly a handsome woman; rather larger and taller than Spanish women in general, but yet retaining all the gracefulness of her sex. A look at her face might at first strike the beholder with satisfaction, and to the sensualist it would most assuredly offer great attractions; but a keen observer, who only looked to read her character, would at once find there the index to a frozen heart and a scheming head. Her eyes, which were somewhat large and brilliant, had an uneasy, restless, ever-changing tone, and moved from point to point with electric flashes. A front view of her face showed a fair, round form; but a side view gave a sharpness of outline that changed its whole appearance, as if by magic. The head was flattened upon the top, the brow slightly receding, the nose sharp and thin, and the lips, almost resembling the bloodless marble in color, were continually twitching with a slight motion.

The daughter was as like the mother as possible, save the lack of years, and the want of full development.

"You need not weep, Theresa," said Donna Anita, with a cold, sarcastic look, while she dangled an unclasped diamond necklace carelessly in her hand. "Those tears are easily called up, and no doubt you think them very becoming, but I assure you they are not. I declare, you are getting worse and worse."

Theresa did not speak, nor did she look up.

"Did you understand what I said?" sharply demanded Anita, over whose face a crimson flush was stealing.

"I knew not that you said anything that required an answer," returned Theresa.

"You will give your attention, nevertheless, when I speak. Now you will accommodate me by drying up those tears. Do you hear?"

"Tears cannot be dried up at will," sobbed the poor girl, weeping more than before.

"But they can be shed at will, I'll warrant," chimed Isabel.

"You've been over to the cemetery this morning, I suppose?" continued the mother.

"Yes."

"This must be put a stop to. Ah, here comes your father."

Don Pedro entered the apartment at this juncture. He was a tall, stout man, with a stern countenance, but bearing about his features a few lines that betokened a mind easily governed by sensual power.

"I declare, de Tavora," said Donna Anita, half rising from her seat, and then settling back again, as though the effort had nearly overcome her, "you look pale. What is the matter?"

"I am not well. I feel sick and faint. Bring me a cup of wine, Theresa."

The young girl sprang to obey her father's request, and in a few moments she returned with a silver goblet filled to the brim with the required beverage. Don Pedro drank it off almost at a draught.

"What is it that ails thee, father?" affectionately asked Theresa, laying her hand upon his shoulder.

Pedro repulsed his daughter with an impatient movement, and threw the goblet upon the carpet. Theresa checked the fresh tears that rose to her eyes, and stooping down, she picked up the cup, and then resumed her seat.

"What is the matter?" asked Donna Anita.

"I feel sick, dearest," returned de Tavora, casting upon his wife a half affectionate and half admiring gaze.

"Not very sick, I hope?"

"O, no. I shall soon get over it. It is only a slight sickness at the stomach, with a pain about my temples."

"I am glad you've come," Anita said, instantly throwing off all apprehensions on her husband's account, "for I want your assistance in managing this stubborn girl."

De Tavora cast a quick glance at his daughter, and then turning to his wife, he asked:

"What is the trouble?"

"Why, I have been speaking to her upon the subject of her marriage with Don Juan Radigo."

"Well, I thought that was all settled."

"And so it is; but the stubborn girl only answers me with tears and sobs."

"How is this, Theresa?" said her father, regarding her with a stern look. "Do you refuse to comply with the plans we have marked out for you?"

"No, no, father," cried the poor girl, "I did not refuse; I only begged that I might be spared such a sacrifice. O, I cannot wed with Radigo."

"You must."

Those two words fell from Don Pedro's lips like lumps of lead which might not be lifted up again.

"And she shall!" uttered Donna Anita, with compressed lips. "I tell you, de Tavora, she is getting to be utterly worthless here, for she does nothing but mope around from morning till night."

"Why more worthless than those who loll idly about the whole year round?" fell tremblingly from Theresa's lips.

Donna Anita started in real surprise at this

unlooked-for retort, and for the moment, rage choked her utterance, but at length she found her tongue, and while her thin white lips trembled with fierce passion, she exclaimed:

"This comes of not checking your impudence in the bud. What, speak thus to me! Perhaps your mother's spirit has descended upon you and put this rebellion in your head. It's well she did as she did, or you might have been even worse than you are now. You'll go no more to whimper over her grave,—mark that, impudent!"

Theresa had shrank back at the first look and word of her step-mother; but at this base allusion to her sainted mother her soul took fire. She sprang to her feet, and, after gazing a single instant into the traducer's face, she fell upon her knees at the feet of her father, and burst into tears. She spoke not, for she had not the power; she only gazed up into her parent's face with an imploring agony that might have moved a dumb beast to pity. The tears streamed down her pale cheeks, her hair fell in curling masses over her white shoulders, and her hands were clasped, not towards heaven, but towards her father.

There was a momentary relaxation of the muscles about the contracted brow, and a hesitation marked his manner, but it passed quickly away, and all was as cold and stern as before.

"Get up," said he, and as he spoke he took Theresa by the arm. "Look to your mother for directions. I have given you in charge to her."

"Alas, dear father," murmured the unfortunate girl. "I have no mother."

"You have."

"Ay, in heaven!"

This was too much for the tyrannical temper of Donna Anita, and hastening forward she caught Theresa roughly by the arm, and rudely pushed her back to her seat.

"There," she uttered, almost out of breath from anger and excitement, "now speak when your voice is wanted, and dare to breathe another such thought, and I'll confine you to your room for a month. Ay," she continued, with

a stamp of her feet, "till Don Juan Radigo takes you away as his wife."

A quick reply arose to the lips of the fair girl at this threat, but she kept it back, and settling back in her seat, she buried her face in her hands.

"You can go to your own apartment, Theresa," continued the angry woman, a moment after she had sank upon the divan.

The poor maiden needed no second command to that effect, and rising from her chair she immediately quit the presence of her persecutors.

"Don Pedro," said Anita, as soon as the door had closed behind the retiring girl, "what has possessed that creature?"

"What is all this?" interrogatively returned the count, in a languid tone.

"Why, the girl has positively refused to marry Don Juan."

"But I thought she had always received the matter quite calmly."

"So she has until to-day; but when I mentioned the thing a short time before you came in, she actually flared up, and pretended that she would not do it."

"Could not do it, mother," interposed Isabel.

"Yes," acknowledged the lady, "she said that she *could* not do it."

"Perhaps there's a prior attachment," suggested Isabel, with what she meant should have been a sarcastic smile, but which, in reality, amounted to nothing but a miserable distortion of the features.

"That cannot be," returned Donna Anita, "unless it be for your own Don Gomez, for she has had opportunity to see no one else."

Isabel tossed her head at this allusion to her acknowledged lover, and in the height of the indignation she experienced at such an idea she applied her jewelled vinaigrette to her nose and gave such a snuff that it brought tears to her eyes.

"I declare, mother," she exclaimed, with an attempt at wit, "I've found a secret for weeping at will. I shall prize my smelling-box more than ever."



"You can't weep such tears as Theresa does," returned Donna Anita, with a motherly smile.

"O, she's used to it. She's practised it."

"Come, come," uttered de Tavora, impatiently, and seeming to sit uneasily in his seat, "if there is anything you want of me in this case, let me know of it now."

"You are impatient," said his wife, regarding him with a look she knew well how to use.

"No, no, not impatient, my dear," returned the count, in a subdued tone; "only I wish to seek some repose, for, in truth, I am quite ill, so I would wish to know how this matter stands, and what I can do in the premises."

"Why, I simply wish to know if Theresa is to have her own way."

"You must look to that, Anita. I have given the girl entirely into your charge, and I assure you that I shall not interfere with your management."

"I know all that, my dear" (when Donna Anita said "*my dear*" she meant to be very affectionate), "but you must remember that while you are living you alone can marry her against her own will, and if she continues to persist in her stubborn determination, I shall have no power to make her do otherwise."

"I am aware of that, certainly."

"Then I wish to know if you will use your authority, if necessary, towards bringing about the marriage between Don Juan and Theresa?"

"Yes, Anita, I will. You may arrange it to suit yourself, and then you can depend upon me for its consummation."

"Thank you, my dear."

"Now I will go to my chamber."

As the count thus spoke he slowly arose from his seat, and turned towards the door. There was a strange trembling in his step, and he looked weak and faint. His wife watched him with a keen glance, but she moved not to help him. A succession of peculiar lights and shades passed over her countenance, and when Don Pedro at length closed the door after him, she turned and regarded her daughter in a sombre silence. In her eye there was a spark of fire,

and a long line of deep thought was drawn across her brow. Her small white hands were clutched upon either knee, her form was bent slightly forward, and her lips trembled as if to speak.

"Isabel," she said, "did not the doctor say that he could not outlive another of those attacks?"

Her voice was fearfully low as she asked this question, and she laid her right hand nervously upon her daughter's arm.

"He did say so, mother."

"And this is surely the commencement of one. I cannot mistake the symptoms."

This idea seemed to afford the mother and daughter food for considerable reflection, for it was some moments ere either of them spoke again. Isabel was the first to break the silence which she did in the following affectionate style:

"If he *should* be taken off, what a sensation we could create in Avila, couldn't we, mother?"

"We have nearer objects than that," said Anita, in a thoughtful mood. "That paper is not yet signed, but with the assistance of Father Raymond we may yet accomplish it. If we can only make Don Pedro believe that Theresa has expressed heretical views, he will sign the paper at once. Father Raymond is the man."

These remarks were made in short broken sentences, and at thoughtful intervals; and when the speaker closed, she settled back with a self-satisfied air.

"Why, I should think he would sign it at once. He made it out freely enough," said Isabella, while a shade of disappointment rested upon her features.

"That is true, my child, but perhaps when the hand of death is placed upon him he may relent towards her. To tell you the truth, Isabel, I fear that for the last few weeks, de Tavora has been thinking somewhat of his former wife, though not with much compunction, yet with a keener recollection of her virtues, for she *had* virtues, I must admit."

"But you do not think that he would ever,

were he to live, give Theresa the preference over me, do you?" asked Isabel, in alarm.

"Not while I live. Fear not, my daughter, my influence over him is too deep for that; nor do I feel any compunctions in using it, for the count himself first set me the example. He made the first advances towards me, even before his first wife died; and when he married me he promised that I should be at the head of his house, and that my children should succeed to his titles. He no doubt expected that his new marriage would be productive of issue, but since such is not the case, you, my child, according to his pledge, must come in for the succession."

"And I shall be a countess," exclaimed Isabel, in delight.

"Not while I live, of course."

"But the right of succession is mine."

"Not by law, Isabel. Theresa is the only one who can now claim it; but the count has power, under the circumstances, to disinherit her entirely, and bestow the right upon me and my own children, and to this end I want that instrument signed. This was the bargain he made for my hand, and I shall hold him to it."

Poor Theresa! thy lot is indeed a hard one; but far better is it than that of him who had thus consented to crush thee. Don Pedro's

heart feels not the soft influence of the Christian spirit that burns within thy bosom, while his chains are as strongly forged as thine. He has indeed sold himself to a spirit as black as Tartarus itself, and he has got in exchange a heart of ice, and a hand of iron.

"Donna," said a servant, "Don Gomez de Acosta is in the hall."

"Show him up, then, at once," returned Isabel, and then turning to her mother, she hastily continued:

"There is one thing, yet, I do not understand. We want to get Theresa out of the palace. Now, surely, Don Juan will not marry a portionless bride."

"O, she shall not be portionless," returned Anita. "We will settle upon her such a sum as will tickle that spendthrift young noble. No woman who had property would marry him willingly, and by gilding Theresa with a few thousand pistoles, he would bite at the bait in a moment. There will be no danger about that. Ah, here comes your inamorato. I will withdraw."

Thus saying, Donna Anita swept out of the apartment, and in a moment more a gaudily-dressed young man was ushered into the blushing Isabel's presence.



## CHAPTER VI.

## THE PURSE.

IN the southern suburbs of the city, a few rods from the river, and on the Alberche road, stood a small inn, over the door of which was a roughly carved sign, in hieroglyphics, informing people that both man and beast could find food and shelter beneath its roof—for he it known that both house and stable were covered with one unbroken course of brown earthen tiling. One of the front rooms was devoted to that purpose for which all inns generally find a goodly space—lounging and drinking, laughing and talking, and singing and joking, affording a seat for all who chose to call in, and containing behind its long bar all those liquors (in those days free from poisonous drugs) that appetite could crave.

It was towards the close of the day—the same on the morning of which we held our last meeting in the Franciscan cemetery. The sun might have been an hour high, but not more than that, when we introduce the reader in the aforementioned bar-room. It was a badly lighted place, with a tiled floor and badly plastered walls, a dingy and slightly-arched ceiling, with here and there a hanging lamp, above which the

black smoke had reared its sable canopy. Three sides of the room were flanked by stout wooden benches, while the fourth—the back—was ornamented with the bar, behind which, in anything but a systematic order, were arranged a battery of bottles, jugs, flagons, pewter cups, and occasionally a parti-colored glass decanter broke the monotony of pewter and brown earthen. The landlord was at his post, and had he been anywhere else no one would have failed to recognize him, not by the red face and pimpled nose of the regular English host, but by his ever-moving, ever-bustling, and over-obsequious air and manner. He was a little old man, and that is all that needs be said of him.

Besides the landlord there were four other persons in the room, three of whom, a fisherman and two mountain hunters, sat together near the bar, while the fourth, whom we at once recognize as our young friend, Fernando Gonzales, sat away by himself in one corner. His eyes were bent upon the brick pavement of the floor, and as he seemed tracing along the dirt-lined cracks and crevices one might have seen that he was most deeply buried in nervous thought.

His hands were twined together by the fingers, and his thumbs were revolving each around the other, while his lips moved as though the thoughts within were too oppressive for silence. His brows were contracted, and his whole position and expression was that of a man who hangs between two painful dubious points, one of which he must choose, and either of which will be fraught with disagreeable results.

The landlord had for some time been watching our young friend from his customary perching-place behind the bar, and from his appearance it was evident that he too, was busy with some, to him, interesting thought. At length he leaned forward, and reaching both hands out upon the bar, he called out:

“Senor stranger.”

This was evidently addressed to Fernando, as he was the only stranger present, but he did not hear it.

“Senor stranger,” again called the little landlord, speaking louder this time, and leaning further over the bar.

Fernando started from his seat and gazed quickly about him.

“It was me that spoke, senor stranger,” continued the old publican.

“Ah,” uttered Fernando; and he walked towards the bar.

“Do you intend to stop here to-night?” asked the little old man, in a tone and manner so couched that they might have been construed into obsequiousness or an overbearing, just as circumstances might call for.

“That had been my intention,” returned the young man. He looked into the landlord’s face as he spoke to see if he could read the reason for this question.

The old man, however, seemed rather puzzled, and at length Fernando comprehended his meaning.

“Ah,” he continued, with a smile, “perhaps you would like that I should pay my day’s reckoning.”

“Well, senor, sometimes, you know, when a man’s a perfect stranger, we aint exactly sure what his intentions may be, so I thought I

would just ask you, and—that is—sometimes I prefer to have travellers pay as they go.”

A curious smile wreathed itself around the handsome features of the cavalier, for he saw at once which way the wind blew.

“I suppose,” he said, good-naturedly, “you saw my purse when I paid my last reckoning.”

Boniface looked blank.

“O, well—never mind. I understand your meaning,” continued Fernando. “I don’t always carry all my money in sight, for I travel sometimes; but I will settle now if you like.”

As he spoke he drew forth the well-filled purse he had that morning received from the hands of Theresa, through the chinks of which the bright gold glistened most temptingly.

“O—no, no, no, senor,” uttered the landlord, in eager haste. “I didn’t know but that you were—that is, I thought you might be thinking of going. O, no—put up your purse. Anything here is at your service.”

Fernando smiled as he turned away, and once more he resumed his seat in the corner. He had just sank into another train of thought, when the trampling of horses’ feet was heard from the street. He started at the sound, but the animals passed the house, and as the sound died away in the distance, he again sank quietly back and re-entered his mental castle, where he soon began to revel in the labyrinths of his own entangled thoughts.

Fernando was just drawing to himself a sort of panorama of the past, wherein he was viewing the scenes of by-gone days, and he had arrived at a point where the name of his mother trembled half audibly upon his lips, when a man carelessly entered the room from the street. The new comer cast his eyes about the place, and for a moment they rested upon the young cavalier; then he sat down upon the bench opposite to where sat the fisherman and the hunters, and called for a stoop of wine.

The bustling landlord moved himself about with becoming alacrity, and soon handed over the wine. The man took it, and as he sat there sipping his liquor, he would ever and anon cast a furtive glance at the young man in the corner.

While he was thus apparently enjoying his beverage the three men who sat opposite arose and went out, and shortly afterwards he arose and sauntered up to the bar, where he sat down the drinking vessel, and then, in a careless way, he said, as though the idea had just come to his mind:

"By the way, landlord, I found a purse near here this morning. Any of your people lost one?"

"Anything in it?" asked the little publican, with characteristic bent of thought.

"No—nothing but the purse."

"A purse, did you say?" exclaimed Fernando, starting up from his seat and coming quickly forward.

"Yes, senor," returned the stranger, turning about and regarding the young man as though he had but just noticed him.

"What kind of a one was it? I lost a purse this morning, and one that I prize very highly as the gift of a dear friend."

"Ah—well, I found one, and I suppose if it is yours you can describe it."

"Certainly," returned Fernando, little dreaming there was danger in the way. "It was of purple silk, bearing upon its sides cross-florics worked with gold thread, and its clasp was also of gold with a ruby in the centre of its arch."

"Then this must be yours," said the man, at the same time drawing the identical purse from his bosom.

"Yes, yes," uttered young Gonzales in delight, as his eyes fell upon the sacred memento.

"You seem to prize it highly, young man. The gift of a friend, I think you said."

"Yes—of my mother."

"Aha—'twas poor judgment for your mother to give you such a purse for travelling with."

"How so?" And Fernando held out his hand for the purse as he spoke.

"It might excite the cupidity of any one who wished to possess it, senor," returned the other, still retaining the thing in his own hand.

"O, no. That ruby is not of much worth,

and as for the clasp, why, a single pistole would make that."

"Ah, senor, but there's a name upon this purse that is worth all the rest."

Fernando started and turned as pale as death.

"Give me the purse," he at length stammered, "and I will reward you well."

"No, no—I couldn't think of it," quietly returned the stranger, as he replaced the purse in his pocket. "*Don Fernando Gonzales* should not have ventured so near the lion's mouth."

"*Betrayed! betrayed!*" murmured Fernando, and for a single instant he allowed his head to droop. But quickly his face flushed, and springing back to the corner he drew his sword.

The stranger only smiled at this movement.

"*Don Fernando Gonzales!*" exclaimed the little landlord, in utter astonishment. "The son of Don Alfonso!"

"You've hit it," said the spy, for so indeed he was.

"Poor fellow!" fell in sympathetic tones from the landlord's lips, as he gazed curiously upon the youth. "It's hard that he should have to have to suffer for a little—"

"Beware!"

The publican trembled at that ominous word from the lips of an official of the Holy Inquisition, and remained silent.

As the spy administered this gentle hint to the landlord, he placed a small whistle to his lips, and in a moment afterwards half-a-dozen armed men rushed into the room.

"Now, senor," he said, "you will please deliver up your sword and come with us. It is your own fault that you are thus situated, for you might have remained out of Spain in safety. Come."

When Fernando drew his sword he thought only of a betrayer—he did not at the moment realize that he was in the presence of one of the dreaded familiars. Now, however, he saw the whole, and with a bowed head he gave up his weapon. None might dare to resist the officers of the Inquisition. From the lowest peasant to

the highest noble, all, all, were subject alike to its mysterious power, and the seal of its office none dared to trample under foot.

With a sad and sunken heart the proscribed youth was led from the room, but ere he crossed the threshold, he turned towards the landlord, and with tears in his eyes, he said:

"You will take good care of my horse, and if ever I call for him I will pay you well for his keeping, and if I do not—"

He hesitated a moment to force back the whelming emotions of his soul, and then he added:

"You can keep him."

"I will, I will," fervently returned the landlord, who was in fact a good-hearted man, and who was moved even to tears at the misfortune of his young lodger. "If ever you come back, Don Fernando, you shall find him safe and sound; but, alas! I fear such will not be the case."

"Your fears are well grounded," responded the spy, in a light, careless tone; and then turning to his charge, whom he led on towards the street, he continued:

"You may as well make your beast over at once, for you'll never need him again."

"O, that faithless Moor! He has betrayed me!" fell half unconsciously from Fernando's lips.

"No one but yourself has betrayed you," returned the official. "That purse which you lost did the business for you."

The young man saw where he had been at fault, for when the purse had first been presented to him, he forgot, in his eagerness to obtain it, that his name was upon the clasp. Now, however, he knew that all was lost. He raised his eyes once to look upon those who guarded him, but he met only the cold, indifferent countenances of men who were too long used to the business to feel anything like sympathy, and bowing his head again he walked on like one who went to his death.

It was not quite sundown when the familiars reached their office with their prisoner, and a fat, red-faced Franciscan gave them admittance.

From his tone and manner he seemed to be at the head of the monkish office in Avila, and after the officials had conversed with him apart for a while, he approached the unfortunate youth.

"There's no mistaking that countenance," he said with a low chuckle of satisfaction.

"O, the evidence of his identity is sufficient," returned the spy, "and besides, he himself admits it."

"I'd rather it should have been the father, but this one will do," said the monk; and he chuckled again, like a man who has gained a point of intense satisfaction.

"But must we set off to-night?" asked the other.

"Yes. You can easily reach Montón village by ten o'clock, and then you can stop at our convent of St. Justin; then the rest of the distance to Madrid you can perform before dark to-morrow. The king will pay handsomely for this fellow, and the sooner we get him on the better. We'll have a capon apiece when the job is finished."

Don Fernando's spirits were aroused to utter disgust at the sensuality thus expressed.

"Great Heavens!" thought he, "can these be the dispensers on earth of the religion of Christ and his apostles! Is it given to such to judge of our actions, and pass sentence on us?"

Hard indeed was it to be cast into the hands of such men; but Fernando knew it had been the fate of thousands before him, and he resolved to resign himself to what he could not avoid.

One of the familiars had been sent for horses, and ere long they were at the door, eight in number. The young man was mounted upon one of them, to the saddle of which he was firmly secured. Then the leader and his six attendants mounted the others, he and three of his men riding in advance, Fernando next, and the remaining three bringing up the rear. The burly old monk gave a farewell chuckle of delight as the party set off. The poor youth heard it, and he felt glad that he was away, but when his mind ran on to the fate awaiting him he forgot the monk, and his heart sank within him.

## CHAPTER VII.

## THE SACKCLOTH.

THE sun was just setting when the myrmidons of the Inquisition and their prisoner started forth. They passed near to the cemetery of the Franciscan convent, and instinctively Fernando turned his eyes in that direction. The first object upon which his eyes fell caused him to start. Near the portal, leaning against the marble post of the outer gateway, stood Abu Malet, the Moor. Fernando rode swiftly past, but he had time to see the consternation that seized his tawny friend, and he could read the sudden grief-lines upon his countenance. He knew that the Moor had not yet proved treacherous.

Twilight passed away; the stars, one after another, set themselves in the heavens, until they sent their spangling gleams athwart the wooded, mountain-dotted country, with power enough to reveal anything of an open way, so that the party were enabled to push on with about the same speed that could have been made by daylight. Those in front, and those in the rear, chatted and laughed as they rode along, but the prisoner was left to his own reflections; nor was he sorry for it, for the conversation of

his escort was anything but agreeable to his moral nature. Ever and anon the leader would turn back in his saddle to assure himself that all was right, and then resume his chatting. His companions addressed him as Mouret, and Fernando remembered him as an old hand in his present office, even before his own family fled from Avila.

It was after ten o'clock when they reached the convent of St. Justin, and here, pulling up their horses, the officials dismounted, and demanded admittance to the gate.

"Who is it?" cried a voice from within.

"Open to the officers of the Holy Inquisition," returned Mouret.

"O, St. Justin protect us! Whom seek you within our walls?"

"Nobody, you fool," politely answered Mouret. "We've got our game with us, and we want rest for the night."

The gate was quickly thrown open, and the party led their horses into the yard, where our hero was cast loose from his saddle and allowed to dismount.

"Now, where is the abbot?" asked Mouret.

"Here he comes," answered the porter. The abbot had heard the noise, and he was on the spot as soon as possible.

"We have a prisoner here, good abbot," said the official, "and we want snug quarters for him till morning, and also beds for ourselves."

"A prisoner," repeated the abbot.

"Ay, a right-down heretic, and the son of a heretic," was Mouret's mild answer.

The old man raised his hands in pious horror, and gazed hard towards the young prisoner. His feeble eyes did not tell him that it was the same traveller whom he had sheltered a night or two before, however.

"We have some strong chambers," he said, "but no vaults."

"Well, then we must take the safest chamber you've got, and set a guard," returned Mouret. "Lead the way, good abbot."

The convent was an old, stone structure, looking as though a number of variously-sized buildings had been thrown promiscuously together, without regard to uniformity, with here a porch, there a tower, here a wing, and there a lodge, and a number of small oriels looking forth from different sections.

The apartment to which Fernando was taken was on the third floor from the yard, in a central part of the mass of buildings, with one window overlooking the garden at the back of the convent. Mouret looked carefully about the room, and then going to the window, he looked down upon the ground beneath. It looked a giddy height, and with a well-satisfied air, he turned to the abbot, who had followed him up.

"This seems a secure place," said he, and he cast his eyes around again as he spoke, as though he would be doubly sure that he spoke the truth.

"Perfectly," returned the abbot. "If you notice, this window has three deep stories below it. The yard in front is much higher than the garden. The door locks safely upon the outside, but for greater security you might trundle a bed into the passage-way, and let one of your

men sleep there; then your prisoner would be sure not to escape."

"By our lady, that shall be done."

A small truckle-bed was accordingly brought into the corridor, and one of the familiars was deputed to sleep in it.

"Stop a minute," said Mouret, as an idea seemed to flash upon him. "I've heard of such things as prisoners making ropes out of their bedding."

He re-entered the prisoner's room.

"Senor Gonzales, you'll have to take the bare straw for your bed to-night. I don't like to trust this material with you."

"Then watch me, some one, but let me at least have a decent bed."

"O, we want to sleep as well as you. There, there's a straw-tick for you."

Mouret patted the hard tick with his hand, by way of emphasis, and then, gathering the sheets up into his arms, he left the apartment.

The door opened outward, and after the truckle-bed had been placed against it, of course it could not be opened, even were it left unlocked. Mouret saw everything fixed to his satisfaction, and then he and five of his companions followed the abbot to the apartments provided for them, while the remaining official soon laid his limbs down upon his barrier bed.

For half an hour after he had been left to himself, Fernando walked up and down his narrow room in a literal frenzy of thought. There were no definite ideas, only he saw his parents, and he saw Theresa, and he saw the strange Moor; and then, looking ahead he saw the—*stake!*

He went to the window and softly opened it, not with any idea of escaping, but merely to get the fresh air. This revived him, and it calmed his troubled spirit, too. He gazed off into the heavens, and the stars seemed to gleam more brilliantly than ever. He gazed down upon the earth, and he could plainly distinguish the shrubs and flowers. Never before had he realized the real value of the free air, never before had he known what it was to look upon the earth and feel that it was shut out to him.

"I may *never, never*, know thee more!" he murmured. "Farewell, sweet stars; farewell, thou broad-spread arch of jewelled night; and thou, soft perfumed earth, farewell! Ere another sun shall leave thee to thy reign o'er nature, I may be locked within the deep, mystic recesses of the Inquisition, and when I step from thence, 'twill be but to my death! Farewell, farewell!"

The prisoner sought his couch, and he laid his hand upon it. It felt hard and matted. He sought some aperture in the ticking, where he might lighten the straw, and when he found it he placed his hand within it. He did not stir the material within, however; but a single moment he held his hand there, and then he started back as though he had touched a serpent.

Sometimes a man may be too cautious. To lock up a sweetmeat from a child is only to offer him an inducement to get it if he can. To hide a covered jar from him is only informing him that it contains something he would much like, if he could obtain it. Had Mouret have been satisfied to let the bed remain just as it was, the prisoner would have sank down upon it, and never thought that it could be put to another use.

"By San Jago!"

Fernando gazed upon the dim outlines of the bed as he thus ejaculated, and trembled from head to foot.

"Mouret has given me instructions I much needed," he continued, to himself. "If those paltry sheets and that old coverlid could be made into ropes, why may not this strong sackcloth? Courage, courage! By Saint Dominic, there's free air beneath the heavens yet!"

The prisoner stepped softly to the door and hearkened. The man who slept without was snoring in the deepest state of balmy unconsciousness. He felt in his bosom and drew forth a small dagger he always wore there. Then he hearkened again, but all was as still and quiet as a snoring neighbor could leave it.

Carefully he drew the straw-tick from its frame and dragged it to the window, where

there was light enough in plenty to guide him in his operations. Naturally of a quick, determined spirit, combined with a somewhat cool judgment, Fernando carried on his labor and his listening at the same time, for he knew that expedition was as necessary as caution. He had nothing to lose by detection, everything to gain by expedition.

With his keen dagger he ripped open the coarse, stout sacking, and having poured out the straw, he proceeded to cut the cloth into strips of such a width as he thought would retain strength enough to support his weight. He knew that his window could not be over fifty feet from the ground at the utmost, and from what he had seen of the height of the lower apartments as he passed through them, he had an idea that forty feet would bring him upon terra firma. His sacking was over six feet long, with a double width of four feet, so he saw that he might with safety cut his strips a foot wide, and that would surely give strength enough. The strips were accordingly cut, and securely knotted together, and having thus formed his rope, he made fast one end of it to the legs of a stout, oaken stool, that chanced to be in the room, and which was long enough to brace against both sides of the window-frame.

Fernando went once more to the window and looked out. Everything was still and quiet below, nor could he detect any signs of lights in the back part of the convent. Cautiously he lowered the free end of his cord, and he had the satisfaction of seeing that it reached to the ground. One moment more he listened at his door—the sentry snored louder than ever—he clasped his hands, for an instant, in silent prayer, and then he trusted himself to the mercy of his sacking cord. The material was coarse and rough, and it consequently gave him a good hand-hold, so that his descent was made with comparative ease. At length he touched the ground! His heart beat quick as he gazed about him, but he found that no one was moving near the premises.

With a noiseless, gliding step the young man hastened through the shrubbery towards the

garden wall, but when he reached it he found it too high for him to get over. What now was to be done he knew not. He dared not go around to the yard, for he well knew that one of the porters would be there on watch, and even though he might easily overcome him, yet it would be a dangerous experiment, for it would be sure to raise an alarm. He did not stop long to consider upon expedients, but trusting that something would turn up in his favor, he glided along towards the southern part of the garden. At length his heart leaped with a thrill of joy, as his eyes rested upon a stout grape-vine that grew against the wall. He felt of it, bore his weight upon it, and found it firm, and then he clambered up until he stood upon the coping. The wall was some twelve feet high, and the young man could plainly see that the ground beyond sloped off with quite a descent. The coping was between two and three feet wide, and of such a convex form that it afforded no hold for his hands; but by dint of considerable exertion, he managed to disengage one of the vines, and bending it over the wall he seized hold upon it and lowered himself down upon the outside. He hung for a moment till his balance had become steady, then he let go, and dropped safely to the ground.

At the bottom of the hill was a deep, dark

wood, and though it offered a secure hiding-place, yet Fernando liked not to trust himself in its midst. He chose rather to take the way to the southward, trusting that he might reach the Alberche before daylight, and find some means of passing over to the opposite shore, where he could purchase a horse, and then make the best of his way into Andalusia.

The road which the familiars were to have taken with their prisoner, led to the southward and eastward, towards El Prado; but there was another, a narrower and less-frequented road, that ran nearly south, and this one Fernando took. He looked back and saw the gloomy walls of the convent looming up against the starry sky, and he could almost fancy that he saw the stripped sackcloth fluttering in the breeze.

The night air was cold and damp; the way lay through a dense forest, where the mad wolves froliced and prowled. The escaped prisoner had no weapon save his short dagger, but yet he pushed boldly on, thinking only of the danger that lay behind him, and ready to face any that might rise up before him. Occasionally the howl of a distant wolf would fall upon his ear, but he felt that he would rather meet a thousand of them than to fall again among the hounds of the Holy Inquisition.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE DEATH-BED VISITORS.

**E**VENING had spread her soft mantle over the palace-dwelling of Don Pedro de Tavora. It was the same evening that darkened upon the prison-bound road of Fernando Gonzales.

The old count had been confined to his bed all the afternoon. Donna Anita and Father Raymond had been in attendance upon him, and he had signed a paper just before sundown, which his wife had carried to her own private apartment and hidden away out of danger. Her large eyes sparkled with an intense fire as she clutched it in her hand, and she stood and gazed for several moments upon the place where she had hidden it, as though with those fire-beams of her eyes she would fuse the lock into an immovable barrier.

The physician stood by the sick man's bedside, but he had ceased to prescribe for the malady.

"Is there nothing, doctor," murmured the count, "nothing that can save me?" And as he spoke, he turned heavily in his bed and gazed imploringly upon the man of drugs.

"You may as well know the truth, Don

Pedro," returned the doctor. "I fear you will never rise from your bed again."

"Never!" repeated Don Pedro with a shudder.

"No, there are no hopes."

"And then I must die!"

A painful shade passed over the dark man's face—he grasped the rich counterpane with his trembling hand, and glaring into the face of the physician, he continued:

"Are there not some potent means? Is there not some subtle drug, some mystic medicine, or some yet untried application, that might bring back my strength?"

"No. There are times when drugs have no power upon the body—times when a nectar or a poison would operate alike. Life is too far gone from the seat where medicine can act. The soul is too near its heavenward flight."

"Heavenward!"

Don Pedro de Tavora closed his eyes as he uttered that word, and some unseen power smote hard upon his bosom. During several minutes he lay in a fit of deep thought. His features were moved by many shades of feeling, and

once or twice a heavy groan broke from his lips. At length he re-opened his eyes, their glaring expression had gone, and in their hollow depths there seemed to be a dim light of sorrow.

"Anita."

"What, my dear, dear husband?" instantly responded his wife; and she made a vain effort to bring a tear to her eyes.

"Where is Theresa?"

Donna Anita started, for there was a tinge of affection in the tone of that question.

"I do not know," she replied.

"I wish you would send for her."

"She is not in the house."

"Not in the house?"

Again Don Pedro sank back into a mood of darkened thought.

"Anita."

"Well, my husband."

Her voice was colder than before, and this time she did not try to weep.

"I wish you would find Theresa."

Isabel was there, and laying her hand upon her mother's arm, she said, in a low tone, but yet which it was meant for the count to hear:

"I should have thought Theresa would have been here, had she loved her father."

"Of course," emphatically returned Anita.

"Perhaps she knows not how sick I am," murmured the dying man.

"O, yes she does. I told her you could not live long."

Donna Anita spoke rather more eagerly than she had intended, and the sick man started as the tones fell upon his ear.

"I wish you would send some one in search of her," Don Pedro said, in an anxious, beseeching manner.

"I will see."

The lady passed quickly out from the room as she spoke, and one who had watched her closely might have seen that her thin lips were tightly pressed together with some strange determination. She passed along the corridor, and descended the wide stairs that led to the hall below. From thence she passed out on to the

verandah, and at a short distance from the door she met Theresa.

"How fares my father?" asked the young girl, half springing forward and gazing up into her step-mother's face with an imploring expression.

"The physician thinks he is improving," returned Donna Anita.

She spoke the lie in a calm, bold voice.

"I thought he was dying. O, I must see him—indeed I must. It is cruel to keep me from him thus."

"You cannot see him, girl, for the doctor says he must not be disturbed. All depends now upon his being kept quiet."

"But did you ask him if I might come to his bedside?"

"Yes."

"And, O, what said he? Did he not say I might come?"

Donna Anita looked coldly upon the fair, upturned face of her implorer, but there was no spark of sympathy in her bosom. She had her own ends to answer.

"He said that he could not see you to-night."

"Not to-night? Then I may never see him again. Something tells me that he is dying—that he will never see another morning. O, father, father, could you but see this poor heart of mine, I know you would have compassion. Am I not your own child—your *only* child? O, father, father!"

"*Only* child!" iterated Donna Anita, with a quick flash of her dark eyes. "Peace with such nonsense, child. You speak well of your father, truly. Now if you are careful you may see him in the morning, nor will I say anything to him of the manner in which you speak of his affection. He is asleep now, and the physician says that when he wakes he will be much stronger."

Theresa covered her face with her hands and sank back upon a seat. Anita gazed upon her a moment with a triumphant look, and then turning away she passed back into the hall.



For the present she had accomplished her purpose; but did she feel happy in her success?

Let those who think there is happiness to be found in the path of sin try the experiment, and when they have gained a heart as hard as was Anita de Tavora's, they may find what a thankless load they have to carry. There may be a grim, dark satisfaction in accomplishing a cherished design of evil, but there can be no happiness, no joy there. The peaceful quiet that makes the happy life, flows never from evil. God has placed in every human soul a broad mirror, and all the joy of humanity is reflected from its surface. It may beam with the reflected light of heaven, or it may be dimmed by the darkness of moral death; but as beams or darkens that mirror of the soul, so lives and feels the man. If there's happiness in eternal night, then there's happiness in sin!

The step-mother had been gone but a few minutes, when Theresa's attention was arrested by the sound of some one moving among the shrubbery in the garden. She started up from her seat and went to the side of the verandah, and she could plainly distinguish a dark form moving towards the steps that led up to where she stood. At first she thought it might be one of the servants, but it moved too cautiously for that, and she was upon the point of turning towards the door when her own name pronounced in familiar tone, arrested her steps.

With a light, noiseless tread the form glided along towards the verandah, and up the steps. It was Abu Malec, the Moor.

"Theresa," he said, "be not alarmed at this. They told me your father was dying."

"And so I believe he is," returned the fair girl, in a tone that betrayed the utmost confidence in the Moor.

"Do you not know?"

"I do not know to a certainty, though I think that such is the case. O, Abu Malec, they will not let me go to his room."

"They?—who?"

"My mother—my step-mother."

"Not let you go to your dying father?"

"She tells me that he is not dying—that he

is sleeping, and that the physician does not wish to have him disturbed. She said he would be stronger in the morning, and then I can see him."

"Then she told thee falsely, Theresa. Thy father is dying now."

The young girl gazed with mingled awe and wonder upon her companion.

"I saw old Beatrice but a short time since, and she assured me that such was the fact."

"O, how can they be so cruel? What have I done that I should be thus treated? Alas, my poor father! I shall never see him more. God forgive him for all the wrongs he has done me, and make his rest happy in the world of spirits. There he will join my sainted mother, and perhaps when I join them in heaven, he will be more kind to me, and love me. I hope he will."

Big tears rolled down Theresa's cheeks as she spoke—her hands were clasped, and her eyes were turned upward. The Moor regarded her with a rapt look of admiration, and when she lowered her eyes he turned away for a moment, and looked down into the garden.

"Theresa," said he at length, "follow me."

"But whither?"

"To your father's chamber."

The maiden was all astonishment.

"Come. I will lead the way."

"But you do not—What mean you, Abu Malec?"

"I mean what I say. If you will follow me, you shall see your father."

Why Theresa followed she knew not, but a strange confidence led her on, and in company with Abu Malec she entered the hall.

The Moor passed up the same stairs that Donna Anita had descended, but, instead of following the same way further, he turned to the left.

"You are taking the wrong way," said Theresa.

"No, this is right."

"But my father's chamber is at the other end of the corridor."

"I do not wish to pass in by the main door;

and besides, it may be locked. We will pass in through the oriel."

"But the door that leads from the corridor to that recess is always locked."

"We will try it."

There was something like a smile upon the Moor's features as he said this, and without further remark he passed on.

The place to which he alluded was a small, closet-like recess adjoining the count's apartment, which looked out through a large oriel window upon the garden, and which had two doors, one opening to the end of the corridor, and the other directly into the count's chamber.

When Abu Malec reached the former door he took a small key from his pocket and soon gained admittance beyond. The oriel window was open, and the other door was ajar, as if to admit fresh air to the sick man's room. Through the crevice came the hum of voices, and Theresa distinctly heard her father pronounce her own name! She would have sprang instantly forward, but Abu restrained her.

"—sh!" uttered he. "The flame is flickering in its socket, and an unguarded breath might extinguish it in an instant. Follow me."

As Abu Malec spoke, he pushed the door softly open and entered the chamber. The physician, Donna Anita, Isabel, and Father Raymond, all started back aghast at the appearance of the tawny Moor.

"Ha! you here!" Anita uttered, forgetting the Moor as she saw Theresa.

"Stand back, woman; she would see her father," said Abu Malec, laying his hand upon Donna Anita's arm and staying her progress.

"And who, what are you, infidel Moor, that you dare thus profane a Christian's death-chamber with your presence?" exclaimed Father Raymond, in pious horror.

"I am one who could speak a single sentence that might crush you, recreant monk," returned Abu Malec, with a sparkling eye.

"What noise is this? Who speaks?" faintly groaned the count, vainly endeavoring to raise himself upon his elbow.

"O, 'tis I—your daughter—your own Theresa," exclaimed the fair girl, now springing to the bedside. "Do you not know me?"

"Come away, child—come away quickly. You are disturbing your father. Did I not tell you—"

Donna Anita trembled with rage and disappointment as she said this, and she fastened upon the poor girl's arm such a grip that the pained flesh quivered.

"Let her stay—let her stay," murmured Don Pedro. "Here, Theresa—here."

Anita ground her teeth as she turned from her hold, and she seemed like one lost in a wilderness. The Moor—his strange entrance—the unfortunate appearance of Theresa, and the returning affection of her husband for his own child, all helped to confound her.

"Theresa, I heard another voice. Whose was that? Stand back, holy father; I've received all the comfort that you can give. Whose was it, Theresa?"

"It was mine, Don Pedro," said the Moor, stepping forward to Theresa's side. "Do you recognize me?"

The dying count gazed hard upon the handsome form of the dark-skinned man.

"Memory brings back something wherein you are set down," he said. "Who are you?"

"Do you remember the mountain cave—the bandit, and the Benedictine Convent?" asked the Moor.

"Yes—but—but—"

"I was there, Don Pedro de Tavora. And I was once at Toledo—we crossed the Tagus."

Don Pedro fairly raised himself upon his elbow. His eyes rolled wildly in their sockets for a moment, and then they settled in a deep, burning gaze upon the Moor. His heart leaped with a quickness that sent the blood once more to his face, but it soon flowed back, and he sank again upon his pillow.

"O, God!" he murmured, "save me from this phantasy. That face again! O, it cannot be."

"Look to your daughter, Don Pedro," ut-



tered the Moor, his features working the while with intense excitement.

"For our lady's sake, doctor, do get this mad infidel away," urged Donna Anita, as she nervously grasped the wondering physician by the arm.

"It would not be safe," returned he, "for your husband seems to know him. He will do no harm."

Donna Anita would have said more, but she dared not, lest she should expose the blackness of her thoughts and designs; so she stepped to the side of her daughter and regarded the scene before her with painful, mad anxiety.

"But you—you," persisted the count, still gazing into those tawny features with an intensity that was almost painful.

Suddenly a brilliant light shot athwart his pale face, his eyes gleamed with a new fire, and again he raised himself upon his elbow.

"Almighty God of heaven and earth!" he ejaculated; "speak to me—tell me—"

The Moor placed his hand softly upon the count's lips, and laid his head back upon the pillow.

"Speak to Theresa, Don Pedro. I can be nothing to thee now. You know me, and you know my power.—Here."

As Abu Malec spoke, he drew Theresa nearer to the bed and then stepped back.

As the count's eyes rested upon the tear-wet face of his only child his lips quivered, and two bright, pearly drops rolled down his sunken cheeks and fell upon the snowy pillow.

"My child, my child," he said, as he stretched forth his hand; "O, how have I wronged thee, how abused thee; and what an angel of resignation hast thou been. Theresa, canst thou for—give me?"

"Yes, yes—everything, dear father," passionately cried the fair girl, at the same time bending forward and imprinting a kiss upon his pale brow. "Only tell me that you love me."

"I do love thee, Theresa, indeed I do. Here let me bless thee. There—God—have mer—"

The old count's breath came short and quick.

He hesitated, and a sudden shoot of pain ran along the nerves of his face. He half raised his head and murmured:

"Anita."

His wife moved doggedly to his bedside.

"Anita," he continued, as his weakening sight caught the form of his wife, "you have a—O, that pain. You have a pa—you—to-day—I signed—seal—tear it—burn. Theresa! forgive, O, forgive—"

The word ended in a low gasp—the head sank heavily upon the pillow—and the soul of de Tavora had taken its flight from earth.

Poor Theresa fell upon the lifeless clay and sobbed aloud. A ray of sunshine had broken across her path—her father had blessed her with his last breath, and her first moment of mourning was also the first moment of real joy she had experienced in her father's presence for years. Her sobs and her tears were not all of sorrow.

The monk moved up to the bedside and mumbled a Latin prayer, while Donna Anita stood by, regarding the scene with a look of demoniac triumph.

"Aha," she muttered to herself, "your repentance came too late, Don Pedro. That paper is in my possession, and its provisions shall be carried out to the very letter." Then she stepped nearer to the bed of death.

The Moor looked but a moment upon the marble features of the dead man. A movement was perceptible about his lips, a sort of wavy motion swept across his dark face, as sweeps the breeze across the bosom of a placid lake, and then, without a word, he passed on from the apartment. None thought of stopping him—none dared to question him, but as he came he went, and where he had stood by that couch of mortality, seemed to stand his spirit still—a kind of airy, mysterious presence, inspiring awe though it met not the sight.

"Theresa," at length spoke Donna Anita, in a chilling tone, "we will leave this chamber now."

The poor girl dared not disobey this injunction, and once more kissing that cold brow, she followed her step-mother from the place.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE ORPHAN'S TRIALS.

ON the morning after the death of her father, Theresa arose from her bed with an aching brow and swollen eyes. 'Twas not her bereavement alone that struck her thus with grief. During the night—the sleepless night—she had pondered long and deeply upon the situation in which she had been left. The base falsehood of her step-mother on the previous evening still rankled in her memory, and helped swell the cause of fear she had long entertained. That falsehood had been so utterly heartless, so cruel, and withal so coolly delivered, that the poor orphan could not but feel that there was some deep, black purpose hidden behind it. Cold and unloving as had been her father, yet while he lived she had been identified with a home—she had possessed kindred, at least, and she felt that something yet bound her to earth. She thought of the Moor—but could he keep her now? His influence had been with her father, but since that father had passed away, her hopes in that quarter were nearly blasted.

With such thoughts as these, Theresa passed out from her chamber. She stopped a moment

at one of the corridor windows, and stepped forth upon the balcony. The fresh air of morning, bearing upon its bosom the fragrance of a thousand sweet flowers and the warbling songs of the tiny garden minstrels, somewhat revived her drooping spirits, and the hot fever of her brow began to cool beneath the grateful influence. She thought of her promised meeting at the grave of her mother, and she resolved that she would at once set out for the spot, for though she might be early, yet she longed for the holy communion that sacred place afforded.

She had donned her mantle, and was just passing through the hall, when she met her step-mother. She endeavored to avoid the dreaded woman, but it was of no avail, for the latter seemed intent upon intercepting her.

"What means this?" asked Donna Anita. She spoke in a peremptory, authoritative tone, and the young girl at once stopped.

"I am going out for a short walk," returned Theresa.

"A deep respect you must have for the memory of your father, thus to go roaming off on the very morning after his death."

"It is the heart that mourns," returned Theresa, mildly.

"Then let your actions show some of it by your remaining within doors. If you have no respect for your own character, at least feel a little for mine."

"O, mother," cried the orphan, "do not treat me thus. I have respect for all that needs it, and surely none can blame me for seeking the morning air in my affliction. Let me go—I shall not be gone long."

"You would go again to the cemetery, I suppose, to weep and wail for the thousandth time over the grave of your mother?"

Theresa de Tavora gazed for a moment into the cold, taunting features of her step-mother, but she could find no words for utterance. She would have burst into tears, but above the sting of the soul there arose such a feeling of deep loathing, that she only shuddered and started back as she would have done from the folds of a slimy snake.

"You cannot go out this morning," continued Donna Anita; and she spoke as one who had the unlimited right to command.

"Cannot?" repeated Theresa, as though she must have misunderstood.

"So I said."

"Do you mean to forbid me from visiting my mother's grave?"

"You cannot leave the palace to-day."

The orphan girl stood like one thunderstruck. In her wildest fears she had not dreamed that she was thus to be imprisoned, and yet she dared not disobey. There was a chilling power in the large, dark eyes and coldly lowering features of her step-mother that she could not overcome, and though her present mission was so doubly dear to her, yet she knew that she could not perform it. At any other time she might have asserted a right above the commands of the cruel woman, but now her heart was burdened with mourning, and she could not, she would not, call up in her bosom a spirit of wrangling; and trusting, hoping, that she should have another opportunity of meeting the only

being she had now left on earth to love her, she turned sadly away.

"Stop," said Donna Anita. "I have not done with you yet. Who was that infidel Moor that you brought to your father's chamber last night? Where did he come from? How dared you break through the commands I had laid upon you?"

The woman stamped her foot as she spoke, and gave loose reins to her anger.

"The Moor bade me follow him to the place of death, or I should not have gone," returned Theresa.

"And do you mean to say that he led the way?"

"He did."

"But how dared you unlock the door of the oriel?"

"The Moor did it all."

Whatever may have been the step-mother's feelings towards Theresa, of one thing she was well aware—that not even to hide a fault would the girl tell a lie, and for a moment her anger gave place to blank amazement.

"Who is he?" she at length asked, with much of anxiety in her tone.

"I know no more than you do. You saw all that transpired last evening. I can tell you no more."

"And did you never see him till last evening?"

"I have met him once before."

"Where?"

"In the Franciscan cemetery."

"Ah, and what said he to you there?"

Theresa hesitated as this question was put to her. She felt the spirit of resistance rising within her bosom, and with that moral power which firm rectitude ever gives to its possessor, she calmly replied:

"I have told you all that I can tell. I met the Moor in the cemetery, and he spoke to me, but I do not feel obliged to relate all that he said."

Donna Anita's eyes sparkled and snapped like coals of fire. Her small hands were clasp-

ed with masculine firmness, and she seemed ready to burst with sudden passion.

"Do you refuse to answer my question?" she hissed out, with fearful distinctness.

"I have answered it."

The step-mother took a step forward and laid her hand upon the orphan's arm. She ground her teeth together, and while she trembled beneath her fierce rage she settled her fingers deep into the tender flesh of the poor unprotected. Theresa drew back with a sharp cry of pain, and the widow-fiend let go her hold.

"Mark me, Theresa," she whispered—and as she did so her hot breath struck upon the orphan's cheek; "you shall repent of this, and so shall that black Moor. You know not yet into whose hands you have fallen. There is a conspiracy in all this. There is yet an Inquisition in Spain, and we be to him or her who falls into its hands. Beware, Theresa, how you brave me. Now go to your own apartment again, and remain there till you are sent for. We shall soon see who holds the rule in this place."

The fair girl's heart arose to a rebellious point, and every nerve was strung with indignation, but she remembered that she stood within the house of mourning, and silently she turned away. When she opened the door of her chamber she started back in alarm at beholding a cowed monk sitting by the window. The moment she appeared, however, the dark cowl was thrown back, and she at once recognized Abu Malec, the Moor.

"Do not be alarmed, fair maiden," he said, "but come in and close the door."

Not a shadow of doubt or fear dwelt in the heart of Theresa, as she obeyed the request, and in a moment she was anxiously awaiting the result of this unexpected interview.

"My stay must be short," said the Moor, as the young girl took a seat in front of him; "but I have come to tell you that there is no need of the meeting we had proposed."

Theresa gazed inquisitively at the speaker.

"Fernando cannot be there with us."

"Cannot!"

She dared trust herself to say no more.

"You must bear up under the intelligence, for I have no desire to deceive you. He is in the hands of the Inquisition!"

The poor orphan uttered a sharp cry of anguish, and for a moment her head drooped. Then a convulsive shudder shook her frame, and starting up from her seat she looked upon Abu Malec with flashing eyes.

"Moor," she exclaimed, "is this your work? O, if you have betrayed that man into the hands of his enemies—if through your means he has been given up to the cruel death that awaits him, may the tide of your life run icy cold in your veins, and may grim remorse gnaw evermore at your soul. O, Fernando, Fernando!"

"Theresa de Tavora," pronounced the Moor, in low, soft accents, as he arose from the divan on which he had been reclining, and bent upon his companion a look of soul-lit meaning, "do you think I could have been guilty of such a dark crime? Do you think that I could thus play the hypocrite? Is there anything in my face that betokens a heart so base? My dark race I know are persecuted by your holy church, but is not the Moor as noble as the Christian? Look upon the blood-stained plains of Andalusia, of Granada, and of Valencia, and tell me if your church is not built in the blood of Moors? Do you suppose I would lend my hand to give another victim to the insatiate thirst of the blood-fiend?"

Theresa gazed in wonder and awe upon the strange, burning countenance of the Moor. She forgot her suspicions, and with a throbbing heart and trembling lip she murmured:

"O, forgive me if I have wronged you; I meant it not. But is it true what you tell me?"

"Alas! it is, Theresa. I have been to the inn where he lodged, and it seems he lost a purse that had his name upon it, which was found by one who recognized it, and at once carried it to the officers of the Inquisition. That led to his immediate detection and arrest."

"O, the fatal purse! He told me that he had lost it. But tell me, Abu Malec, are there no hopes for him?"

"I cannot say *yes*, nor would I say *no*. He has fallen into the hands of a power that knows no mercy, and God alone can see the end of it. Had not this unlooked-for accident have happened, I had been in hopes of working in his favor, but I fear I can do nothing now."

"Then God's will be done," ejaculated Theresa, again sinking into her seat.

Her heart was fairly crushed. The events of the night and of the morning had filled her cup of fear and sorrow to the brim, and this was like snapping the last cord that bound her to earthly life. She bowed her head beneath the fearful stroke—her throat seemed dry and parched—her bosom heaved with its heart-sobs, and over her soul an utter dread had drawn its sable pall.

The Moor regarded her with a trembling interest. He stepped forward, and rested his hand upon her head.

"Theresa," he said, in tones of the mildest, softest cadence, "do not give up to hopeless despair. For yourself you have but little to fear."

"Everything! everything!" passionately cried the poor girl.

"From what?"

"From my wicked step-mother. O, you know not what she is capable of doing."

"But she cannot have power to do much."

"Yes she has. I have seen enough to know that she gained from my father some fearful authority. You heard him last night speak of a paper?"

"Yes," returned the Moor, in a thoughtful mood; "and now I bethink me, he evidently wanted it burned."

"What could it have been?" half unconsciously murmured Theresa.

The Moor entertained a thought that startled him, but he hid his emotion from the troubled orphan, and in a soothing tone he replied:

"Let time bring it to light. But let me

assure you that so long as I am alive, you have a hope of escape from the thralldom that your step-mother would force you into. Once in Toledo, I had a transaction with your father, and its provisions are not yet all fulfilled. Strange as it may seem, you were deeply interested in its results, and if I fail not in my calculations, I shall yet be able to lift you from the power of Donna Anita."

Theresa almost forgot her other causes of sorrow as she listened to these strange words of the Moor. He spoke earnestly, sincerely, and whatever might have been the secret of his power, the orphan believed that he spoke the truth.

"Now if Fernando Gonzales comes not back to you, you can easily overcome your sorrow on his account. You have seen him but a few short minutes—"

"Ah, but we were children together," mournfully interrupted Theresa.

"Yes, but six long years of separation must have somewhat soothed the pangs of parting, and you could not have called all back again during the two short meetings you have held."

"Abu Malec," said the fair girl, with a soft, sweet earnestness; "suppose you were to lose some cherished relic—some memento in which the whole of your soul was bound up, and six long years were to pass away ere you found it again. During that time you have never once forgotten it, nor ceased to mourn its loss. At the expiration of that period you unexpectedly find the lost treasure. At the first moment of recognition would your affection for it be cooled or augmented by the lapse of time since last you saw it?"

The Moor smiled at the girl's simile, and turning to where lay his monkish habit, he picked it up and drew it on.

"I understand your meaning," he said, "and I sympathize with you; but with regard to Fernando, you must school your heart for the worst; you will then be prepared for the best. As far as your step-mother is concerned, she must have more power than I think she has, if

she can thwart me. I must go now, for I have already stayed longer than I intended. God bless thee, Theresa, and give thee strength to bear up yet a little longer."

The Moor spoke—and was gone!

To the mind of Theresa de Tavora it all seemed like a mingled, changing dream. From the moment of her first meeting with Fernando, at her mother's grave to the present time, incidents had crowded upon her with such rapidity that she could hardly realize that they had come and gone. Her soul was the home of a strange trio of emotions. Of her step-mother and her orphan condition she stood in deep dread—for

Fernando she experienced the liveliest grief—and in the Moor she was bound up in wonder; but upon the grief-point her soul hung, and from one to the other, of fear and wonder, it wavered like the vibrations of a nicely balanced scale-beam.

She wondered how Abu Malec gained admittance to the house—she wondered how he could feel such an interest in her; but after wondering all she could, she found that she was as far from any sort of a conclusion as before, so she came back to the gloomy realities that surrounded her.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE PURSUIT.

**T**HE gray streaks of dawning day were just beginning to drink up the stars that hung over the eastern horizon, when Fernando Gonzales heard the low murmuring of the Alberche river, but almost at the same moment he heard a sound from the opposite direction that made his heart beat quick, and called a blanch-spot to his cheek. It was the clattering of horses' hoofs!

He had left the woods nearly a quarter of a mile behind him, and between him and the river the ground was only grown with grass, save where here and there a small clump of bushes had been left standing to mark the boundaries of the different grazing lots. To the left, at the distance of half a mile, stood three or four small huts, just beneath a mountain that rose to the eastward, and there it was that the youth had hoped to procure a boat in which to cross the river.

An instant's listening assured him that the horses were swiftly approaching him, and ere he could run a dozen rods he saw them emerge from the wood. He was confident, however, that he was not discovered, for the gloom was

yet so deep that he could with difficulty make out the dusky forms of the horsemen, and with the hopes of evading them entirely he instantly laid himself down in the tall grass, determined to run the risk of their coming across him. With his ear to the ground he could distinctly hear the tramp of the animals, and a flutter of joy played in his heart as he thought they were making for the scanty settlement.

Only about three minutes had passed when he involuntarily started to his feet, for a horse was almost upon him.

"*Criez!* Senor stranger," exclaimed the horseman, instantly reining up his steed. "What are you doing here?"

It was *not* one of the familiars! Fernando gazed up into his interlocutor's face, and found him to be an utter stranger.

"You can't be a bandit," continued the horseman; "for you aint armed."

"No," returned the young man, as a lucky thought struck him, "but I thought you might be."

"Ha, ha, ha," laughed the stranger, with a

right good will. "You do us an honor, truly. Which way are you travelling?"

"To the southward."

"Then you cross the river?"

"Yes, if I can find a boat."

"You'll find one at the Wabawas yonder. Quite a village for such a name, isn't it? Come, old Musquite's got a boat."

"I'll follow on."

The horseman started off in pursuit of his companions, but while Fernando stood reflecting upon the course he should pursue he noticed that his interlocutor was coming back accompanied by a second rider, and he could now see that the whole party consisted of eight men. Let what would come, he knew there was no use in fleeing, so he calmly awaited the result of this new movement.

"Stranger," said the second horseman, a powerful, dark-looking man, as he came up to the side of Fernando; "we take it that you haven't paid your toll yet."

The truth at once flashed upon the young man's mind.

"What money have you got about you?"

"Not more than enough to carry me to my journey's end," returned the youth, in a calm tone, for the presence of banditti was a paradise compared with the atmosphere that hung about the Inquisition.

"Just show us your purse."

Fernando knew there would be no use in hesitating or prevaricating, so he at once drew forth his purse and handed it to the dark-looking bandit.

"On my soul, this is a heavy one—and all gold, too, as I live. You pay well for your crossing, stranger."

"But you will not take my all," urged Fernando, in an imploring tone. "I am a stranger in this section."

"O, no, we wont leave you to starve. How far are you going?"

"To Guadaloupe," said the young man, at a venture.

"Let's see—that's about thirty leagues, eh, Rodrigo?"

"Yes," returned the other.

"Now let's calculate." And the bandit began to count his fingers. "There'll be four days, and time to spare. You ought to get along on a pistareen a day, but I'll be generous and allow you a dollar. Well, there—take two pistoles. You can foot it through Spain on that."

"Will you not give me back my purse? It was the gift of a friend."

Fernando could not give up the only memento he had of Theresa.

"Yes, take your purse."

As the bandit spoke he tossed the purse upon the ground, and then, with a broad laugh, he continued:

"You must excuse us for the liberty we have taken, stranger, but the toll we take from travellers is all we have to live upon. Farewell, and may success attend you."

The bandits turned and rode away, leaving their victim with ample food for reflection. The whole party of horsemen seemed to hold a short consultation after the two "toll-gatherers" had joined them, and then, instead of proceeding towards the little village of huts, they started off to the left, and soon disappeared in the wood at the northern slope of the nearest mountain.

At first, Fernando had been inclined to treat his loss as trifling, but a few moments' consideration brought him to the fact that he had sustained one of the greatest misfortunes that could have befallen him. He had now no means to purchase a horse, and what could he do without one? He knew that the familiars could arouse plenty of assistance in their pursuit, and that with his slowly moving feet for his sole dependence, his chances of escape were rendered dubious. However, he wasted no time in useless repinings.

It had now grown to be broad daylight, and with quick step the young man hastened towards the huts. Some of the men were stirring, with one of whom, Fernando quickly struck up a bargain for being put across the river, and having bought a couple of miserable black biscuits, he trusted himself within the apology for

a boat which his ferryman had procured, and ere long he was landed safe upon the other side. He had coppers enough in his pocket to satisfy the demands of his boatman, and having stepped upon the shore, he turned back and asked:

"How far is it to Talavera de la Reyna?"

"Just fourteen leagues, senor."

"And the most direct route?"

The boatman stepped up on to the bank.

"You see that road that runs to the right around the hill?"

"Yes."

"Well, that's the direct road, and the nearest by two leagues. That narrow road to the left, there, just where you see those goats, also leads to Talavera, but it runs around through the little village of Laduez, and so it's much farther."

"Thank you. I shall take the road to the right of course."

Fernando kept on in the direct road till his informant had disappeared, and then he took a short cut across to the other road, for he entertained a fear that his pursuers might come across his boatman and question him. He cared little for Talavera de la Reyna, so that he might reach the Tagus and cross over into the country beyond, and gain the rugged fastnesses of the Sierra de Toledo, where he felt that he should be safe.

When our hero gained the narrow road he pushed hurriedly on. At a small brook he stopped long enough to quench his thirst and soak one of his biscuits, and his scanty breakfast he eat as he walked along. He met several mule drivers during the forenoon, and though the way was such that he could not avoid them, yet he passed them without remark. It was high noon when he reached the village of Laduez, a small place, containing not more than a dozen houses, and having found among them one which afforded entertainment for travellers, he determined to rest awhile and procure a dinner, for the wretched bread he had obtained at Wabawas not only failed to satisfy his hunger, but it actually made him sick; and without some

substantial nourishment, he knew that he should not be able to proceed.

The owner of the house was an accommodating little fellow, and a good dinner of dried goat's flesh and eggs, was soon set before the hungry fugitive. He almost forgot the danger from which he was fleeing, as he found himself discussing the merits of the really good victuals, and he had nearly finished his meal, when the voice of the host arrested his attention.

"Katrina," cried he, "where are you?"

A shrill voice from a distant part of the house responded to the call.

"Come down here quick, and set things to rights in the front room."

"Dear saints alive, master, what is the matter?" asked the shrill voice, just as a pair of heavy wooden clogs came clattering down the stairs.

"Matter enough. Here comes more travellers, and good ones, too, for they are on horseback. Of course, they'll want refreshments."

"They haint stopped here yet, have they?"

"Stopped, dunce? No. They've just topped the hill."

Fernando stopped to hear no more, but leaping quickly from the table he sprang to the window, and pushing aside a cluster of vines that grew over the light lattice, he looked forth towards the hill he had himself passed. At the foot of it, and rapidly approaching the village, he saw four horsemen, and though he could not recognize either of the familiars among them, yet the presence of an armed monk satisfied him at once that they were upon his track. His first thought was of immediate flight; but if he went off without paying for his dinner, he would be sure to call his host after him, and thereby, perhaps, rush directly into an arrest.

Summoning up all the self-possession of which he was master, the young man sought the landlord. He knew that the least show of anxiety would excite the suspicions of that individual, and he strove to show none.

"I'll pay for my dinner," said Fernando, hauling out one of his pistoles.

"You're in a hurry, senor. Wont you stop and rest?"

"I'll take a turn in your garden first, and after that perhaps, I may accept your offer."

"I declare, senor, I shall have to send over to old Gildrive's to get this gold changed. Sent to Talavera this morning after mules and haven't got a pistole left. 'Tisn't but a little ways to Gildrive's, and he'll be sure to have it. Katrina!"

"Dear saints alive, what is the matter?"

"Here, dunce, take this pistole—"

"I'll take the change when I return," hastily interrupted Fernando, upon whose brow the big drops of sweat were beginning to collect, for the tramp of the approaching horses could now be distinctly heard.

"You'll find it a pleasant walk around through that—"

"O, yes, I see. Beautiful."

Fernando stopped to hear no more of his host's directions, but making for the back door as quickly as possible, he gained a sort of grape-vine hedge, and when once behind it he glided swiftly along towards the foot of a wooded hill that lay about two furlongs distant. He gained the hill, passed around it, and seeing a small opening in the bushes ahead, where there seemed to be a goat and mule path, he struck into it, and soon found himself in a still wider path that led up from the road, and which he remembered to have passed on his way to the inn.

Had the young man only stopped to see the operations of the four horsemen, he might possibly have been saved from the fate towards which he was now rushing, for he would have known that two of the pursuers turned down the very path into which he had entered; but it was now too late, for within a rod of the very spot where he emerged from the shrubbery, the two horsemen had halted, and appeared to be holding a consultation upon the course it was best for them to pursue.

With that desperate energy which the presence of fearful danger sometimes gives to a man, Fernando settled at once upon cool determination. Flight, in any direction, was out of the question, and with a bold face he walked delib-

erately forth into the middle of the path and kept on to the southward.

For a moment the riders seemed inclined to let him pass on without molestation. Fernando did not turn his head, but he could hear them utter a few hurried sentences, and then the horses came clattering after him.

"—s-s-s!" uttered one of the horsemen, in that peculiar hiss which the lower classes of Spaniards use to attract attention. "Senor." Fernando turned.

"Where does this path lead?" asked the horseman, at the same time scanning the youth from head to foot.

Our hero was puzzled, and his questioner noticed it.

"It leads back to the road."

"But whither the way you were going?"

"Up among the sheep pastures," returned the youth, at a venture.

"You don't look much like a shepherd, at all events," said the horseman, with a coarse grin. Then turning to his companion, he continued:

"Guess this is the chap, Beppo."

"Of course it is."

"Aint you from the Alberche this morning?" asked the first speaker.

"Well, suppose I am?" uttered Fernando, his heart sinking within him.

"Why, then it's likely you came from Monton."

Fernando made no reply.

"And perhaps from Saint Justin's?" continued the horseman, with a low, chuckling laugh. "O, there's no use of denying yourself, you are our prisoner."

"A prisoner! and for what?"

The young man tried hard to keep back the deadly fear that had seized upon him, but it was of no avail. He knew that he was fairly discovered, and that escape was beyond his power.

"O, you know well enough for what. The abbot wont charge you anything for the bed you cut to pieces last night, but you see it hasn't done you any good."



As the fellow thus delivered himself, he slid down from his saddle and grasped Fernando by the arm. He was a stout, remorseless-looking man, whose dress and manners showed him to be one of those accommodating individuals, ever ready to hunt or fight, steal or rob, or to help the spies of the Inquisition when call was made. They would conduct a benighted traveller to the convent in safety, and then rob him the next morning as soon as he entered the wood; and some people even whispered that the good monks of St. Justin had other garbs than the cowled gown, which they wore on particular occasions. But be that as it may, Fernando knew that the more quietly he demeaned himself, the more easily he should be treated, and without a word of resistance he obeyed the directions of his captors. His hands were tied behind him, and in this manner he was driven back into the road, and from thence to the inn he had left, where the monk and his companion were found cozily seated in the entry drinking wine.

"Got him, old bald pate," shouted the fellow who had captured Fernando, as he rode up to the door.

The monk dropped his wine-cup and sprang out into the yard, where he fairly danced with delight as he saw the prisoner.

"Didn't make out, eh?" he vulgarly exclaimed, slapping the youth on the shoulder. "You made a bold push, though."

Fernando noticed this monk as one who must have recognized him at the convent, and without the least remark in reply, he stood calmly awaiting the disposal that was to be made of him.

"You shall have your change, at all events," said the host, who now understood the whole affair, at the same time extending a handful of silver.

"I'll take charge of that," uttered the monk, stretching forth his filthy hand.

He laughed as he put the silver in his pouch, and soon afterwards he turned his attention towards the procuring of a horse. He demanded one of the host in the name, and under the au-

thority, of the Holy Inquisition, and of course the poor publican had to obey, but under the promise, however, that the beast should be safely returned. Upon the back of this horse, Fernando was firmly secured, and after taking another gulp of wine, the monk set his party back on the road he had come.

When they reached the Alêrche, Fernando learned from the conversation of his guard that another party had gone on towards Talavera de la Reyna by the western road, and he discovered, too, by the manner of the old boatman who had put him across the river, that that individual had been the director of the effective movement against him.

It was just dark when the party reached the convent of St. Justin. Mouret and the familiars had already returned from their search, and were anxiously watching for the arrival of other parties who had been sent out. He fairly lifted Fernando from his saddle after the lashings had been cast off, and his utter delight seemed to be so great that he found difficulty in expressing himself in words.

"Are you not the same man who lodged here a few nights since?" asked the old abbot, as he regarded the youth by the light of a lamp that hung in the convent porch.

"I was here," returned Fernando, remarking the fixed look of the abbot.

"You had a companion with you?"

"Yes. One that I picked up on the road."

"You make a strange choice of travelling companions."

"I had no choice about it. We both sought shelter here from the storm."

The abbot's eyes remained earnestly fixed upon the prisoner for some time, and when he turned away the words "*curious*," "*strange*," dropped from his lips.

Again was Fernando disposed of for the night in the convent of St. Justin, but this time a guard was placed in his room, so that all hopes of escape were at once cut off, and he knew that when he retired to sleep again, it would be in the confines of a dungeon.

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE DISINHERITED.

TWO weeks had passed away subsequent to the death of Don Pedro de Tavora. Donna Anita and Isabel had mourned in the most approved style, and now they had begun to be lavish of their "witching glances." The widow had at first appeared inconsolable under her affliction; but two weeks had softened the pangs of loneliness, and the bloom of her cheek and the bright smile of her eyes returned with tenfold power.

The masses had all been said, the bier-tapers had been extinguished, and as the priests received the widow's gold they assured her that the soul of her husband had reached the regions of eternal bliss.

In the meaningless mummary that had been kept up over the death of her father, Theresa had taken no part, for her soul turned away in loathing from the hollow-hearted rites that others engaged in. She mourned alone, and she did truly mourn—not alone for the death of her father, but other causes opened the fountain of her sorrow. She had not yet forgotten her own mother. The dark vacuum that had been left in the world of her love by the loss of the gen-

tle Madaline had not yet been filled, nor did it seem that earth could ever supply that loss. Often, often, during the past fortnight, had she wished that she might join her sainted mother in the other world.

It was early in the day. Theresa sat in her chamber, and in her lap lay a lute. She had been trying to sing, but the attempt had resulted in so melancholy a strain that she gave it up. The sound of the vibrating strings had just died away, when the young girl's thoughts were interrupted by the entrance of Beatrice, the old house-keeper. She closed the door slowly and systematically behind her, and then, with the most mysterious air imaginable, she seated herself upon an ottoman directly facing the orphan.

"Theresa," she said, in studied accents and emphasis, "your mother wants you to join her in the great drawing-room." And then the old woman threw back her head, and closed her lips hard, as though she held something in the background of vast importance.

"Does she want me now?"

"She said just as soon as you could get ready."



"Then I will prepare at once."

Theresa saw at once that Beatrice had something weighty upon her mind, but she knew that the quickest way to get at it would be to leave her to herself. So she deliberately began to arrange her lute in its case.

"There's been some strange doings in the house this morning," ventured the old woman, after fidgeting for some time in her seat.

"Ah," uttered Theresa, and then she closed the lute-case and locked it.

"Yes. Father Raymond has been here."

Theresa involuntarily shuddered.

"And three or four officers that I never saw before. They are all in the great drawing-room now."

The old woman seemed determined to say no more till she was questioned.

"And what have they been doing?" asked Theresa. She spoke in tones that highly gratified the old house-keeper, because they betrayed an interest in the developments she had to make.

"They've been overhauling papers all the morning. They've been into the old count's library and opened all his drawers, and some of the papers they burned, and some they tied up and put back again."

"If the proper officers are present, then that may be all right, Beatrice."

"Ah, Theresa, I can tell something by the looks of people's eyes. I'm old, and I've learned in my day to understand a great deal that I don't hear spoken nor see done. Now there was your own dear mother—God bless her sweet soul—nobody wouldn't have wanted to hear her speak to know that she was a perfect angel. You could see it in her eyes, and you could read it in that beautiful smile that always lay around her mouth. Don't cry, Theresa, for your mother *was* an angel. Ah, how happy we all used to be, when we saw her moving about the house—but ah me, those times are passed."

Beatrice wiped a tear from her eye, and having devoutly crossed herself, she proceeded:

"Now I've learned to read the very thoughts

of Donna Anita, and I know that the thoughts she has this morning are all born of evil. Her eyes have been all on fire, and she has been smiling, too."

"She smiles, perhaps, because her prescribed season of mourning has passed."

"No, no, there's more than that in the smiles that I saw this morning. That old monk smiled and chuckled, too, and I heard him say that your step-mother was the most fortunate woman in the world. Then she said, '*poor Theresa,*' and then both of them laughed. Aint there something in that?"

The poor orphan's blood ran cold, for she felt how sad was her situation. She knew that those who should have been her sympathizers only mocked at her misery, and though she had no means of guessing at the nature of the business now on foot, yet the darkest fears were aroused, for she remembered the dying words of her father, and the half-uttered injunction they contained.

"I will go now," said Theresa, rising from her seat. "I am prepared for the worst."

"I'm afraid not," uttered Beatrice.

"They cannot make me much more miserable, my kind old friend."

"God grant it—but I'm afraid—"

"Don't call up more fear than necessary," urged the young girl. "It will be time enough when I am called upon to realize it."

"O, I wouldn't hurt your feelings for the world, Theresa; I only wanted to have you prepared for their business, because then you'll know better how to meet them."

"I understand you, Beatrice, and I thank you, too."

Theresa passed out from her room, and descended to the drawing-room, where she found her step-mother in company with Father Raymond, and three civil justices. The latter three were sitting by a table upon which were various papers, some of which were spread open, while others appeared to have been lately sealed, as a taper was still burning, with a roll of wax laying by its side.

"Theresa de Tavora, I believe?" said one of the officers, without moving from his seat.

Donna Anita informed him that it was,

"We have called you," continued the justice, "to witness the last administration of your late father's property, and I have the pleasure to inform you that through the kindness of Donna Anita, you are made the undisputed possessor of five thousand pistoles. Quite a snug little sum."

"Five thousand pistoles, senor?"

"That is the exact sum," returned the justice, reaching over and drawing a paper towards him. "Five thousand pistoles, to be paid over to you on the day of your marriage. I think that is according to your wishes?"

The last remark was addressed to Donna Anita, and she graciously nodded assent.

Theresa stood aghast. Five thousand pistoles! She could not believe it.

"My father's estates were worth several millions," she uttered.

"O, yes, yes—that is true; but he has made all over to his widow."

"Tell her the whole. Explain it all," said the iron-hearted step-mother.

Theresa's face was already as pale and rigid as marble. A glimmering of the whole fatal truth broke like an ice-bolt upon her heart, and when she looked towards the justice, she only seemed waiting for the last cold breath that was to freeze up her soul forever.

The officer opened a large parchment roll that lay by his side, and in a distinct, business-like voice, he read its contents. The poor orphan heard it to the end, and then, with one deep groan, she sank insensible upon the floor!

She was utterly disinherited.

That instrument had been drawn up at her father's command. It bore his broad seal and signature, and was attested by competent witnesses. Every inch and every rial of Don Pedro's property had been settled upon his lawful wife, Donna Anita, and, more terrible than aught else, not only had the titles of Osma been settled upon the widow and her children, but she was also made the sole guardian of the helpless orphan!

What a blow was this! No wonder, poor Theresa, that thou didst sink beneath it.

The justice sprang from his seat as he saw the girl sink upon the floor, and he raised her head in his lap. Donna Anita called for some of the servants, and with such restoratives as they could command, they sought to restore the ill-fated orphan to her senses. She was removed to a divan, and gradually she began to recover, when the servants were ordered to leave the room, the widow assuring them that it was only a sudden dizziness that had affected the "poor dear girl."

Theresa opened her eyes and fixed them upon the face of her step-mother. A moment they rested there, and then they closed, for the sight was like a death-scroll to her vision.

"Are you not yet recovered?" asked Anita.

"Recovered? O, God! to what a dreadful thing have my senses returned! 'Twas cruel to bring me again to life."

"She wanders yet," said the unfeeling widow, turning to the justice. "Her mind has been unsteady for a long time."

Again Theresa opened her eyes—the base falsehood went clanging to her soul—she was weak and heart-broken, and she burst into tears. She had no friend now—no protector—she had been stripped of her all—the home of her father had passed from her, and she had been given to the remorseless guardianship of one who had ever been her persecutor. She saw the very birthright that God had given her snatched away and bestowed upon another, and she knew that she had been left as a mere chattel in the hands of one who would fail not to rule her with an iron will.

"I am willing to add another thousand pistoles to the sum I have there mentioned," said Donna Anita. "I would not surely subject the child to want."

"O, your gift is quite enough as it stands," quickly replied the old monk. "Really, you have already shown your generosity to an extent the girl had no right to expect."

"I give it freely."

"Of course. We all know the goodness of your heart."

Donna Anita tried to call up a blush at the remark, and then she replied:

"Some might have let the poor girl go without a dollar, but I could not find the heart to do that."

Theresa could bear this no longer. Her tears ceased flowing—she sprang to her feet, and regarding her step-mother with a flashing look, she said:

"I know where I am placed, and I know full well the power you have contrived—"

"Contrived?"

"Don't interrupt me."

The widow fairly shrank before the inspired gaze of that wronged girl.

"I know the power you have gained, and I know, too, how you will use it; but I call on God to witness that my father meant not that this should have been so."

Anita smiled a demoniac smile, and pointed significantly at the parchment.

"I know you have that instrument, but my father wished it burned. It was the last wish he spoke, and you heard it. He loved me, and he blessed—"

"Hush! you know not what you are talking about."

Anita spoke this with forced calmness, but one would not have been under the necessity of over-strict observation to have seen that the fierce passion-fire was raging within.

"Know not what I'm talking about?" repeated Theresa. "And do ye think the cub can lose its dam and not know it? Do ye think the lamb can feel the fangs of the prowling wolf and not know wherefore it writhes in pain? Not know of what I talk? Base woman, I do know, and so do you. You know how you have seduced my father from his duty—how you contrived to traduce me in his hearing—how you tore his love from my sainted mother, and how you urged him to the signing of that instrument. You know all this, and if you be possessed of a human heart it must fearfully scorch and writhe beneath such a load of blasting guilt."

"I knew she was slightly deranged," said Donna Anita, turning to the justice. She had effectually hidden her rage, and a dark smile

lurked about her mouth. "She has for the last year been in the habit of wandering off among the tombs and grave-stones, and I fear that—"

"O, God forgive her!" fell from Theresa's lips, and again she sank down insensible.

Even the step-mother was startled by the depth of that ejaculation, and the three justices moved uneasily in their seats, for though they could have no voice in the matter further than to carry out the instructions of the old count's written will, yet they could not fail to see how base had been the means that had brought about such a result.

Donna Anita had somewhat miscalculated the effects of her development upon the step-daughter. She had not thought that the timid girl would dare to upbraid her; but as matters stood now, she deemed it best to get rid of Theresa as quietly as possible, and to this end she called for assistance and had her taken at once to her room. After this had been done the officers duly recognized the validity of the widow's claims, and she was fully possessed of all her deceased husband's estates and titles, to be by her holden or disposed of as she willed.

Theresa de Tavora had been conveyed to her bed, and under the efforts of Beatrice she soon regained her consciousness. She heard the voice of the old house-keeper, and she opened her eyes.

"Is *she* here?" the poor girl asked, with an instinctive shudder.

"No, no," returned Beatrice. "But tell me, Theresa, what they've been doing?"

"O, horrible! horrible!"

"But what is it, Theresa?"

"What is it?" repeated the orphan, with startling vehemence, half-springing from her bed. "O, blessed Virgin Mary, they've made me—"

There was a fierce struggle in her bosom—a sob broke forth and checked her speech, and clasping her hands above her brow, she sank heavily back upon her pillow.

"Poor dear thing," uttered Beatrice, as she started forward, "she's fainted again. O, that wicked woman!"

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE AUTO-DA-FE.

IN one of the darkest cells of the prison of the Holy Inquisition, at Madrid, lay Fernando Gonzales. He had been there nearly two weeks, for with a piece of mortar he had kept an account of the days as they fled, by scratching them down upon the damp granite wall. At the top of the cell were two small holes, not over three inches square, which admitted all the light that came in, and which revealed a thickness of nearly four feet in the outer wall. The young prisoner's eyes had become used to the meagre light, and he had been enabled to study out the various pencillings and scratches that former prisoners had left behind them. They all told the same fearful tale, and all had gone to the stake!

The young man had spoken with no one since his confinement, and, save the jailer, who on each morning brought a loaf of black bread and a mug of water, he had seen no human face. He had had no trial, no questioning, but on the very night of his arrival he had been thrust into the dungeon where he had since remained. The sharp pangs of grief had passed; sorrow had gone; hope's lamp had long been burned

out; and the unfortunate youth had sunk into that dark world of calm despair, where ministers of death alone speak to the senses.

The small apertures in the wall had been illumined by the light of day some three or four hours, when the oaken door of the cell was opened and the rays of a candle shot into the place. For a minute or two, Fernando's eyes shrank from this new addition of light, but he soon overcame the difficulty, and was enabled to examine the visitors. There were three of them—men robed in black, and wearing the insignia of inquisitors. One of them carried in his hand a large book, the covers of which were black velvet, bearing upon each a cross; another carried the light, while the third bore the holy rod of office.

"What is your name?" asked he who held the book, as he sat down upon the prisoner's stool and opened the volume before him.

"Fernando Gonzales," returned the young man, involuntarily casting his eyes over the blood-colored characters upon the parchment leaves.

"What was your father's name?"

"Alfonso."

"Where did he reside six years ago?"

"In Avila."

"Why left he there?" continued the inquisitor, making a red cross upon his book for each of the questions he had asked.

"He fled from the power of the Inquisition."

Another cross was made, and then the questioner turned to him who held the staff.

"That is sufficient?"

"Yes."

"I believe we need no more information?"

"No. His own admissions supersede the necessity of further procedure."

"Then I'll place him at number fifteen, next to Simon St. Guiez."

Fernando started as he heard that name, for he remembered it well. St. Guiez had been for eight long years a prisoner, and his offence was, that he had unguardedly denounced the pope as an unfeeling monster, and declared that he would not bow to the papal authority. He had then attempted to seek the protection of Elizabeth, of England, when the myrmidons of the Inquisition grasped him. All Spain knew the fate which had been reserved for that brave knight, and Fernando saw the consummation of his own fate approaching.

"Fernando Gonzales," read the inquisitor from his book, "to-morrow, at dawn of day, you will be taken hence to meet the doom you so richly deserve. The Holy Inquisition sentences you to the flames—the church sanctions the act, and Almighty God approves it. Prepare your soul for its last earthly trial."

The prisoner made no reply, for he had nothing to say. He asked no questions, for well he knew that his dark visitants never answered. He sat him down upon his rough straw pallet, and for a long time he gazed vacantly upon the door that had closed once more upon his loneliness.

Fernando Gonzales was awakened from the mental lethargy in which he had been wrapped during the week that had been passed, for the approach of a horrible death started his fears

and his griefs into new activity. The desire for life arose strong in his young bosom, for he had not yet become so weakened by confinement as to lose the charms of existence. But others there were within those damp dungeons who received the intelligence of their approaching fate with real thankfulness—men who had grown old and white-headed upon the noisome vapors of their prison—for whom life had lost all its attractions, and who looked upon death as the angel of their release.

The day wore slowly away—the cell of the young Castilian grew dark, and the convent bells tolled the hour of midnight ere he thought of sleep. He stretched his limbs upon his pallet, but repose visited him not. Once or twice he sank into a drowsy state, but some horrid dream started him up, and at length he commenced pacing his cell. He thought of his beloved Theresa—of the pangs she must suffer, and of the bitter regrets she would experience when she heard of his fate; and he felt a momentary thrill of pleasure as he thought that one, at least, would respect and love his memory after he had gone.

Morning broke over Madrid, and as the sun began to rise above the eastern mountains, Fernando was led forth from his cell. In the yard of the prison were arranged eighteen ill-fated victims who were to feed the flames, and our hero made the nineteenth. There were none of them bound—none chained or shackled, but each was placed under the charge of two officials or voluntary sureties, one on each side of the prisoner; and when they were all thus arranged the order was given to set forward. Those who, from long confinement, were too weak to walk, were placed upon tumbrils, while the others were forced to walk.

Already the excited populace were collected outside of the wall, and their clamor fell harshly upon the ears of young Gonzales as they hooted and howled in mad anxiety to get a look at the heretics. The big gate was thrown open, and for several minutes the procession was detained by the mass of human beings that came tumbling into the yard. The soldiers soon cleared them

away, however, and the condemned of the Inquisition were led forth. The way was flanked on either side by dense masses of the people who had come forth to witness the *auto-da-fe*, and the various garbs that met the eye showed that many of the eager spectators had come from far back in the country. There were old men and young men, old women and maidens, and boys and girls; there were the nobles and the beggars—the rich and the poor, the halt, the lame, and the strong—all, all, pushing and shouting as the procession passed by.

The tide of human beings set towards the great plaza where the terrible ceremony was to be performed, and where one of the royal regiments was already drawn up to keep the area of the *auto* clear.

Slowly and solemnly approached the condemned and their attendants, and at length they entered the open space. On one side, like dark spectres of Tartarus, arose a row of blackened, charred stakes, while near at hand were huge heaps of fagots. Here the prisoners were separated, and each led to the place of death assigned him by the numbering of the inquisitor. Fourteen had been led out ere they came to Fernando; then two rough-looking men seized him by the arms and conducted him to the stake where the chains were ready to bind him. Upon his left, at the next stake, stood an old man, with a snow-white head, whose whole weight was borne upon the shackles that bound him. He was one of those who had been brought in a tumbril, and Fernando at once recognized him as Simon St. Guiez.

A bevy of bare-headed monks, with the inquisitor general at their head, now walked along in front of the condemned, and they certainly appeared to be in the highest state of mental enjoyment. A sort of proclamation was read by the herald, there was a flourish of trumpets, and the way was cleared for the king. The inquisitor general waved his hand towards the victims, and his satellites began to heap the dry fagots about them. Then all within the open area was silent again, but from without, where the vast sea of human heads rose and fell like

the long waves of the heaving ocean, there came up a continuous murmur like the rumbling of distant thunder.

At length torches flashed and flickered from the door of a small lodge in one corner of the enclosure, and in a few moments more a wreath of smoke curled up about the stake that stood nearest to the paling. The half-frantic populace shouted and shrieked as they saw that the business was actually commenced, and ere the uproar had at all abated, the grim executioners had reached the stake where stood Fernando.

"God be praised! I shall soon be free from the Satans of this world!" Fernando heard come from the lips of St. Guiez. He turned his head, and saw the old man's hands clasped towards heaven.

The fagots about the young Castilian were on fire. The devouring, hungry flames ran out their forked tongues as they licked up the small dry twigs, and anon they swelled and grew till they began to roar forth their death-howl. On, on, came the devouring element, fagot after fagot crisped and crackled, and the heat began to wrap itself intensely about the condemned youth.

Suddenly there was a movement about the person of the king. Philip had taken a paper from the hands of the inquisitor general, and in a few moments more half-a-dozen men sprang towards the victims and glided swiftly along the burning line.

"Number fifteen!" cried one of them.

"Here, here!" shouted a second, pointing to Fernando.

In an instant the men gathered around the young Castilian and began to hurl the flaming fagots aside, and ere he could realize what was passing, the chains were cast from his body, and he was led from the ember-laden, smoking spot. A horse was led up, and he was ordered to mount it. He asked no questions, for he was too bewildered, but mechanically he climbed up into the saddle and gathered the reins into his hands. Two horsemen rode up, and beckoned for him to follow them.

Fernando heard deep, heart-rending groans

behind him, but he turned not to view the horrid spectacle. He knew that by some strange means he had been saved from immediate death, and gladly he followed his mysterious guides from the place.

It was a difficult job to walk the horses through the dense crowd, but they at last accomplished the undertaking, and when they once gained the open street the guides started off towards the southern section of the city.

## CHAPTER XIII.

PHILIP.

WHEN Fernando had an opportunity to reflect upon what had passed, he found himself in a small room, furnished in an almost sumptuous style, and overlooking an extensive garden. He had hardly convinced himself that he was not the plaything of a dream, for the events of the morning still seemed an improbability in the face of the Inquisition, and though he knew that he yet lived, yet he knew not for how long the respite was to last.

Noon had passed, and the day was on its wane, when a man appeared at the door of Fernando's room and requested him to follow.

"Where am I?" asked the youth, as he stepped forth into the passage beyond.

The conductor looked curiously into the face of Fernando, but he made no answer.

Our hero shuddered at the ominous silence of his guide, for it savored marvellously of the atmosphere of the Inquisition, but his thoughts were soon engrossed by the magnificence of the apartments through which he was being led, and by the appearance of the gaudily-dressed men who were standing about, all of whom regarded him with wondering expressions.

At length his conductor passed a pair of heavy doors, and turning into a narrow passage a few steps beyond, he stopped at a small crim-

son velvet covered wicket and knocked. The door was opened, a lad with a powdered head looked out, and as the guide whispered a few words in his ear, he immediately disappeared. In a few moments, however, the door was again opened, and the same lad bade the applicant enter. The guide turned and beckoned for the young man to follow him.

Fernando started back in astonishment as he entered the apartment into which he had been thus bidden, and with his brain almost reeling with excitement, he cast his eyes about upon the scene. The place was a high vaulted room, the walls of which were hung with tapestry of crimson and gold, and adorned by numerous paintings. At the upper end, upon a sumptuous divan, and surrounded by a score of knights and nobles, reclined Philip II., of Spain.

"Sire," said the man who had conducted Fernando, bowing low as he spoke, "this is he whom you ordered me to bring."

The king started up to a sitting posture, and after regarding the youth for a moment, he bade the messenger to withdraw.

"Do you remember me, senor?" asked Philip, while a slight smile broke over his still handsome countenance.

"I know you are my king," stammered Fernando, hardly daring to raise his eyes.

"How do you know it?"

Fernando gazed up, but he did not answer.

"Come, come, senor, look at me sharply, and tell me if you have not seen me when I was anything but a king?"

Philip spoke in a merry mood, and as the young man looked at him again, a new light broke in upon him. He clutched his hands in nervous anxiety, his lip trembled with a powerful emotion, and he gazed into the face of the king like one in a frantic dream.

"You remember me, then?"

"I—I—re—"

"Tush! man alive, speak out, for by our lady, you've no reason to cower before me. I've seen you when you looked me boldly enough in the face. Don't you remember it?"

"I remember the mountain storm, sire."

"Ay, and you remember the torrent?"

"Yes, sire."

"And the floating horseman?"

"Yes, sire."

"And do you know who you saved from a watery grave?"

"It must have been your majesty."

"You are right, Senor Gonzales; it was truly your king. Did I not tell thee, I might at some day be able to return the debt?"

Those who stood around looked inquisitively at the king, and he, noticing their unmistakable curiosity, smiled as he said:

"You, de Foix, and you d'Acunha, must well remember the night that I spent beneath the roof of our good abbot of St. Justin?"

"Yes, yes, sire."

"Well, on that evening, I was, as you know, on my way from Avila to the Escorial. I got separated from my attendants, and in attempting to force my horse across one of the swollen streams, I was carried away by the furious torrent. I put forth all my efforts to start up my steed, but he had become so utterly frightened that he put not a movement towards the shore. This young man was crossing the stream below me. He saw me coming down, and at the risk

of his own life, he stopped in the very channel of the roaring flood—seized my horse's bridle—turned his head up the stream, and by almost superhuman coolness and bravery he got me to the shore."

A low murmur of admiration ran through the party of attendants, and they looked kindly upon the young hero.

"You remember Don Alfonso Gonzales?" continued the king.

"Yes," replied half-a-dozen voices.

"And you know that I had proscribed his whole family?"

"Yes, yes."

"This youth is the only one left. The familiars at Avila arrested him and brought him hither, and even though I paid them a round sum for his delivery, yet the circumstance I have related came not to my mind, and 'twas not till I received the list of the condemned from the hands of the general this morning, that I thought of it. But, Senor Gonzales, you are safe now, though you had a narrow chance for it. By the saints, my lords and noble gentlemen, the flames were wrapping about him like a winding sheet when I sent the fellows to release him. How felt you, young sir?"

"Perhaps, sire, it was something as you must have felt when you were sailing away towards the Albereche."

"Save that I was horribly chilled, while you must have been marvellously warm," retorted the king, with a light laugh. "But, in faith, that's no subject to jest upon. I think your father is dead?"

"Both father and mother, sire."

"And you have no brother nor sister?"

"None, sire—on earth I have no kindred."

"De Foix, touch that bell-cord behind you."

The courtier obeyed, and the summons was immediately answered by an officer in waiting.

"Bring me the folio wherein account is made of the confiscation of Don Alfonso Gonzales's estates in Avila. It was entered six years ago. The secretary will assist you."

"Now, Fernando," continued the king, as the officer withdrew; "I will make you some slight remuneration for the favor you did me. The sentence of proscription shall not only be annulled, but you shall receive back your family estates. Some may call me hard-hearted and cruel, and I have no doubt that my name will go down to posterity coupled with many dark and bloody deeds; but posterity will never know the causes that have arisen about me like threatening demons—those who in the future shall read of Philip will never see Philip's soul."

The king bent his eyes to the floor, and a gloomy cloud fitted across his countenance; but almost immediately the sadness passed away, and with considerable energy he continued:

"But there's one thing men can never say of Philip, that he ever forgot a kindness, or failed to appreciate a favor."

Again he sank into a melancholy mood, and his thoughts seemed to be travelling back over his strangely checkered life-track. The Spanish monarch was now an old man, but the deep furrows that marked his features, and the heavy lines that crossed his brow, were not all the effects of age. He sometimes tried to hide the fact from his own soul, but yet he could not do it, that remorse was ever busily working within.

Disappointment, deep and bitter, flowed in his cup. There was one light gleaming from the north that paled the glitter of his crown. Elizabeth of England was to him a source of continuous disquiet, and had that mighty queen never lived, Philip of Spain might have been a different man. Elizabeth nipped his towering ambition in the bud, set at defiance his Catholic master's bulls and anathemas, and reared her Protestant standard high above them all. Then poor Philip's heart recoiled back upon himself; his gloriously promising marriage with Mary had ended in bitter disappointment—he had been thwarted in every movement towards regaining the hopes he had lost—the sea had been strewn with his wrecked fleets, and now, as he looked back upon the past, he saw but little for

which to be thankful, but much, very much, for which to mourn and regret.

The messenger returned and placed in the king's hands a large book. Philip opened it to where the secretary had placed a mark, and after carefully examining the page, he turned to Fernando, and said:

"Your estates are held by Don Gomez d'Acosta, at the will of the crown, but you shall have them all back again; and in return, I trust that you will ever remain true to me and my interests?"

"I swear it," uttered the young man, sinking upon his knees, and looking up at his monarch with a grateful expression.

"I believe you."

Philip seemed somewhat affected by his young preserver's manner, and perhaps at that moment he thought whether kindness or cruelty would make the most loyal subjects of a crown.

"Would you wish to return to Avila immediately?" he asked.

"As soon as convenient, sire," returned Fernando, as his thoughts dwelt upon Theresa.

"Your purse must be nearly empty."

"Entirely so."

"My treasurer shall fill it, and in the meantime you shall be made comfortable here. Tomorrow you shall start as early as you please."

As the king spoke he summoned one of the waiting men, to whom he gave Fernando in charge, and then he turned to converse with his companions.

The young man was conducted from the royal presence, and when he found himself once more alone, he fell upon his knees and thanked God for the blessings that had dawned upon him. Every attention that could conduce to his comfort was paid him, and in the morning he was again summoned before the king.

"Here," said Philip, with a kind smile, "is a purse sufficient to meet your present wants, and also a draft upon our governor in Avila for further sums. With regard to your family estates, you had better remain quiet for the present. Ere long I shall have occasion to

send an embassy to Avila, and then you shall be fully reinstated. There is a party of several gentlemen about to start on the same road, so you will have good company."

"God bless you, sire," ejaculated Fernando, and he caught the king's hand and pressed it to his lips.

Philip was touched at this mark of unaffected gratitude, and he pressed the youth's hand with real warmth.

"There, you are at liberty now. The proclamation of your restoration will reach Avila before you, and you will have nothing to do but pursue your course as you see fit."

Fernando turned away, and ere long he found the party to whom the king had alluded. A good horse had been provided for him, and with a bounding heart he was soon on the road to his native city.



## CHAPTER XIV.

## THE STEP-MOTHER'S AIMS.

ONCE more we are back to Avila, in the palace of de Tavora. It was a glorious evening, and a gentle breeze swept through the gardens and groves. Theresa was walking thoughtfully and gloomily along a paved piazza, and as she reached the garden steps she descended and struck into an arbored walk. She was miserable and unhappy, and from the tears that still trickled down her cheeks it seemed as though some recent blow had stricken her.

She had stopped by a marble fountain at the end of the arbor, and was gazing into the sparkling basin when she heard her name pronounced by a familiar voice.

"Who calls me?" she asked, starting from her reverie.

"It's me, Theresa," and old Beatrice emerged from the arbor.

The house-keeper placed her finger very mysteriously upon her lips, and gazed cautiously around.

"You are alone?" she continued, in an interrogative tone.

"Certainly," said Theresa.

"Then there's no danger."

"No danger of what?" inquired the young girl, looking up in wonder.

"I'll show you."

With these words Beatrice turned quickly back towards the point from whence she had come, and while Theresa was wondering what it could all mean, a heavier footfall than the old woman's struck upon her ear. A dark form glided through the arbor—it approached the spot where the orphan stood, and on the next moment she was clasped to the bosom of Fernando Gonzales.

Slowly the lovers moved away towards the extremity of the garden, and each told to the other all that had transpired since last they met.

"Then you are utterly disinherited?" said the young man, as Theresa closed her sad tale of wrongs.

"Yes—utterly and hopelessly."

"Not hopelessly, dearest."

"Ah, Fernando, you cannot dispel the blackness of my doom. I know that I am given to a misery from which earthly power cannot wrest me."

"No, no, Theresa," passionately exclaimed the youth, as he drew the frail form of his loved one closer to his bosom; "I can now extend to you protection. What though your father's estates and titles be all gone from you? Mine

are returned, and you shall share them with me. I am now a Castilian noble, and you want for nothing that I cannot give you. Let them have their ill-gotten gains, and let them enjoy all they can. We will not envy them."

Theresa de Tavora dwelt upon the picture this presented, as a drowning person would look upon a far-off shore. It presented a world of joy and happiness, but it was all beyond her reach.

"Alas!" she murmured, "your noble, generous love, and your kind sympathies, can now avail me nothing, for I am betrothed to Juan Rodigo, past all hopes of redemption."

"But you cannot, you will not consent to such a sacrifice?"

"I cannot help myself. I would rather be laid in the cold grave by the side of my mother, than wed with that man, but I must do it, for my step-mother swears that it shall be done."

"But she can have no reason for this, unless it be to get rid of your presence, and surely she cannot be so utterly heartless and cruel as to study your misery."

"Ah, Fernando," mournfully returned the poor orphan, in tones that seemed wrung from her very heart, "you know not the woman against whose plans you hope, nor do you know of the fatal circumstances that have conspired to bind me to my wretched fate. Don Juan Rodigo has received the promise of my hand, the settlements are all made out, and in one week from last night we are to be married. There's no power on earth that can prevent it!"

Fernando saw the truth of Theresa's words. He knew that Donna Anita's will was absolute, and that no law of Spain could step between a guardian and ward, or between a parent and child. It was a painful, a maddening thought, and the youth pressed his hand hard upon his head as he dwelt upon it.

"Ha! There is the Moor," he uttered, like one who catches at a straw. "Where is he?"

"I have not seen him since the morning after the death of my father," returned Theresa.

"Perhaps he may yet fulfil his promise,

dearest. He surely spoke like one who had the power."

"No, no, he cannot help me now. I know not but that he might have done it before this fatal contract was drawn up; but now—now—I am lost! O, God! forever, forever! There is no more joy, no more happiness nor peace, for me on earth. All, all, is gone."

The heart-broken orphan sank heavily upon her lover's bosom and sobbed aloud. Fernando would have spoken, but his own heart was too pained for that, and he could only wind his arms about the ill-fated girl and weep.

The warning voice of old Beatrice broke upon the air, but the lovers heard it not, and ere they dreamed of danger, Donna Anita stood before them. Her large, dark eyes gleamed and flashed in the starlight, her pale, thin lips quivered with rage, as her gaze fell upon the scene thus revealed to her; and grasping her step-daughter by the arm, she tore her roughly away from the bosom of the man she loved.

"This, then, is the secret," hissed the woman-fiend, as she turned first upon one and then upon the other. "An inamorato of the invisible order—a graveyard lover, I've no doubt."

A bitter sneer broke from Anita's lips, and she gazed fixedly upon the youth.

"Who are you, senor, that thus sneaks like a craven renegade about my premises?"

Fernando clasped his hand upon his velvet doublet as he heard the taunt, but he ventured not to speak. He knew of no language he could use. Had it been a man, the way would have been direct and clear, but he knew not how to address a woman under such circumstances.

"What, both silent?" continued the widow, with a scornful laugh. "This, my coy maiden, is the source of your objections to the man I have chosen for your husband; but you shall not gain anything by the wicked deceit you have been so long practising."

"Base woman," exclaimed Fernando, no longer able to hold his tongue, "she has not deceived you. She knew not that I was to have



been here to-night—she knew not that I even lived."

"A very likely story. And so I suppose you will set yourself up as the girl's champion, senior innamorato. I want no more of your falsehoods."

"Falsehoods, senora!"

"Ay, falsehoods, senior."

"By the saints in heaven—"

"Hush, Fernando," murmured the poor girl, as she noticed that her lover was losing his self-control beneath the stinging abuse of her step-mother.

"*Fernando!*" iterated Donna Anita, starting back in surprise and gazing more earnestly into the young man's face. "Now, now, I see it all. You are Fernando Gonzales—the proscribed heretic—the—"

The woman hesitated, as a sudden thought flashed across her mind, and starting back still further, she continued:

"Escaped! Free! I was surely informed of your arrest, and of your delivery at Madrid. Ha, ha, ha—you are fairly discovered, and I'll warrant that you'll not escape again."

"I am Fernando Gonzales," proudly returned the youth; "and I have been in the prison of the Inquisition; but I'm free now as the proudest noble in your land. Free, too, to cry out against the abomination you are attempting to carry out."

"There's no Donna Madaline alive now to wink at your folly," said Anita, with a cold sneer; "and as for your crying out against me, your efforts may end as Theresa's do—in nothing but swollen eyes. Now, senior, I forbid you to enter upon my premises again; and for you, Theresa, I'll be myself bound that you have not another opportunity to disobey or deceive me. We shall see whose will is law here."

As Donna Anita spoke, she took Theresa again by the arm and dragged her away. At the distance of a few feet, she turned and looked back upon Fernando, and though she spoke not, yet there was a peculiar motion of the

head, seeming to indicate that a labored thought was busy in her brain.

Theresa looked back, too, and she clasped her hands towards her lover. Fernando would have sprung forward, but an instant's reflection showed him that by so doing he would only make matters worse, and he saw the idol of his soul led ruthlessly from him.

He still gazed forth into the gloomy vista where Theresa had disappeared, his heart laying almost still beneath its load, when he felt a hand upon his shoulder. He turned suddenly about, and found himself face to face with the Moor! There was a sad look upon Abu Malec's dark features, and upon his cheek might have been traced a fine line of moisture which looked like the track of a tear.

"She's a wretched woman," uttered the Moor, pointing with his finger towards where the females were gone.

"You here!" exclaimed Fernando, taking no notice of the remark that had been made.

"I am, in truth."

"And heard you our conversation?"

"Only the last of it. I came to seek Theresa, but I cannot see her now."

"Can you help her?" asked Fernando, losing all his wonder, all his astonishment, in that one thought.

"Perhaps I can. They tell me she is to be married to Don Juan Rodigo."

"Yes, yes, her wicked step-mother will force her to it."

"Did you learn how long before such a consummation is intended?"

"In one week from yesterday."

The Moor bent his head in thought.

"So soon—so soon," he at length muttered to himself.

"Yes," almost breathlessly returned Fernando. "That base woman has planned it all, and unless you can bring forward some power to thwart her, the poor orphan must be given over to utter misery."

"And there is another who will be miserable, too," added the Moor, with a faint smile.

"Do not trifle with me."

"I am not trifling, Fernando, and to prove it, I will help you both if I can. I have not seen Theresa to speak with her for some time, for I have been away; but I have learned all now that I need to know, and I will at once set about the work. If I am alive, you shall see me within a week."

"But whither go you?"

"From whence you have just come."

"Madrid?"

"Yes."

"Then you have heard of my restoration?"

"Yes, I know all about it; but we'll speak of that another time. Do not make any disturbance about this affair of Donna Anita's, for by so doing you might spoil all, by causing her to hasten the marriage, and in such case no power on earth could prevent it. If there lives a person who can lift the burden from Theresa's heart, that person is myself. In six days—I must hasten, or even I may be too late."

"One word more," urged Fernando, as the Moor turned to go. "Tell me what strange power you possess. Tell me, and I shall be content?"

"I dare not give my secret to the air yet. You must be content with what you already know. I only arrived in Avila just at night-fall from Osma, and I came immediately here to learn how matters stood. I have gained all the information I need, and now I must away again, or that information will be of no avail."

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If you are wise you will not see Theresa again until I return, for it could do no good, and it might be the means, as I have said, of making matters worse."

"And how shall I know when you return?"

"I will call upon you."

"But you know not where I may be."

"I can easily find you."

The Moor said no more, nor did he wait to hear an answer; but turning quickly away he glided off through the distant darkness.

Fernando stood for some time in the very spot where his strange companion had left him. His mind was in a state of perfect bewilderment, and in vain was it that he endeavored to analyze the peculiarities of his situation. The Moor was a mystery that he did not even attempt to solve, for the very atmosphere in which the tawny man moved seemed like an impenetrable shroud; and yet his words had left an influence in the young man's heart that worked for good, an influence that did much towards dispelling the gloomy fears that bound him.

The atmosphere was becoming somewhat chilly, and the dew was beginning to collect in large drops upon the foliage, when Fernando turned from the garden. He stopped a moment beneath the piazza to gaze up at the place that had now become Theresa's prison, and then, with a deep sigh he passed out into the street and sought his inn.

## CHAPTER XV.

### PLOTTING.

It was during the early part of the succeeding day that Donna Anita and Isabel were sitting alone in one of the drawing-rooms. The former had been for nearly half an hour pacing to and fro across the apartment in an uneasy, thoughtful mood, and she had just taken a seat as her daughter entered. There was a cloud upon her brow, and though the usual look of cool determination struggled up to sight upon her features, yet it was blended with a shade of unusual disquiet.

"Isabel," she said, "an unfortunate circumstance has turned up, and it may work badly for us."

The daughter looked frightened.

"I have discovered the secret of Theresa's objections to Radigo. That young Fernando Gonzales has returned to Avila, and they have been holding secret meetings. I caught them making love in the garden last night."

"Of course you will put a stop to it," uttered Isabel, in virtuous horror.

"Most assuredly. The girl shall not step out of the house again until she is married to Don Juan."

"Then what harm can Gonzales do? You have full authority to do as you please with Theresa."

"I know that, my child, and I will do it, too; but this may make us some trouble, nevertheless. It seems that this young Gonzales has been released from the penalty that hung over him. Father Raymond was here last night, after I saw the young innamorato in the garden, and he told me that the bishop had received a proclamation direct from the king, ordering that Fernando Gonzales should be restored to his family rights in the city, and he intimated that his estates were to be restored to him."

"His estates!" iterated Isabel, in sudden alarm. "Why, do they not belong to my dear Gomez?"

"He holds them by a special patent from the king, but the fief can be revoked at any moment."

"O, it would be cruel to take the property away from my poor Gomez after he has enjoyed it so long."

As Isabel delivered this piece of sympathy, she bit her finger-nails by way of concentrating a new thought that had entered her head.

"Tell me, mother, if Gomez should lose this estate, wouldn't he be poor?"

"He would have but very little left."

"O, what a horrid husband he would be, indeed."

Donna Anita smiled at the aptness of her daughter's judicious reflections.

"That is not all, my child. From some strange and unaccountable circumstance, this young Gonzales must be in high favor with the king, and consequently he will have many friends here. Now if he chooses to make any disturbance about our treatment of Theresa, he may excite the whole city against us, for he will easily find friends, and it would be no hard matter to stir up sympathy in behalf of my ward."

"But they can't help themselves if you choose to make Theresa marry Don Juan."

"Of course they have no power to prevent it; but then it wouldn't be very pleasant to have the whole city stirred up against me, nor would it be at all agreeable to have Don Gomez lose his property. But I mean that Theresa shall marry young Radigo, for I have set my heart upon it, and the promise has been given."

"And how will you get over the difficulty, mother?"

Donna Anita did not answer this question, for she had sunk into a scheming calculation, and for some moments she remained with her eyes fixed upon the points of her shoes.

"Didn't Juan say he should be here to-day?" she at length asked.

"Yes, he's in the great drawing-room now. He came just as I started to join you."

"Then go and send him to me, and see that none of the servants are listening about."

Isabel departed to obey her mother, and shortly afterwards Don Juan Radigo made his appearance. He was a young man, of a somewhat prepossessing appearance at a distance, but upon a nearer view, the deep marks of dissipation and debauchery at once dispelled the charm. In his disposition and manner, he was the very quintessence of foppishness. He greeted Donna Anita in a free and easy man-

ner, and at a sign from the lady he took a seat by her side.

"Don Juan," commenced the widow, "have you got the courage to resent an injury?"

"You tease me, senora. *Me* resent an injury!" And Don Juan tapped his sword-hilt most significantly.

"You have a rival."

"Ah! not in the affections of the angelic Theresa?"

"Yes."

"Who is the dastard?"

"Fernando Gonzales."

"But of course you won't allow the fellow to make himself agreeable there. I heard this morning that he had been released."

"I fear he has already made himself very dangerously agreeable."

"Then you will stop it, of course?"

"I should rather think that part of the business devolved upon you, Don Juan."

"So it does. I'll see the fellow. Theresa has been promised to me, and I shall claim her hand."

"And you shall have it, too, in spite of all opposition. But still this Gonzales may make us some trouble."

"Then I'll—I'll—ah—I'll— But he's really beneath my notice."

"No one is beneath our notice who is able to sting us," said Donna Anita, in a soft, insinuating manner. "Gonzales knows that you are affianced to Theresa, and yet he steals interviews with her in the garden, and in the graveyard."

"He's a puppy!"

"Yes, and he may bite, too."

Don Juan gazed inquisitively upon his interlocutor.

"I tell you the young man will make a noise about the affair; and if you want to hold your five thousand golden pistoles, you must get rid of him."

The widow spoke in a strangely meaning tone, and she looked sharply into the eyes of her companion.

"But if the fellow has got permission of the

king to settle in Avila, how is that to be done? I faith, senora, the thing looks to me as though he can stay for all you or me."

"Don Juan," cried Anita, with a deal of impatience, "could you see a thousand pieces of gold if they were placed before your eyes?"

"Only make me happy by trying the experiment, that's all," returned Juan, with a light laugh.

"I'll try it in another form."

"O, no, no—just try it with the gold first."

Donna Anita cast such a look of concentrated seriousness into the face of the fop, that he lost his desire for joking, and with a sober countenance, he continued:

"Now just tell me what you mean?"

"Well. I mean simply this: Fernando Gonzales is in your way, and he is in my way, too; and he must be removed."

She did not say anything about the fears she entertained of Don Gomez's losing his fiefed property.

"And how shall it be done?" asked Juan.

"Can you not insult him?"

"Ah, yes; but then, you know, he might take offence at that."

"So I expect."

"Yes, and he might want to fight."

"Well?"

"Well—I don't exactly care about—that is, I shouldn't want just now to pick a quarrel with the fellow, for he was a deuced good sword-player when he was a boy, and I don't know what he might be now."

A scornful expression curled about the mouth of Donna Anita, and she might have said something sarcastic, had she not at that moment reflected that it would not do to risk Don Juan's life. She had now a new motive for cherishing the young hidalgo. She really loved Don Gomez d'Acosta, and she hoped to make Radigo an instrument for the saving of the estates which she feared were going to fall back into the hands of Gonzales. As for Radigo himself, she had only cared for him as one upon whom to foist off Theresa, but now she was going to make him serve a double purpose.

"Don Juan," she said, "suppose I add another two thousand pistoles to Theresa's dowry?"

The young man looked up in astonishment.

"If you will get Fernando Gonzales out of the way, it shall be yours."

"But where shall I get him to?"

"To heaven!" hoarsely whispered the widow.

"What—murder him?" uttered Don Juan, with a shudder.

"Yes, or hire it done," coolly returned Anita. "There are plenty of men in Avila who will cut a throat for a ducat."

"That's bad business."

"Not so bad but that it might be worse. However, I merely wish that you should retain the gold, but if you think—"

"No, no—I'll do it." I know a score of fellows who would jump at the chance."

"You can be careful, and not make yourself conspicuous in the matter," suggested Donna Anita, while a glow of satisfaction beamed across her countenance.

"Let me alone for that."

"And be sure, too, that you obtain some one who will do the job faithfully."

"I can easily find such."

"And seven thousand pistoles are yours."

"Egad, I'll set about it at once; I did intend to see Theresa this morning, but I'll postpone it till to-morrow."

When Don Juan Radigo took his leave he had become safely nerved up to the task he was to perform, and he had, moreover, actually persuaded himself that he had a vast deal of bravery in his own bosom. Donna Anita politely bowed him out, and a sarcastic smile worked over her features as she turned back into the drawing-room.

"Poor fool," she murmured to herself, "how quickly he nibbles at the golden bait. I think I have finished Fernando Gonzales, however, and if such be the case, all is safe. He must not live to thwart me, nor to stir up rebellion against me. I wish Don Pedro had not said anything about that instrument—really I think

he might have died without blabbing of that. But never mind. With Theresa once married and out of the way, all is safe. Don Juan will certainly keep his promise with regard to the only man I have to fear."

It might seem almost strange that Donna Anita should be so anxious for the removal of Fernando Gonzales; but the danger of d'Acosta's losing his property was a mere mite in the scale. She knew that the young man had peculiar claims upon the love of Theresa, for she

had been informed of all that had transpired previous to the flight of Don Alfonso, and she had reason to believe that Fernando would use every means in his power to maintain and secure the rights of which she had robbed Theresa; and under existing circumstances she dared not trust her affairs under the eye of too close a public scrutiny. She had gone too far—she had gained too much, to retrace her steps now; only one barrier seemed to interpose, and the assassin's knife was to remove that.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### THE ASSASSINS.

HUMBLE as was the small inn at the outskirts of the city, Fernando had resolved to make his stay there till he heard from the Moor. The little landlord was equally surprised and pleased to see the youth return, and he listened eagerly to his account of what had befallen him since his arrest.

"By our lady," exclaimed the publican, as Fernando closed his account, "I shall ever love Philip after this. I knew not that he had so much gratitude in him."

"He has a heart that can feel when you reach the right spot."

"Egad, you are about the first condemned man that ever reached it, though," said the host, with a laugh; "but even that solitary case is sufficient to prove that he can feel thankful. The saints grant that he may feel so often."

At this moment a customer called the attention of the landlord, and Fernando stepped out into the street. The dusk of twilight was deepening into a darker gloom, and after standing for a few moments before the inn, he turned down towards a point where a light bridge crossed the river. There were several people stand-

ing about the house when the youth passed out, but he took little notice of them save to remark one man who seemed to watch him with more than ordinary interest. Before he reached the bridge, he heard the sound of footsteps behind him; but the circumstance appeared so natural that he took no notice of it, and without turning his head he kept on to the river.

The bridge was a mere construction for foot passengers, built to connect with several large vineyards that lay on the opposite side of the stream, there being two stone bridges, one above, and one below, for horses and teams. Fernando passed over and was sauntering thoughtfully along beneath a grove of lemon trees, when the following footsteps came so near that he turned to see who it might be. He found that two men had come after him, both of whom stopped as he turned around. They were only about a rod distant, and Fernando could see that they were both of them rough-looking fellows, but the circumstance caused him no uneasiness, though he instinctively cleared the knot of his sword-hilt, as he turned his steps further on towards the vineyards.

Again the two strangers started onward, and ere long one of them came up with our hero.

"Good evening, senor," said he, in a voice which was pleasant enough, but which bespoke the rough, uncultivated man.

Fernando returned the salutation, and for nearly a minute the stranger kept along by his side without speaking further.

"Hope you wont think me intruding, senor?" he at length continued, gazing rather sharply into the young man's face.

"That depends upon circumstances," laconically returned Fernando.

"Of course; but if you are the man I take you for, I have something to tell, which it might be for your interest to know."

"And who do you take me for?"

"Fernando Gonzales."

"Then speak on."

"But are you the man?"

"You have just spoken my name, and I know of none other in Avila who can claim it."

"Let us get out of earshot from this man behind us, for what I have to tell you should not be given to other ears."

"Is he not a companion of yours?" asked Fernando, not at all liking the turn affairs were taking.

"O, I know him, and he came down to the bridge with me, but that's all. He knows nothing about my business with you."

"You can speak now without any danger of being heard."

"I'd rather get a little further away."

Fernando began to mistrust that there was some underhanded game in all this, though he had no means of divining what it might be. The stranger appeared to be perfectly at ease, betraying no signs of any foul purpose, but yet he was one of those whom an honest man would hardly have been likely to have chosen for a companion; and, moreover, his voice and manner belonged to one who could hold no very exalted ideas of moral right.

These thoughts passed rapidly through Fernando's mind, and as the suspicion became

awakened he stopped and turned full upon his companion.

"I shall stop here," he said, "till you reveal to me your business."

"Only a little further on, senor."

"Not another step."

"Why, what sort of an idea have you got? Hope you don't think I'm deceiving you?"

"No matter what I think. If, as you say, you have anything to reveal, you have an opportunity to do so now."

"Well," returned the stranger, seeming to meditate upon what course he should pursue; "I don't know but that I may as well tell you here as anywhere."

As he spoke, he cast a furtive glance around towards the man who had been following them. Said individual was about two rods distant, and seemed to be regarding the movements of our hero with considerable interest, for though his countenance could not be seen, yet his manner was sufficiently plain. He had also stopped, and was humming a low tone to himself.

"You have been lately in Madrid?" said the stranger.

"Yes," returned Fernando.

"And you saw the king there?"

"Yes."

"Did he speak to you about—Ha! what's that?"

As the speaker uttered this ejaculation, he pointed with his finger back towards the bridge. Fernando instantly turned in the same direction, but he saw nothing unusual, and was upon the point of turning back again, when he received a blow upon the side of the neck that felled him to the earth. It did not immediately render him insensible, though it had completely paralyzed his physical powers.

"I've fixed him," exclaimed the ruffian, as the other man came up.

"So you have, but you haven't finished him."

"We'll do that soon enough. My dagger'll make short work of him. Come, let's lug him off to the river."

The two villains laid hold upon Fernando

and lifted him from the ground. He had no power to resist, but he groaned in agony, and endeavored to speak; he could make no articulate sound, however, though he was fully sensible of his exact position. They soon reached the river's bank, where they laid their burden again upon the ground, and then they held a short consultation.

"We'd better get him into the water before we stab him," said one, "and then the blood wont be seen."

"Yes," replied the other, "and we must sink him, too. The water's deep under the bridge."

At this point, Fernando's senses began to fail him. His head swam, the pain in the neck settled into a sort of numbness, and gradually all became dark. He had a faint idea of being lifted up again, and then he seemed suddenly to fall, but he realized nothing further.

When the young man came to himself, it was broad daylight, and he found himself in a small room, upon a bed, and by his side stood a man who looked like a physician.

"Where am I?" feebly asked Fernando, as soon as he had begun to collect his scattered senses.

"You are safe," returned the physician; for such he was; "but you will have to remain quiet for a day or two."

The youth felt extremely weak, and the bandage upon his arm showed that he had been bled, but ere he had an opportunity to ask the doctor further questions, the door of the room was opened and the little landlord entered. He looked much pleased as he found that Fernando had come to his senses, and stepping to the side of the bed, he remarked:

"You fell in with rather bad company last night, Senor Gonzales?"

"I did indeed," returned the youth, seeming to be reaching back after the events of the preceding evening.

He gazed into the face of his kind host for several moments without speaking, but at length he continued:

"How is it that I find myself alive? The last thing I can remember is, that the assassins had dragged me to the river and were going to stab me."

"Ay, and they would have stabbed you, too, had they have been left to themselves a minute longer."

"And how was I saved?"

"I'll tell you," answered the host. "Those two men that attempted to kill you, I had seen skulking about here half of the afternoon, and when you went out, I saw that they followed you. It was sometime before I thought of any danger to you, but when I came to reflect upon the circumstance, I at once made up my mind that the villains had followed you for no good purpose. I knew them to be villains of the darkest dye, and I knew, too, that if they could make a dollar by the operation, they would as lief murder you as not. I thought it quite likely that you might have enemies in Avila, and feeling almost assured that there was a plan on foot for your injury, I got a couple of my men and started off after you. We hastened down to the bridge, and had just crossed when we saw the scamps down by the edge of the river just below us. They had you in their arms, and seemed to be carrying you further beneath the bridge, but the moment they saw us rushing towards them, they dropped you and made off as fast as their legs would carry them. We found you entirely insensible, though we saw at once that you were alive, and I had you brought here. The doctor was called, and he at once pronounced you in no very great danger."

"Do you know the villains?" asked the physician.

"Yes, I know them by sight."

"Then we may have them arrested."

"I rather think not, for they wont be likely to remain about here. In all probability they'll join some of the banditti among the mountains."

"It seems as though some one must have hired them to kill me," said Fernando.

"Of course," returned the host.

"And yet I see not who it could have been," continued the youth.

"Is there no one in Avila who has occasion to desire your removal?"

A look of intelligence lit up the features of Fernando, as the host asked this last question, and for several moments his mind was busy with the thoughts thus called up.

"Yes, yes," he at length answered, "there are two, at least, in the city who have reason to dread my presence.

"And who are they?"

"Don Juan Radigo and Don Gomez d'Acosta."

"Ah, then I think I can guess pretty near the truth. I'll warrant you that Radigo is at the bottom of it, though I must say that I should hardly have given him credit for decision enough to plan such a movement."

"I am afraid that we shall be able to prove nothing," said Fernando.

He spoke in a weak tone, and his head seemed to be much pained.

"No, it can't be very easily proved, I know," said the host; "but nevertheless you can watch him narrowly, and the truth may yet come to light."

The young man groaned with the pain about his neck and head, and the physician advised that he should remain quiet for the present, but at the same time assuring him that in a day or two he would be entirely recovered.

Shortly afterwards, Fernando was left alone, and he began to study upon the foul attempt that had been made against him. He knew pretty nearly from whence that attempt had come, but he mistrusted not that Donna Anita de Tavora had instigated the whole; and perhaps 'twas well that he did not, or he might have done that which would have tended to destroy his own interests.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### HOMELESS.

ON the second day after Fernando's accident, or, rather, after his being so basely assaulted, he was not only able to walk out, but he had regained most of his wonted strength. He had eaten his supper and had retired to his room, when he was waited upon by his landlord, who informed him that some one below wished to speak with him.

"It's no one that I need be afraid of, is it?" the young man asked, with a smile.

"O, no. It's a young monk."

"Then why will you not have the kindness to show him right up here?"

"I will."

In a few moments after the host had disappeared Fernando's eyes were greeted by the appearance of a monkish robe that covered a very small and delicate form, and one that trembled violently, too. The visitor sank into a seat, and in a moment more as the robe fell back, our hero found himself face to face with Theresa de Tavora!

"Angels of mercy! what means this?" exclaimed Fernando, as he started forward and grasped the fair girl by the hand.

She was pale as marble, and though she had been lately weeping, yet she was now past that, and her features were set in the mould of a firm determination. She trembled, but 'twas with fierce excitement.

"Fernando," she replied, in agonizing accents, "I have fled from my native roof."

"Fled!" iterated the youth, astounded.

"Yes, Fernando, I have fled from the house of my birth, and I return not there again. I cannot stand it longer, indeed I cannot. The torture of my situation there is beyond human endurance, and every hour adds only to my sufferings. I have not only been stripped of my all, of my birthright, but I am to be sold into a still worse fate, and made utterly, hopelessly miserable for life. My wicked step-mother suffers no opportunity to pass without plunging her poisoned daggers into my bosom—she insults the memory of my sainted mother—she tramples upon every holy thought and feeling, and spurns upon me as though I were a dog. If I remain there, a few more days will see me sacrificed to Radigo, and my earthly doom thus sealed forever!"



"But where, where will you go?" asked Fernando, still retaining Theresa's hand, and gazing earnestly into her face.

"Anywhere. It matters but little to me now. My goal is the grave, and how I reach it makes but little difference. If I die by the roadside, or perish among the mountains, I shall be far happier than now. I have come to bid you farewell! and when I am gone I—I—"

The poor girl's bosom heaved, and she burst into tears. Her strength was not equal to the task of calmly parting from him whom she so fondly loved.

"You shall not flee from Avila, dearest Theresa," exclaimed Fernando; "for there may be peace for you here yet."

"Alas! Fernando, 'tis too late. I have resolved upon my course, and I must follow it out."

"No, no, it is not yet too late. The Moor may yet help you."

"But where is he?"

"He has gone to Madrid. I saw him on the very night that I met you in the garden, and I do really believe that he has the power to assist you. I know not why it is, Theresa, but I have a strange confidence in that remarkable man; so much so, that I am resolved to trust him implicitly."

Theresa laid her aching head upon her lover's bosom, and for a long time she remained in silence. At length she looked up. Her tears had ceased flowing, her heart beat more calmly, but that same mournful, agonized look of resigned determination rested upon her countenance.

"I must go," she said. "Whatever may be the power that the Moor possesses, he cannot break the chains that bind my fate to my step-mother's will. She will still rule me, and still will she poison my life. I must go."

"Then I go with you."

"No, no, Fernando. You have wealth now, and in Avila you may be safe and happy. If you follow me you will have to give up all that you have gained, and—"

"Stop, stop," hastily interrupted Fernando.

"You know not what you are saying. What,

think you, is gold compared with the love I bear for thee?" Even though you seek the ends of the earth, I shall bear you company. But you shall not go yet. We will wait, at least, till the Moor returns, and then, if he cannot help you, we will leave Castile forever."

"But I shall be discovered, if I remain in the city," said Theresa, in a thoughtful mood.

"No, you will not. In three days, at the farthest, the Moor will be here, and during that time you can remain here in safety."

"In three days!" repeated the poor girl with a shudder. "And at the end of those three days, if I am found, I am to be married to that miserable debauchee."

"You shall not be found. The host is a good, kind-hearted man, and I know he will afford you the asylum you need. They will not think of looking for you here."

"They will look for me everywhere. O, I am afraid to remain."

"Courage, courage, Theresa. Do not throw away the only chance you have for your own happiness and for mine. Let us once more see the Moor, and then, if he fails, we will both go. Do not thwart me in this. Say, dearest, that you will remain?"

Again Theresa bowed her head in deep thought. There was a painful struggle in her bosom, and she clasped her hand on her brow.

"I will stay," she at length murmured. "I will stay, and my trust shall be in God. He will not forsake me."

"No, nor will I," passionately exclaimed Fernando, as he clasped Theresa to his bosom. "I thank thee for that promise, and in return I will stand by you even unto death. Our host shall not know who you are, only that you are a friend of mine, and I know he will afford us every facility we need."

"Though I agree to this thing, yet I cannot feel safe. They will find me, I'm sure they will."

"Let us hope not," said Fernando, in a persuasive tone. "But, at all events, there is one thing of which we may feel assured. You will be safer here than you would be travelling unprotected through the country."

"My sex would protect me."

"Not always—especially when wearing such beauty as yours; and then, again, you would be more likely to fall into the hands of those who may be sent in search of me."

"No, Fernando, I think not. Before my step-mother would think I had really fled from the city, I could reach the convent of Saint Magdalen, and once beneath the roof of the kind, old abbess, I should be safe. But I will stay."

"Ay, and you shall be safe here."

Theresa looked up and tried to smile, but she could not do it, though she did look grateful, and more calm than before. She evidently suffered too much from the fear of being taken by Donna Anita, to appear happy or contented, but yet she tried to persuade herself that she might be safe.

Fernando left Theresa for a few moments, and sought the landlord.

"My kind host," said he, having first assured himself that no one was listening; "I have a favor to ask of you."

"Anything in my power I will do," returned

"That person whom you conducted to my room a short time since, is a young girl; and I would afford her shelter here for a few days."

The host was all astonishment.

"Of course you will not refuse me?"

"She is not fleeing from the Inquisition?" said the landlord.

"O, no, she seeks safety from the aims of one who would force her to marry Don Juan Radigo."

"Then, by all the calendared saints," exclaimed the little man, bringing his fist most emphatically down upon the counter, "she shall have the best protection my poor house can afford. Marry that graceless scamp! No, I'll lock out my best customers before they shall find her. I don't want to know what her name is, neither do I want to see her, and then I shan't have to tell any falsehoods if I am questioned. There is a small back chamber that will just suit her, and she shall have it in wel-

"I thank you most heartily," returned Fernando; "and you shall be well rewarded for your kindness."

"Don't speak to me about reward, senor; I'll look out that I lose nothing by helping a fellow-creature in distress."

"And I, too, will look out that you lose nothing," said Fernando, as he turned away.

He rejoined Theresa, and informed her of his success.

"And now," said he, "you may feel perfectly safe. As soon as the Moor returns to Avila, he will call at once upon me, and from the result of his efforts we can shape our future course. You will not despair, dearest?"

"No."

That monosyllable was spoken in a faint, fluttering voice, and Fernando could not but see that she felt not what she spoke.

"Abu Malec can help you, I am sure of it."

"Perhaps he can, and I pray to God that he may; but, alas! I see not how he is to do it. Donna Anita is all-powerful now."

"Wrong was never so powerful that it could not be overcome," said the young man.

"That may be," returned Theresa, "for there is one thing that is sure, sooner or later, to conquer it."

"And what is that, dearest?"

"Death!"

Fernando gazed sadly into the fair girl's face, and as he read the deep dejection which rested there, he knew that it would be of no use to urge her further.

"Come," he said, "it is getting late, and I will show you to your room."

As he spoke, he led Theresa out into the narrow entry, and passed on to the apartment that the host had designated. It was a small room, in the back part of the building, the door of which was heavy, and armed with a stout lock.

"There, Theresa, you will be safe here, and I would have you sleep in peace. I will see you on the morrow."

"On the morrow?" repeated the orphan. "Ah, Fernando, we know not what the morrow may bring forth. We may never meet again beneath this roof!"

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### THE MONK'S MISSION.

**E**RE yet the light of day had fairly broken up the darkness, the Tavora palace was the scene of a most intense excitement. Donna Anita was almost frantic with rage and disappointment, and already had she summoned Father Raymond to her assistance, and at the moment when we enter the building, the burly monk was waddling into the drawing-room.

"A good morning to thee, lovely senora."

"I greet thee the same, good father."

"Now what is this affair that has called me thus early from the sweetest sleep that mortal ever enjoyed? In faith, your messenger dragged me from my cot without mercy, and from his manner I knew not but you were dying."

"Theresa has fled!"

The widow could only command speech enough for that single sentence.

"Really fled?" uttered the monk, in that tone of stolidity from which he seldom departed.

"Yes. She went last evening."

"Then it strikes me that you are well rid of her."

"How! Rid of her?" exclaimed Donna

Anita, apparently shocked by the manner of her companion.

"Yes, you are well rid of her. She was nothing here but a source of annoyance, and I think you will be better off without her. If she's gone, then let her go."

"But I will not let her go. Why, you are crazy, monk. Let her loose in Castile to prate of her disinheritance? No, I must have her back again."

"I tell thee, Donna Anita, the girl can do you no harm. She can tell of nothing that our laws could contradict."

"She can tell a thousand things that I would not have her tell. You must find her for me."

"That might be a difficult thing. Perhaps she's run off with that young Gonzales."

Anita started and turned away her head as the monk pronounced that name. For several moments she seemed busy with something outside of the window.

"Don't you think such a thing very likely?" continued the monk, apparently not noticing the perturbation of the lady.

"I hardly know; but I think the young

man of whom you speak, left the city three days ago. You haven't seen him since then, have you?"

She spoke this in an eager tone, and she seemed also to hang with strange earnestness upon the answer.

"No, I haven't seen him since he came back from Madrid."

"And have you heard of him?"

"Only what you have spoken."

Donna Anita breathed more freely. She felt sure that Radigo had kept his promise, and that Fernando was no longer an inhabitant of earth.

"Father," she said, in an argumentative manner, "all people in Spain do not feel as you and I feel. The girl will find plenty of sympathizers, and if she chooses to tell the tale of her wrongs—"

"Imaginary wrongs," interrupted the monk, with a look of pious care.

"No, no," returned Anita, with a frankness of truth that her companion did not expect; "she has been wronged, and hence I fear her. We may deceive the world, but we cannot deceive ourselves. You may pass among men for a devout and exemplary monk, but you know full well that such an idea would never find a home in your own bosom."

"Really, you are inclined to be facetious," returned the holy father, with an attempt at good nature, but yet wincing beneath the lady's remarks.

"Nay, father, not facetious, but truthful. You know how we obtained the instrument that has placed me in the possession of this vast property, and you know whether it would stand a very close public scrutiny. Now let us understand each other. I am resolved upon the course I will pursue, and were it even necessary to give Theresa over to the Inquisition as a heretic, I would not fail to make out a fatal proof against her, and I know that you would help me."

"I help you?"

"A thousand pistoles would convince you of the necessity of the thing."

"I declare, senora, you have a winning way about you."

The fat monk gave a low chuckle as he said this, as though he saw the glittering gold already in his grasp.

"Now," continued Anita, "we will come to the point. If Theresa is once married to Radigo she can do us no harm, for then she becomes a fixture in a home of her own. That marriage shall take place, you shall perform the ceremony, and you shall be paid for it; but first we've got to find her."

"If she hasn't gone with young Gonzales, perhaps I can hunt her up."

"I can assure you that she has not," asserted Donna Anita.

"Then I'll try."

There was a longing, expectant look upon the monk's countenance as he spoke, and he seemed diving into a reflection of his own.

"If you will bring Theresa to this place between now and to-morrow night, I will give you five hundred dollars."

Father Raymond's eyes sparkled with delight, and he pledged himself to perform the task.

"That five hundred is a strong argument, isn't it?" said Anita, with a curious smile.

"O, I didn't need that as any kind of an inducement for myself," quickly returned the monk, with a prodigious show of disinterested willingness; "but then you know, I can now engage the services of some of the rest of our fraternity."

Of course, Donna Anita knew how much of this to believe, though she expressed no opinion touching it to her companion, and after giving a few directions regarding the necessary secrecy of the affair, she dismissed the monk upon his mission.

Father Raymond's first movement was towards the Franciscan cemetery, but he found nothing there, and he set himself down upon a new-made grave to think. He had no idea of hiring any one to help him, and for this decision he had two reasons. First, he wanted all the money to himself, and, second, he did not want to make the affair too public; for though

he cared little in so far as the right of the thing was concerned, yet he had a little fear that all was not going to end so smoothly as Donna Anita had pictured.

He was thus meditating when he was suddenly called back to a sense of his situation by the voice of a new-comer. He looked up and saw one of the Franciscans.

"You are out early this morning?"

"I like the morning air," said Father Raymond.

"Ha, ha, ha, I gave you credit for being a hearty sleeper," said the other.

"No, I've reformed."

"Then the Lord have mercy on those who need reformation."

The monk felt like getting angry at this piece of sarcasm, but ere he had opportunity the Franciscan continued:

"Perhaps it was you who was gliding about here last evening, save that then you looked *slightly* less in rotundity of person than you do now."

The monk was upon the point of returning some light answer, when a lucky thought flashed upon him.

"Last evening, said you?"

"Yes."

"Somebody visiting the grave of a friend, perhaps?"

"Very likely."

"Was it a man?"

"Really, I couldn't say. 'Twas too dark; but whoever it was, he seemed very much in a hurry to get off."

"Ah, then it was a man," said Father Raymond, in a disappointed tone.

"It might have been a woman."

"I'll tell you why I ask," said the monk, with a sudden show of frankness. "Since the death of Don Pedro de Tavora, his daughter, Theresa, has been a little deranged at times, and last night she wandered off and has not since been heard of. Her step-mother is almost frantic with fear lest some ill should befall her, and perhaps the person to whom you allude may have been she. She often comes here to visit

the grave of her own mother—Donna Madaline."

"Ha, now I think of it," returned the Franciscan, "that may have been the girl to whom you allude, for she came directly from yonder cypress where Madaline's grave is, and then glided swiftly away."

"And what direction did she take?"

"To the southward."

"I trust in God that no ill may befall her," uttered the monk, with well-assumed solicitude.

"So do I," added the Franciscan, "for I have often seen her here in this place, and she always looked so sad and melancholy, that I have learned to love her for the gentle resignation she always manifested. She must have been very unhappy long before her father's death."

This was carrying matters a little too far for the monk, and making an excuse for his sudden departure, he turned away from the Franciscan and passed out into the street. He kept on in the direction pointed out by his informant, and he had no doubt but that, if the person in question was really Theresa, he might gain some further clue of her.

He was approaching the small inn where we left the young orphan, when his attention was arrested by the appearance of a little girl who was chasing away through the garden in pursuit of a scarf that was being driven along by the wind. There was something so particularly comical in the eagerness of the child, that the monk could not withstand the temptation to see the end of the chase. Now the child would rush upon the scarf, which had become rolled into a light, puffy ball, and a cry of disappointment broke forth as the wind snatched it away. Then, with another run, she would attempt to stop it with her foot, but she only trod upon the bare ground, while the object of her design was most provokingly fleeing off ahead.

At length the wicked scarf brought up against a rose-bush, and the child captured it. Her long chase had brought her near to the road, so she clambered over the fence, and soon came up to the spot where the monk was still stand-

ing. The instant the old man's eye fell upon the silken scarf he seemed to recognize it, for he stepped quickly forward to intercept the child.

"You caught it at last, my child," he said, with a kind smile.

"Yes, father," returned she, looking timidly up.

"How did you lose your scarf in the first place?"

"It flew out of the window. But it isn't mine."

"Ah, whose is it?"

"It belongs to a young lady—"

"The one that came last night, I suppose?" familiarly interrupted the monk.

"Yes, father," innocently returned the child.

"This is fortunate. The young lady sent for me to attend her. Are you going directly to her room?"

"Yes, father."

"Then you can show me the way."

The child had but one opinion concerning the monks, and her young mind had never comprehended that they could deceive, so she thoughtlessly led the way to the inn, where she passed through the narrow entry without attracting the attention of those who were in the bar-room. Then she ascended the stairs beyond, and at the end of the upper passage she waited for her lumbering follower.

"Is this the lady's room?" asked the monk, pointing to the door just ahead.

"Yes, father."

"Then let me go in first, and when I come out you may do your errand."

Whether the child mistrusted anything or not, she dared not disobey the holy man's order, so she reluctantly withdrew.

Father Raymond placed his hand upon the latch—the door moved slowly open, and on the next moment he was in the presence of Theresa. The poor girl gave one long, absorbing gaze into the face of the intruder, and then, with a low cry of pain, she sank into a seat.

"My child," said the monk, in a soft, hypocritical tone; "your poor step-mother is over-

come by fear on your account. You did wrong to leave your home without letting her know where you were going."

"Don't blacken your soul by lying more," exclaimed Theresa, starting up from her seat, and speaking like one who had nothing to lose by expressing her honest opinions. "To those who know you not you may cast your hypocrisy, but I know you too well. I have left the home of my childhood never again to return to it, and and so you can tell Donna Anita."

"No, no," returned the monk, endeavoring to smother the anger he felt, "I shall convey no such message. I intend that you shall return with me."

"Never, never! I go not back again."

The monk gazed upon the young girl with a sensation of peculiar awe. He felt no sympathy—that was beyond his nature—but he experienced a sort of admiration for the transcendent beauty of the orphan, which even his vows did not prevent him from appreciating.

"You must go with me," he at length said; "for I have promised to take you home. You must be aware that there is no use in your resisting?"

"Home! O, do not profane that sacred name by applying it to such a place as that from which I have fled. Let me go—let me possess but my liberty, and I will trouble my step-mother no more. She is welcome to all she has robbed me of—my home, my peace, my friends, and my birthright, but I cannot go back to give her my soul again for the torture."

"You speak foolishly, child. 'Tis your own stubborn will that has caused you to suffer. If you would but comply with the wishes of your step-mother, you—"

"Out, out! base man. Your falsehood is as black as the heart that begets it."

"Then I'll speak no more," uttered the monk, in a hissing tone. "Now go with me to your home?"

"No, I'll remain here."

"You will go with me! Now will you do it quietly, or shall I call in aid?"

Theresa began to reflect, and a single mo-

ment's reflection showed her that resistance would be useless. She knew that the law was against her, that none would dare to interfere in her behalf, and that her enemies were too powerful in their stronghold to be overcome. These thoughts, as they came freezing over her soul, disarmed her of the moral power that had sustained her, and she sank back upon her seat and covered her face with her hands.

"Will you go?" asked the monk.

"O, I cannot."

"Then I will go and procure help, and in the meantime the place shall be watched, for go you must."

"Drag me not away like a dog. I know the power that compasses me, monk, and I know that I must bow to it. I will follow you, and may God be with me."

"You are wise, my child."

"Speak not, but lead me on my way. I can better bear to see you than to hear your voice."

The monk passed out from the room and in

the passage he met the child, but instead of noticing him she sprang towards Theresa.

"Here is your scarf, senorita."

The orphan thanked the little girl, and placed a piece of silver in her hand.

"The gentleman will be here to see you in a little while—the one that's been sick. He's eating breakfast now."

"Tell him that I have gone to my home. Tell him that they sent for me, and I could not help it."

"But are they going to hurt you? O, don't cry, dear senorita. I wouldn't go with the naughty folks. Stay here, and we'll be kind to you."

Theresa caught the prattling child in her arms and imprinted a kiss upon her fair brow. She would have spoken, but she could not, and turning quickly away from the innocent sympathizer, she hid her face in the folds of her mantle, and followed the monk back to her prison, as follows the victim to the sacrifice!

## CHAPTER XIX.

### THE ROADSIDE ENCOUNTER.

STARTING back in horror, "Gone!" cried Fernando, "gone!"

"Yes, senor," returned the landlord's little daughter. "And she cried, too, when she went away."

"Who came for her?"

"It was a great naughty monk."

"Then heaven itself is against us!"

"Does heaven make folks bad, and then send them after poor girls?" asked the child, with untutored simplicity.

"No, no, I was wrong."

Fernando gazed mournfully into the face of the little girl.

"Surely, senor," she said, with much earnestness, "there can't be folks wicked enough to hurt the dear lady. She was so good, so kind, and she looked so sad and unhappy."

"There are a great many wicked folks in this world, and some of them are even wicked enough for that."

"O, senor, then why don't you go and take her away from them?" exclaimed the child, with sparkling eyes. "I would if I were a man."

"God bless you, my sweet child," ejaculated the young man. "Always preserve that noble, generous heart, and you will be a gem among the children of earth."

Fernando turned from the inn and stopped out into the road. He cared little which way he took, so long as he was left to his own reflections. He had regained most of his strength, and as the fresh air lent its influence to invigorate his system, he concluded to saddle his faithful horse, and take a jaunt out of the city, for he had determined to await the coming of the Moor, before he attempted aught towards the release of Theresa.

The noble steed evinced his joy in an hundred ways as he once more felt his master upon his back, and with a proud step he ambled off towards the mountain road to the southward. For the distance of a mile or more, Fernando allowed his horse to trot along as he chose, but at length he drew in the rein and came down to a slow walk. He had reached a secluded spot, where one of the Carpentani mountains arose to the sight, the road sweeping around its base, while away to the left, upon a gentle slope,

stretched long groves of fruit trees and vineyards. It was a quiet place for the exercise of thought, and Fernando had begun to calm somewhat the turbulence of his emotions, when he heard the rattling of horses' hoofs behind him. He turned in his saddle and saw two young men just coming in sight around the curve of the road, and as he wished to let them pass without remark, he drew his own horse out upon the roadside where he continued to go slowly onward.

The approaching horsemen, however, seemed not inclined to take the hint thus thrown out, for when they came up with our hero they reined in their steeds.

"A fine morning, senor," said one of them, at the same time bending upon Fernando a searching look.

Fernando politely returned the salutation, and would then have passed on, but the first speaker interrupted him.

"Do I not speak with Fernando Gonzales?"

"Yes," returned our hero with a start.

"And you are Gomez d'Acosta?"

"Right, by the saints," returned d'Acosta; "and this is our mutual friend, Don Juan Radigo."

The foppish young rake bowed daintily as he was thus introduced, and Fernando, whose mind was by no means in a most pleasant frame concerning this same Don Juan, coldly replied:

"Very well, gentlemen; when I desire your particular acquaintance, I will endeavor to cultivate it, but until that time I must bid you both—  
—good morning."

D'Acosta and Radigo exchanged quick glances, and ere Fernando had started, the former said:

"Not quite so quickly, Senor Gonzales. I have accompanied my friend out here on purpose to have a meeting with you, and surely we cannot forego the pleasure now."

There was a peculiar tinge in the manner and tone of this remark that sounded rather significant to our hero, and while a quick flush came to his cheek, he replied:

"I know of no business between us, senor, and if you are fortunate enough to hold such

knowledge, then it belongs to you to proceed; and you will be expeditious, too, for I have little time to waste."

"If I understand rightly, senor," said Don Juan, with a show of bravery, "you lay some claims to the hand of Donna Theresa de Tavora?"

"You can understand what you please."

Fernando began to feel angry as he said this.

"And I please to understand from your own lips the truth or falsity of what I have understood," continued Radigo.

"You will understand nothing from me, save that it is none of your business."

"Do you mean to insult me?"

"Construe it as you please."

"Then I shall construe it into an insult direct," said Radigo, bristling up and drawing nearer to his companion. "The lady in question is under my especial protection, and I shall hold myself responsible that her fair fame does not suffer from your—"

"Hold, senor!" exclaimed Fernando, trembling at every joint with fierce passion; "dare not to profane that name further. I know you as well as you know yourself. Do you know of a certain affair that came off near the foot-bridge, a night or two since?"

The young man fixed a keen glance upon Radigo as he asked this question, and the villain quailed before it, as he would have done before the look of an executioner. Fernando needed no more to convince him of the truth of his suspicions, and with a scornful expression he added:

"Now take yourselves out of my presence. I have no time to answer your questions, nor do I desire to ask any of you."

"But you *must* answer us," interposed d'Acosta. "We have sought you for an especial purpose, and we are not to be turned empty away."

"And what have *you* to say?" quickly asked our hero.

"I have this much: The death of Don Pedro has left Donna Anita under the protection of her friends, and I, as one of those friends, feel

called upon to protect her from your machinations. There is no need that I should explain to you the nature of your unwarrantable intrusion upon the peace of the unfortunate widow, but if you know where your own safety is concerned, you will be careful how you intrude upon her further."

Fernando Gonzales began to see through the object of the two men. He felt sure that they had come out to waylay him, and excite him to give them provocation for a quarrel. He knew that Don Juan was an arrant coward, but d'Acosta had the name of being a daring, reckless fellow, and he had even "killed his man" in an "affair of honor." But our hero feared them not, and though naturally of a quiet and gentle disposition, yet there was that spark of Castilian pride in his bosom that could not slumber under an open and foul wrong.

"Has Donna Anita commissioned you to seek this interview?" he asked, at the same time drawing his rein tighter within his left hand, and resting the other upon the pommel of his saddle.

"An honorable man does not need that a lady should *request* him to protect her," answered d'Acosta.

"And a *true* man would not meddle with such a base affair as is that which has been consummated within the walls of the lady's dwelling to whom you allude," retorted Fernando, in a proud tone.

"Can you explain that remark?"

D'Acosta turned red in the face, and the words came hissing forth from between his clenched teeth.

"Yes," exclaimed Fernando. "The explanation shall be yours, for I have no desire to leave you in the dark. I allude to the infamous plot by which Donna Theresa has been robbed of her birthright, and in which, if I mistake not, you have had a hand. —Ha! do you seek your sword? Hear me through first. I know well enough the advantage you gain in marrying one who is heiress to the titles of Osma, and I know, too, whence flows your extreme sympathy for Donna Anita. But for all

this I care little when compared with the other fate that has been reserved for the unprotected orphan." The speaker fixed a withering look upon Don Juan, and pointing with his finger in the same direction, he continued:

"You would even have her wed with yonder worthless popinjay!"

There never was a coward so despicable, but that he might be made frantic with anger and lose himself in the passion. So even Radigo, who would have run like a child before an attack, now became so utterly blinded, that he fairly forgot his natural instinct of self-preservation, and drawing his sword he spurred madly upon our hero.

Fernando's own sword sprang from its scabbard, but before the point of Don Juan's weapon reached him, his quick-witted horse had leaped nimbly on one side, while the steed of his adversary brought up against the opposite wall.

"Beware how you try that again," exclaimed Fernando, as he whirled his horse about.

Don Juan took no notice of the warning; but raising his sword he rushed on again. Our hero could hardly avoid a smile as he saw the position in which the scamp had placed himself, for his whole bosom was open to the least lunge that might be made against it, while his weapon was raised as though it had been a heavy club. Radigo passed upon Fernando's right hand. It required but a slight movement to turn aside the intended blow, and then, with a quick, powerful motion, our hero brought the pommel of his sword with such force upon the side of his enemy's head, that the latter tumbled from his horse and lay sprawling upon the green-sward.

"That was a niggardly blow, villain," exclaimed d'Acosta, who had already unsheathed his own blade.

"Be that as it may," contemptuously returned Fernando; "I would not have the brightness of my sword dimmed by his craven blood. He will soon get over his skull-thump."

"Fernando Gonzales," said d'Acosta, in a



tone of menacing calmness, "you have basely insulted me. Now are you willing to grant me the satisfaction I have the right to claim?"

"You have the satisfaction already of knowing my opinion. What can you want further?"

"The satisfaction of knowing that you will express such opinions no more," hotly returned d'Acosta. "Do you understand me?"

"I understand what you say, and if you would not hear my opinions again, then keep out of my way."

"I'll preclude the necessity of that," exclaimed d'Acosta, "for I intend to put you out of the way. Now if you be a man, defend yourself. I would not murder you, nor yet can both of us live."

"Hold," cried Fernando. "I know the cause of complaint you have against me, and I know that your magnanimity is not all wasted upon Donna Anita. You have become possessed of the fact that through me you are to lose your fief upon my family estates, and hence you seek my death. I can read your designs, and I know you for just what you are. This present attempt is as base as it is cowardly, for I verily believe that you knew I was still suffering from the effects—"

"Cease your prating, coward!" shouted d'Acosta, placing his sword at a favorite word, and urging his horse forward. "Your death be upon your own head."

Fernando saw that d'Acosta's mind was made up, and that he must either flee or defend himself. The excitement he had undergone had already begun to sharpen the lurking pain in his head, and he felt that he was not able to cope with the man before him, but he had now no choice, and reining up his horse, he took the point of his adversary's weapon upon the centre of his blade and turned it off. D'Acosta instantly gathered himself up, but, instead of attempting to make another passing blow, he approached Fernando directly in front for a hand-to-hand conflict.

"Now, here's have at you," he cried.

"Coward!" muttered our hero.

"You shall eat that word!"

Fernando got a scratch upon his left arm, and under its influence he gave the rein an involuntary check. His horse ambled off sideways, but at a word from his master he quickly came to a stand, and d'Acosta, literally boiling over with eager wrath, raised his sword and spurred on; but just as he was playing for a sure thrust, a sharp cry of pain arrested his arm, and on looking down he found that Don Juan had somewhat revived, and that his own horse had one foot upon the fallen man's hand.

On the instant, Fernando saw his advantage, and feeling that it might be his only chance for safety, he resolved to profit by it. When his opponent started back from the danger he was threatening Don Juan, he left his sword unguardedly pointing over his horse's head, and with one blow Fernando knocked it from his grasp.

"Stop! stop!" shouted our hero, as he noticed that d'Acosta was preparing to slip from his saddle. "By Saint Peter, if you move to dismount, I'll run you through. This is an affair of your own seeking, and you have acted most basely throughout. I am weak from recent sickness, and I can fight no more, but you are in my power now. You have taken every advantage of me, and now it's my turn."

D'Acosta hesitated, for he saw that young Gonzales meant just what he said, and he attempted to back his horse out of the way, but whatever may have been his plans they were quickly frustrated, for Fernando, under the impulse of an idea that had just entered his mind, drew back his sword and plunged it into the flank of his enemy's steed, and then with the flat of the blade he brought down a blow upon the animal's rump. The horse reared and plunged for a moment beneath the pain of the wound, and then, totally regardless of his rider's efforts, he dashed furiously off to the southward.

Fernando slipped out of his saddle, and picked up both the swords that had been dropped.

"Don't kill me! for mercy sake, don't!" shrieked Don Juan, who was just able to raise himself upon his elbow.

"Pitiful scoundrel," returned Fernando, spurning at him with his foot; "I should scorn the act of spitting on so helpless an animal as yourself. When your companion returns he may help you home, and if either of you want

your swords, you can call for them at the inn by the foot-bridge."

As our hero thus spoke, he remounted his horse and turned back towards the city, determined that, until his affairs were settled, he would be more careful of himself.

## CHAPTER XX.

THE LEASH IS DRAWN TIGHTER.

BELIEVE the fellow's got a charmed life, 'pon my honor," said Don Juan Radigo, in the presence of Donna Anita and Don Gomez d'Acosta. "The king saves him from the stake, some power of darkness saves him from two powerful assassins, and I verily believe, Satan himself saved him from us. I faith, my head spins now with that blow he gave me."

"Never mind," muttered d'Acosta, with a flush of mortification, "let him go. He will have his family estates now, but I'll take good care that the revenues are collected in advance ere I deliver them up."

"The puppy! I wish we'd settled him. Egad, I've a great notion to call him out on my own account."

D'Acosta could not but smile at this piece of bravado; but he did not care to wound his timid friend's feelings by expressing his candid opinion, so he kept silent.

Donna Anita looked downcast and troubled, and a single look at her countenance would have convinced a beholder that she liked not the turn things were taking. In the first place, she had a strange fear of Fernando Gonzales, for she saw that fortune favored him in every manner; and she had also learned, by overhearing some remarks that fell between old Beatrice and her step-daughter, that the Moor was working against her. Now she had only

seen this Moor at her husband's bedside, but even that interview had been sufficient to strike terror to her soul; for she knew that he had possessed some wonderful power over Don Pedro, and perhaps that power might extend over the present affairs of the household. In short, clouds seemed to be gathering in every quarter, but she tried to shake off the chilly dread that had seized her, and roll back the gathering storm.

"Don Gomez," she said, bringing one of her ever-ready smiles to her face; "go, seek Isabel. She would like to see you."

"Certainly," returned the young man, and with a slight bow he left the apartment.

"Now, Don Juan," continued Anita, with a serious look, "our business must be expedited. You must be married to-night."

"So soon?" uttered Radigo, in surprise.

"Yes, there's no time to be lost; and when you are once married, Theresa's dowry shall be placed in your hands."

"But why in such a hurry?"

"Simply because to-morrow may be too late. Fernando Gonzales knows that the ceremony was set for to-morrow—Theresa has been to him, and I know not what plan they may have on foot. O, why did not the idiots kill him while they had the chance?"

"They were frightened by that infernal lord just as they were going to finish him."

"Then why didn't you kill him?"

Don Juan's eyes fell to the floor.

"Never mind," continued Donna Anita.

"It's too late now, though I hope there'll be no danger result to you and d'Acosta, from the affair."

"Danger—how?"

"Why, from civil action."

"O, bless you, no. 'Twas only a wayside broil. There was no blood spilt. 'Twas an affair of honor."

"And who won the honor?"

"You are severe, Donna."

"Perhaps I am. But let that go. You must be married to-night, in this place. I will see that everything is ready; and mind you, when you are married you must be careful of your wife's tongue."

"O, let me alone for that."

"Do not think the task too easy, Don Juan, for, by my faith, you'll find a woman's tongue not so easily governed."

"That's an old saw, Donna."

"Yes, and time has proved it a true one. Now go and prepare yourself."

"I go, and when I come again, I shall be heir expectant to the sum of seven thousand pistoles."

"Ah, you've hardly earned that extra two thousand."

"I did my part of the business. I'faith, I risked my skull for them."

"So you did," returned Donna Anita, with a half bitter smile, "and if all goes on right you shall have them."

"But all can't help going on right. I shall marry Theresa, and that's right, surely."

"Then you must hurry about it. If you keep this thing to yourself, and maintain the utmost secrecy in your movements, it may be safely carried through. Do not mention it to a living soul. Everything will be ready here half an hour after dark."

Don Juan began to feel uneasy, for he had not anticipated so much trouble in getting a

wife, but the beauty of Theresa, and the seven thousand pistoles, lighted up the way, and he went eagerly forth to prepare for his nuptials, while Donna Anita, with a crafty look, watched him till he was out of sight.

"Now," muttered the widow to herself, as she started up from her seat, "I must have Theresa prepared for this. Something tells me that if I wait till the morrow I may be thwarted; but to-night—and all is safe. Theresa once a wife, and she passes from my path. No one suspects my plans, save those who are necessarily engaged in them, nor shall they have the chance. Why did my husband make that fatal allusion to the instrument he gave me? But they can prove nothing! That Moor! He haunts me!"

Donna Anita took a few turns across the room to compose herself, and then she sought the chamber of her step-daughter.

Theresa heard the key turn in the lock of her door—for since her return with the monk she had been under lock and key—and she saw her cruel step-mother enter. She did not shudder, nor did she tremble, but she sat like a block of marble, and gazed with tearless eyes upon the author of her wrongs.

"My child," said Donna Anita, "the servants will be here ere long, to array you in your bridal robes."

"Then let them come, and I will sleep in them to-night."

There was a strangeness in the orphan's tone that startled her step-mother, it was so cold and so unfeeling, seeming to come from lips that had no impulse from the mind.

"You will rest upon your nuptial couch to-night, Theresa."

"To-night?"

"Yes."

"And wherefore to-night? I have no husband yet."

"But you shall have ere you retire to rest again."

The orphan gazed up into Anita's face. At first her look was vacant and meaningless, but gradually it assumed a speaking tone, and the muscles began to quiver.

"To-morrow I am to be married," she at length uttered.

"No, no, my pretty runaway. If you have concocted a plan for escape on the morrow, you will be disappointed, for you become the wife of Don Juan Radigo to-night."

Donna Anita thought she had detected in the manner of Theresa's saying "to-morrow" a hope of escape before that time, but for once she was mistaken, for not the shadow of such a hope had entered the poor girl's mind.

"Donna Anita," pronounced Theresa, with startling energy, "do you mean that I am to be married to-night?"

"Yes—within half an hour after it is dark."

"Then God have mercy on me!" ejaculated the unfortunate girl, sinking back into her seat. "It makes but little difference—to-night, or to-morrow, or the next day, or the next. Earth has but one death for me—she can dig but one grave."

"You will allow the servants to dress you?"

"Yes, and let them bring me a winding sheet. 'Twould be more fitting than a bridal robe."

The orphan had settled again into her cold, vacant state of mental frigidness. A remark rested upon Donna Anita's lips, but she spoke it not—she only gazed a moment upon the victim of her scheming ambition, and then she turned from the room. She re-locked the door, and soon her light footfall was lost in the distance.

The grating of that key! Theresa heard it, and its sound started her into life. She sprang to her feet and gazed half-wildly upon the door. That simple creaking of the prison-bolt seemed to have shot like a stream of electricity through every avenue of her soul, and to have awakened her from her death dream. It spoke to her native pride with more power than could the tongues of a thousand step-mothers.

"O, God!" she uttered, as she clasped her hands upon her brow, "is there no escape from this fearful doom? Fernando, Fernando, I shall soon be separated from you forever! Could I but see thee once more—once more rest upon thy bosom—"

She ceased her murmurings, and walked slowly, thoughtfully, to the window. A new idea had beamed upon her mind, and she endeavored to give it a palpable form. She had no hopes of escape, but she did hope that she might be able to send to Fernando some intelligence of this new movement of her step-mother's. If there could be an earthly chance for her salvation, it dwelt with Fernando and the Moor, and they did not think the marriage was to be consummated till the morrow—then they would be too late, even if they held a power to release her!

"Holy mother of our church!" ejaculated the orphan, as this last thought flashed through her mind; "if the Moor can help me, he will not think of his heavenly mission till to-morrow! And then I shall lose all! A few short hours may steal from me my peace forever! O, madness! O, misery!"

She started across the room, and then came back to the window. Half-a-dozen turns somewhat calmed her mind, and when she stopped to look down into the garden again, she was able to bring her thoughts to a focus. Some ten minutes had she been gazing down upon the waving foliage, when she saw old Beatrice coming up one of the paved walks. The house-keeper was looking up earnestly at the window where she stood, and as she caught the eye of the young girl she stopped. In an instant, Theresa decided upon the course she would pursue. She beckoned for Beatrice to come to her room, and she had the satisfaction of seeing that she was understood.

It was not long before the orphan heard the cautious tread of her old friend in the corridor, and going to the door she placed her ear to the keyhole.

"Theresa," whispered some one upon the outside.

"Who is it?"

"Beatrice."

"Will you do an act to serve me?"

"Anything—everything."

"Then, Beatrice, I am to be married to-night. Don't interrupt me. My step-mother

has arranged for my nuptials this very night. I must get a letter to Fernando Gonzales. Can you carry it?"

"Yes, give me but the directions, and I'll carry it, though I have to walk bare-footed."

"Do you know where there is a small inn just at the southern edge of the city, on the Alberche road?"

"Yes, I know it well."

"Then I will write a note, and you shall carry it. Give it to Fernando if you see him, and if not, then give it to the little inn-keeper. He will be faithful. Go you down into the garden, and when I have written it I will throw it down to you. Be cautious, now, and don't for the love of God let any one beside yourself in the house know of it."

Beatrice promised to obey all the injunctions of her young mistress, and as soon as she left the door, Theresa went to her desk and drew forth a sheet of paper. She had no pen, but with a drawing pencil she wrote as follows:

"DEAR FERNANDO,—My hour of doom has come. My step-mother has arranged that I shall be married to-night. She must fear that I contemplate escaping, but God knows that such a light gleams not in my path. I am a prisoner in the house of my birth—locked within my room, and shut out from any who might befriend me. If there lays within your grasp a single straw upon which I might hang a hope—But I will not indulge in such a dream, for the awakening to the fatal reality that is prepared for me would then be more insupportable than ever. O, has the Moor returned? Can he see me to-night? Something tells me that within that man some portion of my destiny is most strangely bound up. To-night! O, God! let me shut my eyes to the horrible thought! Farewell! If you see me not again on earth you will at least remember me and pity me in my distress. I can write no more. The thoughts

of you, my soul's love, have opened the fountain of my tears, and they make me blind. Once more, farewell! Think of me oft. To-night! God help me!

Theresa."

The orphan folded her letter, and having directed it, she bound it with a piece of ribbon to which she attached a heavy key. She went to the window—Beatrice was there in the garden. The house-keeper made a motion that all was safe, and Theresa let fall the note she had written—she saw her old friend pick it up and glide away, and then, with a deep groan, she sank once more into her seat.

She had done all that lay in her power. Her fate was in the hands of Heaven, and she endeavored to prepare herself for the sacrifice.

\* \* \* \*

The sun was just sinking to rest when the little inn-keeper placed a letter in the hands of Fernando Gonzales. The young man was in his room, and stepping to the window he tore off the ribbon and opened the missive.

"To-night!" he cried, in tones of such anguish, that one might have supposed a lightning shaft had stricken him.

Fernando wound the fingers of his right hand within the locks of his dark hair, and with the other he held the letter. He gazed wildly upon it, like one who reads his own death-warrant.

"To-night! and the Moor has not come! To-night! and all is lost! Look down, O, God! and sweep this black villany from thy footstool!"

A footstep sounded in the narrow passage, and Fernando heard his host directing some one to his room. He placed the letter in his bosom, and in a moment more his door was opened.

"The Moor! the Moor!" he uttered, and springing forward, he fairly clasped Abu Malec to his bosom.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### THE PHIAL.

Theresa de Tavora was arrayed in her bridal robes. She looked the same as we have seen her before—cold and cheerless, seeming to be frozen with utter horror. Her heart lay still in her bosom, for it had sank heavily beneath the weight that had fallen upon it, and it only beat as the tide of life forced it to its unwilling task. Her maids had left her, and she sat within her own chamber gazing upon a spot where a white rose rested upon the carpet. That rose had been brought for her to wear, but she had cast it from her, and a single sprig of cypress rested upon her white bosom.

Thus she sat, when Father Raymond entered her room.

"My child," commenced the monk, sitting down by the orphan's side, "your nuptials draw near."

Theresa made no answer, nor did she move, but still she gazed upon that white rose. It lay there like her own heart's affection—cast away to wither and die—plucked from its parent stem to be cared for no more.

"I trust, for your own sake, my child, that you have conquered your prejudices against the

marriage your kind guardian has selected for you," continued the monk, in a whining, hypocritical tone; "for your happiness cannot but be clouded by useless repinings, and your friends, too, will be pained to see you still continue obstinate and wilful."

The doomed orphan slowly raised her eyes and turned them upon her companion. Their light was deep, and from out the flood of melancholy that dwelt therein, there flashed a gleam of stern resentment.

"Monk," she said, without changing a muscle of her firm-set countenance, "do you know what the tortures of the rack are?"

"I have seen a heretic placed upon one, my child."

"And did it make him suffer?"

"Most excruciatingly."

"Suppose you were doomed to the same torture, and that, too, forever, could you overcome your prejudices against it?"

"No."

"Then cannot I overcome the horror that has been planted in my soul?"

"You talk foolishly, child. What can a

girl like you have to fear? You will have a good home, a kind husband—"

"O, cease such blasphemy," hastily interrupted Theresa, while the marble-like rigidity of her features was broken by a cold shudder. "Talk not to me in such falsehoods. I know what they will do with me, and I am prepared for my fate; but I want no consolation from you. Your heart never felt that holy spark that lights up and warms the bosom of one who can offer consolation to the afflicted. Leave me to myself, and when I am wanted I shall be ready."

The monk had sense enough to cloak his anger, and also to see that further remarks on his part would only tend to make matters worse, so he simply uttered a heartless blessing upon the orphan and turned to withdraw, but before he passed out, he turned back and remarked:

"You will be wanted in half an hour."

The monk was gone, and Theresa's eyes fell again upon the rose.

"How white and how pale it looks!" she murmured. "I wonder if it suffered when they tore it away from its mate? Poor thing, it will soon be dead, and then—"

Theresa clasped her hands upon her bosom, and started up from her seat. She trembled fearfully with some sudden emotion, and it was several minutes ere she could bring her thought back to its throne. The large lamp that burned upon her table seemed to cast a strange glare about the apartment, and with a heavy groan she leaned back against the casement of the window and closed her eyes. Gradually she grew calm again, and with a steady hand she touched the bell-cord that hung near her.

Old Beatrice, who had been on the watch for the least excuse to wait upon her young mistress, answered the summons, for since dark the door had been left unlocked.

"Beatrice," said the orphan, as soon as the old woman had poured forth her store of sympathizing words; "I want you to do one more favor for me, and that may be the last."

The house-keeper was startled by the strange

tones of Theresa's voice, but thinking that the approaching marriage alone influenced her, she quickly pledged herself to perform whatever laid in her power.

"You know my cabinet, in the room overlooking the large fountain?"

"Yes," returned Beatrice.

"What have you done with the key that was fastened to the letter?"

"Here it is, in my pocket."

"That is the key to my cabinet. Go and unlock it, and among some of the boxes that lie in the small deep drawer in the centre of the manuscript case, you will find a small phial of perfume. Bring it to me, but let no one see you do it."

Unsuspectingly, Beatrice hastened to perform her mission, and ere long she returned with the phial.

"If I want you again, I will call," said Theresa.

The house-keeper understood the hint, and after dropping a few words of sympathy, she withdrew.

Long after she was left alone did Theresa stand in the very spot where Beatrice had left her, and gaze upon the phial she held. Her hand was influenced by a slight tremor, but her features were calm and collected, save that there was a sort of wild, dancing light in her eyes.

"Would it be a sin," she murmured, "to snatch from them the soul they would torture? What can life be to me longer? Only a source of unending, unrelieved misery. No hope to cling to, no friend who can aid me. Earth is but a wilderness of upas trees, with here and there a thorn-bush to lacerate those who withstand the poison-shafts."

She walked to the window and looked out upon the starry sky, but she soon turned back from the scene, and once more gazed upon the phial.

"Here is a messenger of mercy. A few drops from this will still my heart forever, and lock out the pain of life. The sin is not mine, but it must rest on the heads of those who drive me

to it. How simple the act that shall stop this wonderful machinery of nature, and yet how fearful!"

Theresa ceased her murmuring and sank upon her knees. She prayed, and as her soul was opened in communion with the Divine, the bright tears began to roll down her cheeks.

She arose once more to her feet. She was more calm than before, and her hand had ceased its trembling. She sat down upon her divan—one hand was pressed against her heart, and the other held the subtle poison that she looked upon as the only messenger of her salvation.

Once, when Don Pedro had spurned his daughter rudely from him, she had procured that phial of poison. Then her heart had been crushed and broken, but she dared not hush it in self-inflicted death. The phial had been preserved more as a remembrancer of the tortures she had suffered than as a means of future freedom, but now she saw nothing else upon which to grasp. Long suffering had shut up the avenues through which entered the love

of life to her soul, and she longed to loose the bonds that bound her only to greater misery in time to come.

"One moment, and the act is done," she murmured. "Mother—dear mother, I come to join you!"

She raised the phial to her lips. The death-potion started from its long rest, but ere a drop had touched her tongue, the tiny glass was dashed to the floor and shattered in pieces!

Theresa sprang to her feet, and found herself face to face with her mother-in-law!

"What would you do, rash girl?"

"Free myself from your fatal power," calmly returned the orphan.

"And sink to perdition. But come, you are waited for."

Theresa followed Donna Anita silently from the room, and as she bent her eyes to the pavement of the corridor she really thanked God that she had been saved from the suicide's death.

## CHAPTER XXII.

### CONCLUSION.

THE bridal party were assembled in the large drawing-room of the Tavora palace. There were Donna Anita, and her daughter Isabel. Don Gomez d'Acosta, Don Juan Radigo, Father Raymond, and Theresa, beside two other monks and several of the widow's own domestics. Old Beatrice, too, had managed to slip in, and she remained quietly in one corner away from observation.

"All is ready, I believe," said Father Raymond, as he cast his eyes around upon the group.

Donna Anita took Theresa by the hand and led her forward. The poor girl resisted not, nor did she even shrink from the touch of her step-mother.

"Holy father," said the widow, as she led the orphan to her place, "I have deemed it just and proper to bestow the hand of Donna Theresa de Tavora in marriage upon Don Juan Radigo; and by the right vested in me by my late husband, her father, I have called you to perform the ceremony of such marriage."

The monk bowed, and Don Juan was led forth. He stood by the side of his promised bride, and took her hand in his.

At that moment all Theresa's fortitude gave way. She had resolved not to quail, nor shrink from her fate, but when she felt that touch—when she felt her hand grasped by the vile man who was to embitter her life-cup, and who



hesitated not to lend himself a base tool to the schemings of her wicked step-mother, her heart leaped so wildly in her bosom that she came near fainting. The whole tide of her misery seemed to accumulate into one vast flood that came whelming over her soul.

None noticed her emotions, but all cold and heartless, the monk opened his book and began the ceremony. He asked Don Juan if he would take the woman by his side for his wife, and with a sparkle of triumph the villain answered in the affirmative. Then he put the same question to Theresa. She had no power to answer, but Donna Anita answered for her.

The widow spoke in a sharp, distinct tone, and it seemed to awaken the orphan from her lethargy.

"No, no, no," she cried, with the last effort of her despairing soul; "I cannot be his wife! Before God and man I cry out against it. O, save me! save me!"

"Go on, go on," uttered Donna Anita. "Let the marriage proceed in haste."

The monk took a step forward and laid his hands upon the heads of the waiting couple. He commenced speaking—the step-mother's eyes were sparkling with malicious triumph—the last seal of the orphan's doom arose to the lips of Raymond, when the ceremony was interrupted by the sudden opening of the great door.

"Hold, there!" shouted a voice, and on the same instant, Fernando Gonzales sprang into the room.

"Out! out! Go on, sir monk!" shrieked Donna Anita. "Hence, meddling fool!"

Fernando took no notice of the woman's rage, but dashing Radigo aside, he caught Theresa to his bosom.

"Sacrilegious wretch, what means all this?" uttered the monk.

"Ask those who follow me. Look up, Theresa—look up, for you are safe!"

Both the monk and Donna Anita were stricken with terror, for a dozen of King Philip's officers had entered the apartment, and with them came Abu Malec, the Moor. In advance

of the rest was a youth, not over fifteen years of age, whose dress flashed with brilliant jewels, and who approached with a proud step.

"Which is Donna Anita de Tavora?" he asked, as he turned his eyes around.

"I am that lady, senor," returned the widow.

"If I mistake not, this party is assembled to witness the nuptials of one Don Juan Radigo with Donna Theresa de Tavora?"

"You have hit the truth," proudly and somewhat haughtily returned Anita.

"Are they married?"

"Not yet—but they will be."

"Not to-night, senora," said the youth, with a peculiar smile.

"And by what authority, pray, do you thus intrude upon my affairs? Who—"

She did not finish her sentence, for d'Acosta, all pale and trembling, seized her by the arm.

"—sh!" he uttered, in a quick whisper, "it is Don Philip, Prince of Asturias—the eldest son of our king!"

"Safe, safe, did you say?" murmured Theresa, gazing up into her lover's face, while Don Juan stood by like a whipped cur.

"Yes, yes, dearest—they can harm you no more."

"Safe—and it is all real!—O, Fernando, how came this? What kind power has come to my aid? 'Twas you, you."

"No, Theresa—there stands your preserver."

The fair girl followed the direction pointed out, and her eyes rested upon the tawny Moor.

Abu Malec's beaming orbs were fastened upon her with a strange light, and she would have sprung instinctively forward to bless him, but at that moment the prince came up and took her hand.

"This is our good Prince of Asturias, Theresa," said Fernando.

"I thank the saints, fair senorita, that we were in time to save you," gallantly said young Philip, as he raised the delicate hand he held to his lips, and then turning to Father Raymond, he continued:

"You can close your book, sir, monk, for you'll have no more use for it here."

Father Raymond shrank back from his station, and placed his holy volume beneath his robe.

"How did the Moor do this?" anxiously whispered Theresa.

"I know not," returned Fernando, with a puzzled look. "I met with him only just as I got your letter. He has told me nothing."

Donna Anita was hardly yet satisfied that all this could be real, for though her mind had been tortured by fears, yet she had come so near the consummation of her plans that to be now thwarted seemed almost impossible; and then, too, she was yet authorized to act as she had begun. The sight of young Gonzales holding her step-daughter so confidently to his bosom awoke her rage, and approaching the prince, she said, with considerable of tartness in her manner:

"I know not, your highness, what authority you may have in behalf of Don Juan Radigo, but you surely can have none over my ward, and I will therefore take her away from here."

Theresa shrank closer to Fernando as she heard this, and even our hero himself had some misgivings. The marriage had been stopped, but was all to end here, sorrow would yet dwell with them.

"Stay one moment," said the prince, as Donna Anita moved towards the orphan. "I have no direct power over Donna Theresa, but there is one here who has, and I have orders from the king, my royal father, to make good his claims."

"And who is it, your highness, that can thus step in between a father and his child?"

"She has no father."

"Ay, but her father, Don Pedro, Count of Osma, still acts in the power he bequeathed to me," uttered the widow.

"We will see if Don Pedro did not give to some one else a power which has never been legally repealed," said the prince, with a smile.

"Where is the Moor?"

"Here, your highness," said Abu Malec.

"Now what claims can you make against this woman's authority?"

"I will bring you my evidence in a few

minutes," returned the Moor, and as he spoke, he turned and left the apartment, but ere he did so he beckoned for old Beatrice to follow him.

Not a word was spoken by those who had been left behind. The prince stood in the centre of the group, and upon his countenance there was a half-playful smile. Donna Anita looked pale and livid, and a fearful tremor shook her frame. That Moor had stricken more terror to her soul than all the rest combined. Fernando and Theresa were both of them swaying between hope and doubt, and breathlessly they awaited the denouement to this strange scene. The monks were huddled together, and their eyes were fixed askance upon the young prince; while Radigo and d'Acosta were regarding our hero with anything but agreeable looks. Isabel alone seemed to have no very deep feeling about the matter, only evincing a sort of morbid curiosity.

Ere long the door was opened, and old Beatrice, down whose cheeks the tears were rolling in torrents, slowly entered. By the hand she led a middle-aged female, of exceeding beauty, whose form and feature were the exact counterpart of the Moor's; but the tawny color of the skin had given place to the purest Castilian tints.

"Now, Donna Anita," pronounced the prince, "you can read a claim prior to your own, and one, too, before which yours must dwindle into nothing."

Donna Anita heard not a word the prince had said, but with eyes fairly starting from their sockets, she stood and gazed upon the presence that had thus been apparently conjured up before her.

The strange woman turned neither to the right hand nor to the left, but with a trembling step she kept on towards the spot where stood Theresa and Fernando. The fair girl had already broken from her lover's grasp, but she was transfixed as marble now. She placed her hand upon her throbbing brow and closed her eyes, for she believed that some air-phantom, some imagery of her over-heated brain, thus haunted her vision. She soon felt a soft hand



aid upon her shoulder, and she heard her name pronounced in that same musical voice that had lulled her childhood's pangs. She opened her eyes, and a tearful, heavenly countenance beamed upon her.

"Theresa—my child!" spoke the woman, and as she spoke she smiled.

There was a simple word trembling upon the lips of Theresa de Tavora, but it came not forth. Her accompanying movement, however, told all that she would have uttered, for she spread wide her arms, and on the next instant they were twined about the neck of her who had spoken. She knew that she rested upon the bosom of her own dear mother!

"*Donna Madaline!*" gasped Fernando, laying his hand upon her shoulder, and gazing with painful earnestness into her face.

"Yes, yes, Fernando," returned Madaline de Tavora; "come back to fulfil the promise she made you years ago."

Theresa had not yet spoken, for her heart was too full—it had been uplifted upon its present giddy pinnacle too suddenly. She could only cling to her mother, and sob and weep.

"This is all a wicked deceit, a foul phantasy," exclaimed Donna Anita, at length recovering somewhat from her stupor. "The cold grave cannot thus give up its dead!"

Donna Madaline gently put her daughter's arms from about her neck and passed her over to Fernando; then turning full upon Anita, she said:

"Do you not know me, woman?"

Donna Anita shrank away from that gaze, and shutting out the scene with both her hands, she exclaimed:

"O, fiends of darkness! 'tis she! 'tis she! The death-angel has turned traitor to his trust, and let forth his subjects to thwart me!"

"I did come forth from my grave!" said Madaline.

The monks started further back, and crossed themselves in holy horror.

"Listen," continued she, "for there are none here who may not know my story. You all

know that you see before you Donna Madaline de Tavora, and how so strange a thing should happen you shall hear. Long before it was supposed that I had died, I knew that this base woman (pointing to Anita) was endeavoring to turn the affections of my husband from me, and howsoever much he may have been at fault, she first led him from his duty. Day by day, I saw his love waning, and at length I knew that my wicked rival had gained the heart that belonged wholly to me. Gradually my spirits failed, my strength dwindled into weakness, and when at length that fearful pestilence swept through our city, I was taken down by it. The shock was so sudden, and coming as it did upon my already shattered frame, my physical system was completely, utterly paralyzed, and every nerve in my body seemed as immovable as steel. They thought me dead, for my brow was white and cold, and my respiration imperceptible. Yet I heard every word that passed, and I knew every movement that was made. At length I was clothed in the habiliments of the grave, and placed in my coffin, and though I tried by every means in my power to give some signs of the vital spark that still burned in my bosom, I could not do it. I even tried to move my finger, to open my drooping lids, but all to no effect. My will was utterly locked up from all outward manifestation.

"The morning before I was conveyed to the burial-ground, Donna Anita and Isabel came to my coffin, and I heard the heartless, wicked woman exulting over my death, and at the same time assuring her daughter that she, Anita, should now be Countess of Osma! Then I thought I would not live if I could; but when my own dear child came and wept over me, and I felt her warm tears falling upon my face, I tried again to tell that I was not dead, but it was of no use. At length the funeral was commenced. I heard the prayers that were made, and I heard the benediction, and then I knew when my coffin was carried from the house. At the grave, I heard the wailings of my child, I heard the people depart, and I was lowered into the resting-place that had been dug in the earth.