



A  
FAITHFUL AND AUTHENTIC  
NARRATIVE

OF THE  
ABDUCTION, CAPTIVITY, SUFFERINGS, AND HEART-RENDING MISFORTUNES

OF  
**PAYNETA MANDEVILLE,**

*Wife of Augustus H. Mandeville, of Baltimore, Maryland,  
who was abducted by the*

*Spanish Bandits*

**OF NEW GRENADA;**

WITH AN ACCOUNT OF THE DREADFUL SCENES THROUGH WHICH  
SHE PASSED, DURING A CAPTIVITY OF THIRTEEN MONTHS,  
AMONG SEVERAL BANDS OF MOUNTAIN ROBBERS.

WRITTEN BY HER HUSBAND.

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[1253]

ABDUCTION AND ADVENTURES  
OF  
PAYNETA MANDEVILLE.  
INTRODUCTION.

BUT a few words are necessary to introduce to the reader of this pamphlet the characters figuring in it. AUGUSTUS H. MANDEVILLE, a young gentleman of Baltimore, having returned from California to the Isthmus, was by the reports then rife, that gold and silver were to be found in and near the Capital of New Grenada, induced to go there. Having found the reports to be greatly exaggerated, he was about to return, when he happened to see a beautiful girl of fourteen, whose name turned out to be Payneta Augustine, the only daughter of one of the richest Spanish nobles in the country. He soon made her acquaintance, and in one week they were married. Her father dying in the course of a few months after the marriage, young Mandeville came into possession of his immense wealth. Three months after this event, the town being infested with bandits of the worst description, the house of Mandeville was entered by a set of desperadoes, who, finding no moveable plunder, tore from her home his wife. He himself had gone to the city market, and when he returned, his wife was missing. Evidences of robbers having been in the house being plentiful, he at once came to the conclusion that she had been abducted. For thirteen months he travelled in search of her, besides having agents traversing every section of the country on the same errand. On the 12th of June she was happily restored to him, after having undergone the most extraordinary and distressing misfortunes. In a recent letter to his father, he gives a full and detailed account of her captivity and truly wonderful adventures among the bandits of the mountains.

No narrative ever yet placed before the public is half so interesting as this plain statement of facts. It is a work of wonder, and the interest it possesses has never yet been equalled by any work of fiction or narration of actual occurrences.

Mr. Mandeville, after congratulating himself on the recovery of his beloved wife, gives the following account of her sufferings and strange adventures:

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On the evening when I was so unluckily induced to leave my house,

my unfortunate wife remained in painful anxiety, listening for the slightest sound, until hearing a noise in the outer passage, which she believed to be occasioned by my return, in her impatience she imprudently went forth to meet me, and was seen, pursued, and carried off by a party of wretches who had entered the house in search, no doubt, of very different prey.

The youth and beauty of Payneta, and the rich ornaments she wore, convinced her captors that she must belong to a very wealthy family. The prize was not however too valuable to be entrusted to the gripe of the bandit chief, so it was resolved to send her off immediately to Saqueria, the head quarters of the particular band to which the party who captured her belonged. Accordingly, disregarding her tears and cries, as well as her repeated assertions that she was a married woman, and that her husband would ransom her at any sum they might demand, they muffled her up in a cloak, and placing her behind a sort of robber lieutenant, who was waiting at the door, and who rode a powerful black charger, despatched her to Saqueria, escorted by five or six of the bandits. The road to that town passes near Trinitaria, a small village, which by its spirited conduct during the general contest with the mountain banditti, had afforded a striking contrast to the pusillanimous supineness of Bogota, the capital. The inhabitants of this little place, which was very imperfectly fortified, arming themselves as best they could, opposed successfully every effort of the robbers to obtain possession of the town. So far from betraying any symptoms of alarm, they invariably put to death, without respect to persons, all bandit prisoners who fell into their hands in the sallies and attacks with which they harrassed their enemies; and such was the dread entertained by the bandits for the brave peasants of Trinitaria, that long after they had got possession of the capital, as it were, they were glad to grant them favorable terms of capitulation, which they were too fearful of consequences ever to infringe.

The treachery which these bandits ever exerted, however, had kept the Trinitarians always on their guard, and they constantly sent forth parties every night to watch any hostile movement which might be set on foot against them by the robbers. The bandits who were escorting my wife on the way to Saqueria, fell in with one of these patrols, and being irritated at the questions which were put to them, replied sharply and haughtily. A scuffle ensued, and Payneta, catching hope from the fray, contrived to tear off some of her mufflings, and called for help in the name of God, exclaiming that she was a Spanish woman forcibly carried off from her husband. The officer behind whom she was seated, did all in his power to silence her cries; but the brave villagers on hearing her exclamations of distress, set upon the bandits, struck down the officer from his horse, and beat his men, after which they carried my wife into Trinitaria. So soon as Payneta had related her story, she met with the greatest possible kindness; and the principal magistrate promised that no harm should befall her while she remained in his hands, nor should she be delivered over to the bandits, in whatever shape or form the demand might be made; but of that

which would have been the only efficacious cordial to her sinking spirits—intelligence of her husband—there was no immediate hope; it was more than the life of any Trinitarian was worth to be seen in the streets of the capital, after what had happened. My wife, while forcibly carried off by villains, had claimed their protection, and she should enjoy it; but not for her, or any one else's sake, would they depart from the system they had adopted, nor endanger their property and families by entering Bogota, while it was suffering under the caprice of tyrannical usurpers, who had been bribed and bought over by a gang of thieves and murderers. Accordingly she was kindly treated in the magistrate's family, but remained there a prey to the most cruel anxiety.

This rencounter with the bandits, and the rescue of a Spanish woman whom they were carrying off, became a matter of conversation throughout the little town; and as Payneta, in her communications with the magistrate, had not concealed the name of her family, which she mentioned in hopes of interesting him to make inquiries for her husband, this also became known. It happened that these circumstances having been alluded to in a tavern, on the principal street, when there were several strangers present, one of them, turning with surprise to the speaker, begged that he would relate the whole story. The man repeated what he had heard, but referred the stranger for farther particulars to the chief magistrate himself, in whose family the lady continued to reside.

The stranger lost no time in applying to the magistrate; and, after civilly asking to be informed of every thing relating to the lady's story, told him that he himself was one of Senor Augustine's sons, and that she who was indebted to his hospitable protection was consequently his own sister. He informed the magistrate that he had been a long time from Bogota, and was on his return there to learn what situation his family were in, &c., and he did not forget to add, that, at the time he left, his sister was but four years old. He now begged the magistrate to inform the lady of his presence, and of his willingness to receive her under his own protection and that of his wife until the fate of her husband should be known; and he offered, at the same time, to produce undeniable proofs of his identity.

The magistrate had no objection to make so reasonable a request; perhaps he might not be ill pleased to be relieved from a charge which was not free from inconvenience or responsibility. The man did, in fact, prove to be Francisco Augustine, an illegitimate son of my wife's father, who, hearing of his parent's death, had resolved to return to Bogota, in hopes of receiving a considerable portion of his wealth.

In the first interview with Payneta he learned enough to comprehend that the whole of his father's property was in my hands, he having no heir save herself at the time of his death; and he resolved to leave no means untried to wrest it from me. As a first and most important step, he determined to get my wife in his power; for he did not doubt I would ransom her on his own terms, provided he could carry her off beyond the reach of any influence I might possess in Bogota.

The affectionate solicitude which he affected for my poor Payneta, and the assurances which he gave her, of sparing neither trouble or risk, to ascertain my fate, won upon her so far, that, though she never had seen her brother, but simply had heard of him and his illegitimacy, she now willingly accepted his protection, and was received by his wife (as her sister) who was stopping at a French *café*, on the main street. She was to remain with her until some intelligence of me should be known.

Francisco kept his word, in setting all possible inquiries regarding me on foot; nor did he fail to discover that I was yet living, and that I was at that time, in the greatest possible despair, making every effort to recover my lost wife: but he did not tell her this: on the contrary, he resolved to carry her to a town called Abitoro, where he should have it in his power to deal with her on better terms for himself; and in order to induce her ready compliance, he framed a story of my having gone in that direction to seek her. It was at this time also, that by way of opening his negotiations with me he conveyed to me, in an anonymous note, the intimation of Payneta's safety and of her unsullied honor, which was the first thing that raised me from the depths of despondency.

The bare idea of meeting me made poor Payneta impatient to quit Trinitaria; and Francisco Augustine was too desirous to encompass his own ends to detain her long. Taking a considerable circuit to avoid the plundering parties of banditti, they entered a rugged mountain pass, and whilst ascending the narrow and intricate path, they were startled by a shrill shout; and before they had time to look round, fourteen or fifteen savage looking horsemen suddenly started from behind the huge fragments of rocks that lay scattered on the mountain side, and rushing down the precipice as if it had been a level plain, presented their pistols and called on them to surrender. Francisco's party were just then slowly picking their way along a narrow and stony path, which slanted along the face of a steep and craggy slope; beneath yawned a dark chasm. His horse, terrified at the sudden uproar, reared upright, and unable to recover itself, fell backward with its master, and they rolled together down the slope, and fell with a heavy crash into the chasm beneath. No one, however, attended to their fate. My unfortunate wife, half dead with terror, was seized, and found herself totally helpless at the mercy of the ferocious band.

No time was lost by her captors, who, placing her on a stout mule, struck their stirrups into their horses' flanks, and urged them unsparingly up the steep and stony face of the mountain. They continued thus to ascend unremittingly for two hours, sometimes winding along the slope, and occasionally pressing right up the steepest declivities, even when covered with shivered fragments from above. When they had reached the summit of the mountain, their panting horses were so severely blown, that they were forced to halt and give them breath. They permitted them to pick the scanty herbage that grew among the stones for an hour, and offered my wife some spirits to drink, who by this time was hardly able to support herself upon her mule; but

she was soon forced to mount again, and after a descent of two hours, as dangerous and fatiguing as their ascent, they reached a deep and narrow valley, where a fresher verdure was produced by the moisture of a little stream, and where upon some level spots beneath the rocks, were scattered a few tents.

The evening by this time was fast closing in, but the people rushed from their tents at the shouts of their friends, and received them with yells of joy. My wife was lifted half-dead from her mule, and carried into a tent, where such refreshment as could be produced by its wild inhabitants was plentifully set before her. But she was in no condition to accept these well-meant intentions. Terror and despair overwhelmed her soul, and all she wished for was to lie down and die in quiet.

But this would by no means have suited the purpose of her captors, who were retainers of Alanda, the chief of a band of robbers who inhabited the mountains to the north of Trinitaria. Like others of these chiefs, he supported his establishment and retainers by plunder, seizing on passengers and goods, and demanding exorbitant ransoms for the persons of those who unfortunately fell into his power.

The capture of such a woman as Payneta was looked on as a prize of no small consequence; and the men resolved to carry her straight to the castle of the chief. My poor wife could not taste food, but the wife of one of the bandits prepared a rich cordial for her use, presented it with some words of comfort—bade her be of good cheer, for the chief, Alanda, was not a harsh or cruel man, and doubtless would restore her to her husband upon payment of a reasonable ransom. A ray of hope seemed to dart into her mind at this most cheering view of her case; she drank the cordial, and sank to profounder rest than she had ever again expected to enjoy.

Early next morning the party prepared to proceed. My wife, though suffering and fatigued, was forced once more to mount her mule; and quitting the tents they descended the valley. After toiling over some rough mountainous ground, they wound gradually downward to a valley of larger size, in which stood a large fortified village, surrounded by cultivated ground. Numerous tents were scattered over the plain beyond it, and their flocks fed in the mountains around. It was well on in the afternoon before the party reached the village, having had no refreshment, except a little spirits and water, during the whole day. My wife was immediately taken to the house of the chief, which was surrounded by a high wall of *adobes*, or sun-dried bricks, with towers at each corner, and which to the miserable captive seemed a hopeless prison. She was sent into the parlor, where she was immediately surrounded by the inferior females of the family, who flocked about her with looks of the utmost curiosity, examining her person and clothes with an energy that threatened to leave not a shred on her back. Order, however, was restored by the arrival of two elder women, who came to desire that the captive lady should be instantly brought into the presence of the chief's wife.

She was accordingly led to a small apartment, where she found an old woman, who was busily smoking a cigarette, or paper segar. Her dress was a little fantastic, though of great richness of material. Her countenance though wrinkled with age, wore an expression of benevolence, and the lustre of her full dark eye was yet unquenched. She received Payneta with kindness, addressing to her a few words intended for consolation; observing that fortune was sometimes propitious when she appeared to be most adverse; that her situation might prove to be more agreeable than she looked for;—and she was proceeding to prove how much cause she had to be thankful for having fallen into such good hands, when she was interrupted by a slight cry from the wretched Payneta, who, unable to support herself any longer, sank on the floor, at the feet of the chief's wife.

For some time previous to her being carried off from Bogota, my poor wife had enjoyed the hope of becoming a mother. The continued agitation she had suffered since then, had greatly enfeebled her frame, and horror at her capture by the people of Alanda, united with the fatigue of the last two days' distressing journey, completed her derangement. Assistance was given to her; she was carried into another apartment, where a miscarriage, accompanied by the most alarming symptoms, terminated her hopes, and almost her life.

For many weeks she continued in the utmost danger, during all which time she received the most careful attention, and the chief's wife herself, came frequently to see her. Youth and disease had a fearful struggle; but, happily for me, the first prevailed, and Payneta slowly recovered. When, after several months, she was able to leave her chamber, the wife of the chief would have her come to her own room, and honoring her with a seat near herself, would seek to hear her story, and always repaid the obligation by some moral observation. But whenever my wife touched upon the subject of her liberty or ransom, she would put aside the appeal. "Time enough, my child, to talk of that when you are stronger; you could not move at present if you were free to go where you would. Besides, the chief alone settles these matters—I never meddle with them; and he is absent now—but he will soon return, and you will learn what his intentions are regarding you."

The chief accordingly did return, and with him his two sons, both of whom had been absent on expeditions, from which they brought back prisoners and booty. Some of these were females, and they were taken into the chief's household.

A few days after his arrival, the chief desired to see my wife, of whose recovery he had been informed; and accordingly she was ordered to appear in his wife's apartment, where he chose to receive her.

He was a man well stricken in years, and the expression of his countenance was pleasing, though tinged with something of wildness; his beard, of a silver grey, covered the greater part of his still ruddy and healthful cheeks, and a piercing dark eye, of unsubdued brilliancy, seemed to vouch for the unshaken powers of both body and mind.

His wife was seated at a little distance from her lord, and the only

male in the apartment besides himself was his youngest son, a man of about five-and-twenty years of age, and of a most unpromising expression of countenance. His face, of a dark, sallow hue, was thickly pitted with small pox, which had seamed one cheek in a fearful manner, and distorted the eye on that side; his black eyebrows, and thin curly beard, gave an additional gloom to the ferocity peculiar to his features. He was round shouldered, and square built; and though an excessive habitual stoop detracted from his height, it did not particularly diminish the massive bulk of his person.

My wife, when she entered, upon observing the young man, whose fierce licentious looks inspired her with an instinctive dread, remained standing near the bottom of the apartment, uncertain how to act. The chief, motioning her to be seated, exclaimed—"What is this that has come among us! this is a true virgin of Paradise! Why, surely, I must get young again for her sake. What say you, wife—think you I may yet prove a fit lover for this fair one? But, no! no! I have had my day—so sweet a rose is not for the bosom of a withered old mummy like me; let the young mate with the young; we must see to have her better matched."

Thus did the lively old chief jest on. Yet, though there was an import in his words which filled the heart of Payneta with fearful forebodings, the terror they conveyed was nothing to that which thrilled through her frame, at the fixed and ominous looks of the son, who had started with hideous delight when she had first entered the room, and continued gazing with intent and gloating eyes upon her trembling form. The moment the chief ceased to speak, she seized the opportunity to cast herself before him, and to supplicate, in the most earnest terms, that he should consent to receive her ransom, and send her back to Bogota.

"What's this? What does she say? What does she mean?" said he, turning sharply to his wife, who sat quietly looking on at what was passing: "Have you treated her ill? Is she not contented? What more would she have? Explain, in the name of heaven!"

"I would represent to you, my dear, that the captive is foolish, very foolish," replied his wife. "She talks of a husband, and wants to get back to him, forsooth; as if, indeed, there were not many better husbands to be found among our brave bandit lads. But she will learn wisdom anon; and when you next see her the heart of the unfortunate will expand, and she will comprehend her happiness in having found favor in your eyes."

"Yes! yes! no doubt of it, if she will see her folly, and cast it from her," observed the chief, and nodding his head twice or thrice, good humouredly, he repeated, "Yes! yes! daughter, your eyes will be opened to see your good fortune, in falling among those who know how to value you, and be kind to you; and you will soon be happier among us than you ever were in your life. You may retire—my wife will see that you are made comfortable in every respect."

There was no more said, so the chief's wife hurried her off, weeping and striving to make herself heard, in a vain attempt to move the

compassion of those who could neither comprehend the nature or the cause of her grief.

A period of several days elapsed after this, during which she had frequent intercourse with the chief's lady; but although she pined for another opportunity of entreating the chief to send and negotiate for her at Bogota, she did not dare ask the interview. It was on the fourth day she received a message from the chief's wife; and on repairing to that lady's apartment, she found there not only the old chief, but his two sons. The elder, whom she had not before seen, was a tall, mild, sickly-looking young man, whose composed and pleasing countenance appeared in very favorable contrast with the dark scowl and malevolent expression of his younger brother. To this person she was introduced by the old man in a strain of panegyric, the motive of which could not be mistaken. But her beauty and modesty appeared to be lost on the youth, who replied to his father in set terms, of which the manner was still colder than the matter. The old chief lost patience at this—"In God's name! I believe the devil has certainly bewitched you, for no young man or son of mine could otherwise talk in so cold a fashion of such a creature as this! The snow of the north is not colder than your heart, if we are to judge by this specimen of it. Come, lad, if there be anything of a man about you, warm up, and try to deserve your good fortune! Come, child," continued he, addressing Payneta, "let your sorrow cease, and be joyful; I am going to be a real father to you;—here is my eldest boy, one of the bravest fellows of our band—you shall have the honor of espousing him,—what say you to that?"

The dreadful truth was now disclosed; this was the reason why all talk of ransom was discouraged; this was the history of all the heart-sickening disappointments and protracted hopes under which my poor Payneta had languished. The chief, struck with her charms and amiable qualities, resolved to bestow her upon his eldest son, whose cold, unambitious disposition, and retired tastes, gave the father almost as much uneasiness as the lawless extravagance and untameable ferocity of his brother. He hoped that the beauty of his intended wife might awaken whatever of feeling and energy lay dormant in his heart, and he was bitterly disappointed at observing how little he seemed to be effected at her first appearance.

On the unhappy Payneta the effect of this discovery was dreadful. She threw herself at the feet of the chief, shrieking, "Oh! no! no! it cannot be—I never can marry him—I am already married to another—you can not divorce me from my husband—you will not tear me from him forever! You have ever been kind and good to me, do not kill me now! send me to Bogota, and may God bless you, and increase your happiness an hundred fold! Any ransom you may demand shall be yours when my husband shall hear where I am—you shall have ten slaves, all better and more beautiful than Payneta. See—my cheeks are withered with sorrow—they are sickly and hollow—I shall soon be dead;—kill me at once, if you please, but you must not, you cannot force me to marry your son!"

Her frantic grief seemed to touch the chief, but it only induced him to remonstrate more earnestly with what he deemed the folly that would willingly reject such good fortune. "In the name of God, child!" said he, "what is it you want—a husband? Why, here is one in your offer, worth twenty of your pitiful city men. And what do you suppose has become of him whom you make all this noise about? Why, the Bogota robbers have long since taken all his money, or his head, be sure of that. Seek him, say you? seek him in Bogota?—the girl is mad, stark mad: why, almost all the people there have been robbed and many of them murdered by that rascal robber, Sebastian, who has succeeded in bribing every officer of the city. You do not know what you are saying, you are talking rank nonsense. You, a young and beautiful girl, to be set down in such a place, without a friend about you!—why, the first one of Sebastian's thieves who met you, would ravish you and then make a slave of you; and then you would learn the difference between a scoundrel of a Bogota bandit and an honest mountain one. Here you are, and here you shall be safe; no Bogota bandit enters these mountains: my son will make you a capital husband, and you will be a good wife to him, I am sure:—and as for a divorce, why, I make a very good *al calde* myself in these parts: let me see who will deny the divorce when I affirm it;—and as to dower, I will find you one myself, for I love you, child, and will have you for a daughter, say what you will."

The younger son now stepped forward. "Father," said he, "my brother cares not for this beauty. Her charms have no value in his eyes—they fail to warm his cold, indifferent breast. Give her to me—I best deserve her, for I feel her worth—I loved her from the moment I beheld her, and I cannot live without her; give her, then, to one who can love her, would fight for her, and will win her, though he should die for it."

"Be silent! shameless!" cried the chief, darting a terrible look at him, "I marvel at your insolent audacity!—how dare you interfere with that which I choose to give to another? I have promised her to your brother, and his she shall be. A fine exchange, indeed, she would make of him for a profligate desperado like you! We should have you make a football of her head, and give her body to the ravens, in less than a month. You would pick a quarrel with her the moment you got tired of her, as you did with that wretched American girl whom you took, and insisted upon keeping in spite of all we could do. No, begone! you shall never have her, and you shall see her no more! The elder brother, who had sat a calm spectator of this scene, would now have spoken, but the wretched object of this unseemly discussion, overwhelmed with despair at all she had heard, and horror-struck at the idea of such violence as the father described and the son seemed ready to perpetrate, was no longer able to support herself, and swooned away. She was instantly borne to her apartment, where she regained her senses only to become a prey of a severe and protracted illness, which once more reduced her to the brink of the grave.

The old chief now became convinced that the scheme he had formed

of making Payneta the wife of his eldest son was by no means likely to be accomplished. He found indifference on the one side, and on the other a horror and a repugnance so extreme, that their effects threatened to deprive him entirely of his captive. The young man himself feeling no desire for the connexion, and his mild nature revolting at the idea of occasioning so much misery to one who had never done him wrong, remonstrated with the old chief; urging him to listen to the prayer of Payneta, and restore her to liberty, upon receiving such ransom as he might see fit to demand. The chief, induced as much by a kindly disposition as by the fear of losing all the profits of his acquisition, consented to this arrangement, and his wife conveyed to my sick and despairing Payneta the decision which afforded her the hope of freedom and reunion with the husband whom she loved. That hope was the most efficacious medicine she could have administered; peace of mind was succeeded by health of body, and her wonted plumpness and beauty by degrees returned.

It was arranged that an agent of the chief's should make the requisite enquiries in Bogota, and that the movements of my wife, when once more able to travel, should be regulated by the intelligence he should transmit. One night, when, after indulging her imagination in many dreams of future happiness, she had retired to bed in the little apartment allotted to her, she was awakened by an indistinct noise beside her, and, rising in alarm, her terror was completed, by observing several persons cautiously moving about her room by the faint light of a small lantern. The scream which rose to her lips was smothered ere it got vent, by the forcible application of a large rude hand on her mouth, which effectually silenced her cries for help; at the moment she was seized, a handkerchief was bound over her mouth and eyes, a loose dress wrapped about her, and she was hurried from her bed into the open air, and borne along so roughly and rapidly, that she could form no more idea of the course which her ravishers were pursuing, than she could see or guess at their persons. In truth her faculties were so bewildered with terror, that she could only struggle to get free, and endeavor to make her voice be heard; but all was in vain; she could only utter low and stifled murmurs, and her arms were too firmly held for her feeble strength to avail against the iron grasp of the ruffians who controlled her. Her efforts, however, succeeded at last in displacing the bandage over her eyes, so far, at least, as to obtain a partial view of what was going on.

She was already beyond the walls of the village, borne in the arms of a man whose features she could not discern, and attended by three or four others, who moved forward altogether at a rapid pace. The moon which was partially obscured by fleecy clouds, gave just light enough to show that they were in a secluded spot, rough with rocks and shrubby bushes, from among which were brought forth five or six horses, ready saddled and equipped. No time was lost in mounting, and a voice, which, in spite of its suppressed tones, the unfortunate Payneta shuddered to recognize, ordered one of the party to take charge of the lady, and see that she was firmly secured behind him.





"I," continued he, "must be unfettered and prepared to resist, should any attempt be made at a rescue." The voice was that of Diego, the younger son of Alanda; and her heart died within her, for she felt that once within his power, there was no more room for hope. Unable to struggle or exert herself any longer she passively submitted, and was bound to her seat and to the man in whose charge she had been placed.

There was scarcely light enough for them to see their way, but the party did not long continue in any beaten track. Turning their faces towards the mountain breast, they forced their way abruptly up its steep ascent, scrambling over a surface so rough, and clearing obstacles so numerous and dangerous, that the boldest riders and surest horses, could scarcely keep their saddles or their feet. They picked a precarious and hazardous path for several hours among shivered crags which formed the summits of the mountains; and the care with which they kept their weapons prepared, in spite of the difficulties of the way, afforded sufficient proof that they both expected and dreaded pursuit. From these precautions my wife, who by degrees had recovered her scattered senses, became convinced that the villainous scheme of which she was the victim had been exclusively the young man's contrivance, and that his father had never even known of or consented to it.

When the grey light of morning appeared, they were traversing a wild and elevated tract, among gravelly hills interspersed with spires and crags of rock, alike destitute of vegetation and verdure. No opposition to their progress was to be dreaded here; and they continued to proceed with unabated vigor, until the man who bore my wife behind him gave the alarm, declaring that she was no longer able to support herself, but hung a dead weight upon him, by the fastenings which secured her. This was, in truth, the case: exhausted by fatigue, poor Payneta had become almost inanimate, and Diego was forced to order a halt at the first convenient spot, where the horses were unbitted and fed, and such provisions as had been prepared were produced. The bandages were now removed from the face of my wife, and she was permitted to adjust her dress. She made an attempt to intreat and remonstrate against the violence offered her, but was silenced by a stern warning to cease giving useless trouble, or that the gag should be instantly replaced.

A halt of two hours was thought sufficient to rest both my wife and the horses; as for the men, they were inured to much severer toil, and did not feel fatigue. Eager to secure his prize, Diego insisted on continuing his course, and the party proceeded until darkness once more covered the earth. The clouds which, during the latter part of the day, had overspread the sky, threatened a storm towards its close; and the darkness became so excessive after nightfall, that the party could not proceed; so, choosing a level spot under the shelter of some overhanging rocks, they once more fed their horses, and mustering close together, in order to secure themselves as much as possible from the cold blasts that began to howl around, the men went to sleep for a while.



As for Payneta, they made her up a couch of some horsecloths in a retired and sheltered corner of the natural cavern, and, after offering such refreshment as they had to give, they left her to herself. But the horror of her situation, surrounded as she was by reckless and ferocious banditti, and entirely in the power of one whose conduct had proved him to be capable of every possible atrocity, was such as utterly to banish sleep in spite of her deadly fatigue. Trembling with terror she shrank into herself, and would have sought refuge even in the depths of the grave, to shun the fate which she could not doubt was preparing for her. But the tortures of apprehension were not all she was now doomed to suffer; for the silence which reigned after the party had arranged themselves for the night, was broken by the light tread of an approaching foot, and, looking upwards, the dark and massive form of Diego was seen relieved against the gloomy sky, and standing close by her couch. Uttering a shriek, my terrified wife sprang from her recumbent posture, and sought instinctively to fly; but the powerful hand of her ravisher was instantly upon her arm, and retained her in its iron gripe. She sank again upon the couch, and faintly implored his mercy. "What dread you, beauteous Payneta?" said he, softening as he might, the rough tones of his voice, and sitting down beside her: "You see before you the most devoted of your slaves. The cruel harshness of my father has driven me, indeed, to a measure which may seem harsh and unjustifiable in your eyes; but who that sees the beloved object of his soul about to be torn from him forever, would hesitate to do as I have done? Seek not then to fly me, lovely Payneta! but rather increase my devotion by yielding a gentle and willing consent to my happiness, and thus bind me to yourself for ever."

The tone in which these words were uttered, was but ill calculated to re-assure his trembling victim: for though the language was that of persuasion, the manner was that of a master to his slave, when he is resolved to be obeyed; and he scarcely suppressed the exultation which he felt at his successful villainy.

"Alas! sir!" said Payneta in reply, "what would you have from a wretch like me?—what charms can a married woman, so forlorn, so miserable as I am, have for a chief like you, who can command the love of so many beauties? Be generous! oh! be generous! Be like your noble father:—do not detain him longer from me whom duty as well as inclination leads me to join—restore my liberty and claim any ransom you may choose to name."

"Restore you to liberty? permit you to rejoin your husband?" repeated he with a scornful smile; "and think you, lovely Payneta! that I am likely to yield the prize which has been won by so hazardous, so decisive a measure, to a woman's entreaty or a woman's tears? No! mine you now are, and mine you shall remain, so long as it is my will to keep you; and let me advise you, as you value your own comfort, nay, as you value your life, to grant me with a willing heart that affection, or at least that favor, which will otherwise be wrung from you by force." With these words he seized upon her, resolved as it

appeared to make good his threats, regardless of the struggles of my wretched wife, which now rent the air. But his detestable purpose was fearfully interrupted.

The storm which had gathered around, had for some time begun to break in cold drizzling rain, succeeded by heavy showers and a loud wind. The thunder, distant at first, but gradually rolling onward, now burst in reiterated peals overhead, and the vivid flashes of lightning illuminated all the dreary scene. Regardless of the Almighty voice, which spoke thus awfully in the tempest, the wicked Diego was seeking to effect his iniquitous object, when a flash brighter than the sun at noon-day, accompanied by a terrible crash, shook both the heavens and the earth, and made every one start to their feet, just as a huge mass of rock, close to their resting place, was scattered in splinters around. The struggling Payneta dropped from his hold, as, looking for a moment wildly around him, he staggered and fell to the ground. "Great God! what may this mean? where am I? who art thou, fiend?" cried he, after a minute's pause. No answer was returned—and Diego, trembling with superstitious awe, slowly arose and retired from the couch of Payneta to his own resting place. The storm had now spent its fury, and was gradually rolling away; but its salutary effect continued, for Payneta suffered no farther molestation during the night.

The march was resumed on the morrow, through an equally wild and difficult country. Towards noon, as the party wound slowly up the steep and craggy face of the mountain, the attention of Payneta was attracted by some words which were passing in an under tone between Diego, and an old man who seemed to be one of his principal confidants. "But, in the name of God!" demanded the old man, in reply, as it seemed, to something which the other had been relating, "what do you suppose it to have been?"

"The devil himself knows best" responded Diego, "for he it surely must have been that sent that cursed storm, and the infernal vision that rode upon it, to disturb me at so critical a moment, and cheat me of my promised happiness. Why, Santo, I swear by my soul, that I saw it as plainly as I now see you:—the flash had passed away, and the gloom of total blindness had covered my eyes, when that bright figure stood before me, with menacing eyes, and waved me from the spot where I lay by the side of her who would so soon have been my own. I am no woman as you know, but may I never lay in the arms of a willing fair one, if the vision bore not the form of Margaret, the American girl, whose death was to be attributed rather to her own obstinate folly than to my hasty anger! I did love that creature, Santo; and the astonishment, nay the terror which seized on me on seeing the dead interpose thus between me and my purpose, suspended every faculty. Shame be upon me! I shrunk away like a detected thief, and had no courage to return to the charge. But I will be even with her for this yet; to-night we will be safely lodged with my old friend, Senor Amadeo—no storm will trouble us there, and no Margaret shall interpose again to thwart me: mine she shall be then."

spite of hell or heaven themselves." "Aye, aye," replied Santo, with a repressed laugh, "I do not doubt it, sir; no fear but you will redeem such a pledge! All I wonder at is, that you should have allowed yourself to be foiled last night by any false alarm; for false I cannot but believe it, however powerful its effect may have been. But, come, I must push forward and give notice of your coming to Amadeo. But by the time you shall have descended into the valley, I will be at the fort. God give you a safe journey till then!" So saying, he rode forward and was soon out of sight.

This dialogue was but ill calculated to comfort or encourage its unhappy object, who required no such farther proof of her ravisher's determination to effect her ruin; and who felt with a sinking heart every circumstance that confirmed the unlimited control he exercised over her fate: nevertheless, she tried to brace her mind to the task of resisting to the uttermost every effort, whether of fraud or force, which should be directed against her virtue, and resolved to sacrifice life itself, rather than to consent to the loss of her own honor or that of her husband.

In the meantime they reached the summit of the pass, and, after winding for nearly four miles along a dangerous chasm, which seemed to have cleft the mountains in sunder, they reached a point from whence they overlooked a wild and singular valley. It was inclosed by rugged mountains, the feet of which were scantily clothed with dwarf oaks. A vast quantity of grey stones, the wreck of the shattered peaks above, covered the greater part of the middle region, while a rich green tint among the rocks that formed their summits, gave token of the plentiful pastures enjoyed by the flocks and herds that fed there. A full and rapid stream formed by the union of two principal branches, and fringed with wood of better growth, ran in a rough and stony bed, which struggled from one side of the narrow glen to the other, sometimes running along the foot of rocky walls of rock, and sometimes winding through a patch of green meadow. The point of junction between the two torrents was a bald and lofty rock, the terminus of a mountain ridge, no wise inferior in attitude to those which bounded in the principal glen. This rock rose precipitously on every side but that on which it was connected with the parent ridge, and there, a narrow neck, formed for defence by the hand of nature, afforded the only means of approach. A station so peculiarly adapted for security, was not likely to be overlooked in a country like New Grenada; and accordingly the level ground upon its summit, comprehending an area of no inconsiderable extent, had from time immemorial been the site of a fortress, which was always the stronghold of some bold bandit chieftain.

This fort was in the possession of Amadeo, a professed friend of Diego's, who had once saved his life, and he was satisfied that here no vengeance could reach him, and no force could rend his victim from his grasp. This was the termination of the present enterprise, and the prison of poor Payneta.

After a long and painful descent from the mountain, they drew near

the place, and its dark features became one by one more prominent and imposing. The original fabric had been formed of ponderous masses of stone and lime, so firmly cemented, that time itself had failed of making its usual impression on them. Several different superstructures had been reared upon this solid foundation; and each in its term had contributed to the imposing group of walls, towers and bastions, which now crowned and encircled the whole rock. But the reigning character of the place was that of gloomy strength. The dark grey walls, following the irregular inflexions of the rock in curious points and angles, were diversified in some places with a tower, a lofty bastion, or the roof of a house, rising above the general level, and the indentings of embrasures and crennels sometimes relieved the monotony of its outline; but, on the whole, the aspect of the place was dreary and forbidding; and as, after a weary circuit which afforded her ample time for contemplating the walls of her future prison, my wretched wife was led through the heavy gates and intricate passages of its outer works, her heart entirely failed her, and she felt as if hope itself, which never quits the human heart, could find no entrance there.

The party was met at the outer gateway by a brother of Amadeo's, attended by a train of his household, to welcome Diego in a strain of due respect. He was conducted to the residence prepared for him, and Payneta was received by some female attendants who lifted her half-dead from the horse, carried her into the inner apartments, and laid her carefully on a soft couch. A bath was instantly prepared and every means were taken to remove, as far as possible the painful effects of her fatiguing journey. The attendants then quitted the apartments and left her to repose.

The first use she made of this liberty was to examine her prison. It was a small apartment, neatly fitted up with most of the requisites of female accommodation; the light was admitted through one small window, which opened at a great height from the floor, in a wall of immense thickness. On clambering up with some difficulty, she shuddered to behold that it looked down on a high and giddy precipice, at the foot of which foamed a furious torrent: so that escape on that side was utterly impossible, except by a frightful death. But even this dismal resource had been guarded against, for the window was secured by cross-bars of iron. As to the door it opened upon a passage bordering a small court, which seemed to form part of Amadeo's own apartments, and was consequently securely guarded. At sight of these ominous precautions, the wretched Payneta sick with the conviction of inevitable fate, fell down exhausted on the couch, and abandoned herself for some time to despair. But her resolution returned by degrees, and she endeavored to fortify her mind for the hour of trial. Determined to part with life rather than suffer her honor to be sullied, she had found means to secrete a small knife about her person; and assuring herself it was still there, and at hand in case of need, she lay awaiting what might be preparing for her in silent but intense agitation.

The remainder of the day passed over undisturbed. Once or twice a female came in, to know if any thing was wanted by the lady; but retired immediately on receiving a negative reply, and the night closed in without any cause of alarm. It might have been more than two hours after the time for evening prayers, when the door opened, and several attendants, bearing lights, approached Payneta, entreating her to rise and array herself in a rich dress they presented her. "Whence come these things?" inquired Payneta; "on whose part are they sent? and why should a prisoner, for as such must I consider myself, be thus decked out?"

"It is not for us to answer these questions, lady," replied one, the principal among them; "nor need you make yourself uneasy on the subject. Here no female has any choice but that of passive obedience, and it will be well that you be found disposed to yield implicitly to the arrangement of those in whose power you now are."

To have attempted resistance in a point of trivial consequence, would have been provocation of evil, so she permitted the attendants to dress and ornament her.

A banquet was now brought in, a white cloth was spread on a table before her, and rich dishes in profusion were placed upon it, while wine sparkled in vessels of silver beside her. When all was ready, the attendants withdrew, and she alone remained awaiting the event in speechless anxiety. Not long was she suffered to wait; the door opened once more, and the hated Diego entered, unannounced, with all the authoritative air of a master. He likewise had changed his garb, and his ungainly figure was now clad in gorgeous apparel.

Disregarding the scream of horror which burst involuntarily from poor Payneta, as she shrank from his approach, he walked up to the couch, and seating himself by her, took her unwilling hand, and in a voice intended to be soothing, expressed his hopes that she had in some degree, recovered from the fatigue of her rapid journey; a journey, he again assured her, the necessity of which he regretted; "and I trust," added he, "that I may now look for a more favorable reception from the lovely Payneta, than she was disposed to grant me when last I had the happiness of a private interview. She will do well to remember that there is no chance of interruption here; in this place, she is known only as my wife, and she must submit to be treated as such."

"Your wife!" exclaimed Payneta, pale with terror at the expression of his countenance, as much as at his words—"Never! never!—it cannot be, shall not be! You may torture me, you may kill me, and work your pleasure on my wretched corse, but while I live, I never will be your wife!"

"You are right," replied he with a sneer; "that detested title need not be forced upon you;—but what think you of being my *slave*, my minion? the creature of my pleasure while the fancy lasts—the worthless, wretched drudge of my will when it ceases? The day may come when you shall eagerly but fruitlessly solicit the favors you now reject—the despised and cast-off mistress of Diego may rue the hour in which she refused the honored name of wife! Reflect, then, lovely

Payneta—yet once again I tender you that proud distinction; be wise, and accept it, for I swear that from hence I do not depart without full possession of your charms!"

"Never! never!—once more I tell thee, man, that nothing but the dead body of Payneta shall ever be subjected to thy insults! Leave me! leave me instantly! I am not so helpless as you think. Once the angry voice of Heaven interposed to save me from the pollution of thy touch; and think not because I seem alone and in thy power, that therefore thy wretched purpose shall be accomplished!"

"That we shall see presently," said Diego, and he rose, with the words, intending to seize her in his arms; but my virtuous and noble wife, springing suddenly to the other end of the apartment, gained time to draw the little dagger which she had prepared. "There is no resource but this, then!" exclaimed she; "Oh my beloved husband, I shall see thee no more, but I die thy unpolluted wife!" While yet uttering these words, with a desperate blow she plunged the sharp blade up to the handle in her bosom; the monster rushed forward just in time to catch her as she staggered backwards, and was covered with her spouting blood.

This was a catastrophe he had never anticipated, and one which effectually frustrated his diabolical intentions. Slowly he bore the pale and bleeding body to the couch, where she lay without sense or motion. He believed that she was already dead; and somewhat shocked, but much more disappointed at her sudden fate, he vociferated for help; the attendants rushed in; and hastily forming some tale to account for the bloody spectacle before them, he quitted the apartment, and left, as he believed, the body alone of poor Payneta to their care.

The pain of drawing the knife from the wound, which was followed by a new flow of blood, produced a groan from my wife, and gave her attendants the first hint that life was not totally extinct. They stanchied the blood with bandages, and placed her in an easy posture on the couch:—it was long before the light of returning animation beamed in her half-closed eyes, and it was with a fearful shudder that she first opened them, and gazed wildly around, but, when she saw none but female countenances about her, the terror of her look subsided, she closed her eyes again, and lay perfectly quiet, uttering only now and then a deep sigh.

There is a benevolent and sympathetic kindness in the female heart, which, when unchecked by any feeling of jealousy or hatred, is ever readily excited by a suffering object, and particularly if that object happens to be a female, young and interesting, like the luckless Payneta. The women of Amadeo's family, when they heard of the accident, ascribing it naturally to some unmanly violence on the part of the supposed husband, flocked one and all to see and make offer of attentions. Full of indignation at the savage cruelty which, although they were ignorant of the whole truth, could alone, they felt, have led to so so fatal a catastrophe, they resolved, if possible, to make her tyrant feel; and therefore continued to give out, that her life was in

the greatest danger, although it was soon discovered that the knife, glancing along a rib, had failed to penetrate the chest, and therefore had not inflicted a mortal wound.

They soon, indeed, discovered the dread which she entertained of her tyrant's visits; and with the humane design of exempting her from the misery of his presence, they continued to maintain the belief of her danger even after her convalescence was well advanced.

But Providence, which, at its own good pleasure, baffles or promotes the best-laid plans of mortals, and confounds alike the wisdom of the sage and the power of the tyrant, had already decreed that my unfortunate wife should be delivered from the hands of this miscreant by an agency on which he never calculated. The adventure of the wounded lady had made no little noise in the house of Amadeo; her beauty was the theme of every tongue, and so highly was it vaunted by the women that the robber chief, Amadeo, became desirous of judging for himself how far it merited their praises. It never is a matter of difficulty with the master of a castle, particularly if he be of unlimited power as was Amadeo, to obtain a sight, unknown to herself, of any female who may chance to be within his walls; nor did any scruples of conscience or of delicacy withhold Amadeo from enjoying this gratification. Unseen himself, he beheld the snowy bosom and love-inspiring form of Payneta, and was so much captivated, that he resolved, although he had a favorite mistress, to appropriate her to himself. He therefore caused his friend Diego to be informed that the lady was not likely to recover; and when the latter insisted on being allowed an interview, he coldly replied, that, after the violence which had already taken place, he did not feel justified in permitting the continuance of an intercourse which might be fatal to an unfortunate person under his roof. Diego stormed and blustered; but Amadeo observing that his own stronghold was not the place where he could submit to be bullied, and adding his regret that the air of the castle appeared to have disordered the health of his guest, the latter took the hint and his leave together, and quitted the country of Amadeo in no small haste.

Congratulations on account of this fortunate deliverance were offered to my wife, and a hint was conveyed along with them, which gave her much reason to dread that her situation was but little altered for the better. When her recovery was complete, she received a formal intimation that it was Amadeo's intention to solicit an interview in the apartment of his lady. The thoughts of such a scene renewed all her apprehensions and distress, but she was unexpectedly relieved; for tidings having reached Amadeo that a plundering party, headed by Diego, had penetrated into his country nearer than was deemed safe, he suddenly assembled his followers and quitted the fort, to repel them.


A day or two after his departure, while, yet trembling with apprehension, Payneta was musing over her melancholy fate, and looking forward to the future with despondency, her door opened, and a strange young girl, of great beauty, richly dressed, and attended by two of

her women, entered her apartment. "You are surprised, lady," said the stranger, seating herself by the side of Payneta, and taking her hand with a smile of the most fascinating sweetness—"you are at a loss how to interpret this visit of a stranger; but be not apprehensive, though you have no knowledge of me—I am your sincere friend, and I am come hither to prove it. In me you see the favorite mistress of Amadeo, the chief in whose power you now are. He stole me from my father in Buenos Ayres two years since, when I was but twelve years of age. So you see I am younger than you. He treated me kindly then, and does now,—and I sincerely love him, although he has robbed me of virtue and tore me from my parents." Payneta had frequently heard of this young lady during her stay within the walls, although till now she had never seen her; nor had report been silent in regard to her character, beauty and accomplishments. She was said to have a proud, ambitious spirit; and though her temper was violent and revengeful, she had, it was understood, sufficient craft and self-command, when her interest required the effort, to veil her wrath under a mask of smiles, and Payneta thought she could detect somewhat of this in the air of cordial friendship which it was her pleasure to assume upon this her first and long-deferred visit. It was not, however, her interest, nor her wish, to offend the young mistress of Amadeo, and therefore rising with a respectful salute, she begged to be honored with her commands.

"Be seated my dear Payneta," said the haughty young beauty, with another sweet smile, in which, however, might be traced an air of patronage: "I have heard much about you, which has awakened a powerful interest in your fate: circumstances, of no small importance, have deprived me of the pleasure of visiting you during your illness, and from listening to your story from your own mouth; but I now ask that satisfaction, which I hope you will not refuse. We have time enough upon our hands this morning, for I have provided against all interruption, and I intreat that you will now consider me, what in fact you will find me, your sincere and zealous friend; and that you will treat me with that confidence which such a one deserves."

"Misfortune, that great instructress, had taught poor Payneta to be cautious in yielding her confidence; and this caution was not decreased by the knowledge she had obtained of the young mistress' reputed character. But there was nothing calculated to excite suspicion in this inquiry; and so fascinating was the semblance of sympathy to one who had long been deprived of the consolations of friendship, that it cannot be wondered at if my unfortunate wife was easily induced to comply with a request, which, in truth, was equivalent to a command. She told the young mistress so much of her story as sufficed to make her perfectly acquainted with her situation; and concluded with an earnest entreaty that she would interest herself in procuring her liberty; adding, that whatever ransom might be required, should be paid the moment she reached Bogota.

"My dear Payneta," observed the lady, when the former had concluded,—"I pity you most sincerely. Good heavens! what a



fate—to be separated so long as you have been from such a husband! Why even I, although Amadeo has robbed me, by force of my all, I can scarce wait until his return when he goes off on an expedition. And your poor husband! what must not he have endured, provided, as I doubt not is the case, he has escaped the robbers who carried you off! But, I trust, your misfortunes are drawing to a close; it shall be my business, in the absence of Amadeo, to give another color to your fate. Now listen to me:—you have fortunately got rid of one tyrant, but without some nice management you will not find your condition much improved. Amadeo has unhappily seen your charms, and has taken a liking to your person. I know this full surely well by his not sharing my couch last night; and I am but too well acquainted with the customary course of such fancies. Totally in his power, as I was, you could not avoid the fate you dread; but his passion once gratified, the toy would lose its value in his eyes, and he might dispose of you to the next friend he should meet as a virgin gift. Such is Amadeo—such the fickleness of his affection:—well as I know him, even I find it no easy task to fix his fancy and retain his volatile affections.” She gazed haughtily round a while, as if she felt the sacrifice which pride was making to interest; but her features resumed their sweet expression, and the consciousness of superior beauty lighted up her face with a glow of exultation, as her eye fell on a mirror near; she then continued her address to Payneta. “I have perhaps given you unnecessary pain, by describing misfortunes which it is my design to avert—or *I must die!* Your heroism deserves a better fate than mine did, for I fell almost without a struggle. Perhaps, it might have been different had I been married to a young and handsome husband, such as yours surely must be. You shall regain your freedom—you shall return to Bogota, and sleep in your husband’s arms! Amadeo will continue absent for some weeks, and I possess interest and adherents enough in the castle to insure your leaving it in safety; prepare yourself, therefore. If you wish for freedom, it shall be yours to-morrow night; drop not a hint of what has passed between us; rouse not suspicion by the least peculiarity in manner or conduct, but be ready to accompany the person who will be with you to-morrow at midnight, and who will place you in the hands of a trusty friend, whose orders are to see you in safety in the hands of your relatives in Bogota. No thanks! only comply with my directions—may God protect you, fair Payneta! Farewell!” Having spoken thus, the robber chief’s young mistress, embracing my wife with another sweet smile, arose and quitted the apartment.

It was vain, as well as useless, to dwell on the joy of Payneta at this most unexpected brightening of her prospects. It was long, indeed, before she could believe that all she had just listened to was more real than the dreams that had so often mocked her hopes. When, after a while, she reflected with more composure on what had passed, she was inclined to view with something like jealousy and suspicion the fair offers of this kind lady, who thus for the first time had visited her solitude; but after pondering over the subject as dis-

passionately as she could, she saw no fair grounds for distrust. It was perfectly natural that a favorite mistress should be jealous of a threatened rival, and that she should endeavor to remove her if possible;—that in doing so she should bestow a benefit upon that rival by delivering her from a gloomy prison. This was a contingency which did not by any means tend to impugn her good faith. At all events, what fate could be worse than remaining where she was, exposed to the worst of insults, and to agonies of anxiety and terror, which made her life a burden? Come what might, she resolved to confide in the young and beautiful mistress of Amadeo, and accept of the protection she offered her to Bogota.

The remaining hours were passed in restless and painful anxiety by Payneta. In vain she tried to sleep; although conscious that all her bodily and mental powers would be required in the approaching effort, her eyelids refused to close; or if for a moment she fell into a doze, it was troubled and uneasy; and she awoke with frightful dreams of discovery and prolonged imprisonment. Darkness at length once more covered the face of the earth, and her terror, lest any untoward event should occur to interrupt her purposed escape, became almost too much to endure: her limbs trembled and her soul was sick, even to faintness. In this way did three or four weary hours pass on, when a low tap was heard at her door, and upon opening it two females made their appearance and gave the concerted signal. Payneta, who was in perfect readiness, did not delay a moment. They threw on her person a cloak and veil, and thus enveloped they traversed many courts and passages, which all were silent and unguarded.

The females now stopped, and delivered over their charge into the hands of two men, bidding her be of good cheer, for these were the friends of their mistress, appointed to be her faithful conductors. The darkness, the dreariness of the house, and the solitary silence of the vast fabric, imparted a sensation of awe, bordering upon terror, to the poor Payneta, who shuddered as she watched the retiring forms of her female attendants, as if she had then parted with the last of her friends. But a moment’s recollection of the horrors she was flying from, and the necessity of retaining all her firmness, and she followed her conductors. No words were spoken; and in a few minutes they reached the massive gateway, where only one or two guards were seen lounging at their post. After a short parley with these, a small wicket was opened in the heavy iron-clenched woodwork of the gate, and they found themselves in a short passage. An angle at the farthest extremity of this brought them abruptly to the outer gate of all, which was also opened after a short delay; and then the cold breeze of night blew around them, uncontrolled by the walls of the fort.

The travellers had now no molestation to dread, and no farther obstacle appeared to oppose their progress. A short way onward, they reached a spot where two horses and an ambling mule were found in charge of a servant: my wife was placed on the latter, while the two horses were immediately mounted by her conductors, and the



whole party, still without uttering a word, pushed rapidly forward. After a march of rather more than two hours, they reached a miserable village, consisting of a few mud-huts, surrounded with tents, and here one of the men informed Payneta that they must halt awhile. She remonstrated against so wanton a loss of time; but the man, with something of a sneer, bid her not be uneasy, that the danger was now over, that the horses required to be fed, and they were here to be joined by a third person, a friend of the mistress of Amadeo, who was in her particular confidence, and who was to conduct her to Bogota. A pang of suspicion and alarm crossed the mind of my wife as she listened to these palpable evasions; but she was helpless, and could offer no resistance to whatever might be intended,—so she held her peace, and did whatever she was bid.

The wretched hut where they now halted was inhabited, as it seemed, by a single old woman, who received Payneta with very little ceremony. But before much time had elapsed, a fat, middle aged man entered the room, and was announced as her future conductor to Bogota. She was particularly struck with the blunt, unceremonious manners of this person, and her alarm increased at so unaccountable a transmission of her person from one rude attendant to another. The men now spoke together apart, with much gesticulation, and many significant glances were directed towards my wife, as if they would have scrutinized her person through the thick veil and cloak which enveloped her from head to foot: at last he said aloud, "It is well, I am satisfied; give your mistress this, and tell her she may rely on my obedience to her commands." The whole then withdrew, and left Payneta and the old woman alone in the hut.

There was something inexplicable in the words, and still more so in the manner of this man, which increased the uneasy suspicions that had arisen in the mind of Payneta. Turning to the old woman, she entreated her to tell her who that person was, what he had in charge regarding her, and whether they would soon set out for Bogota.

"Trouble not yourself, child, about these matters at present," said she, "you will soon be made acquainted with every thing; meantime, be content to know that you are in safety, and that in due time you will be conveyed to Bogota. And now be advised and go to sleep; it yet wants some hours of day, and there is a long journey before you on the morrow." This equivocal reply was far from removing the suspicions of my wife; but she considered that she had at all events escaped from her dreary prison, and was under a roof with one of her own sex: these were blessings to be thankful for, and they went a good way to soothe her mind; fatigue triumphed over anxiety for a season, and she was soon buried in profound repose.

The sun was yet low, when the voice of the old woman awakened Payneta from sleep, and bade her arise and prepare for her journey. On coming forth from the hut, she found no one but the person whose unceremonious behaviour had alarmed her the night before, attended by several black servants, all attired for the journey. The manners of this man had undergone no improvement; on the contrary, there was a

harshness in the tone of command he assumed, and a disagreeable air of vulgarity conspicuous in his person and address, which renewed all her uneasiness, and increased the suspicions she entertained as to his character, and the views of the bandit chief's pretty mistress in committing her to his charge. She inquired for her two former conductors, and was informed, that having executed their orders, they had returned to the fort. "And is this the person who is to conduct me to Bogota?"

"It is—be satisfied."

Every thing being ready, she was led out of the village by the old woman, who was likewise attired for a journey, and taken to a place where half a dozen mules stood prepared for the march; some loaded with baggage, and others with covered cradles for the accommodation of travellers. Here they found her new conductor, who had moved on before, and who now impatiently summoned the old woman, and bade her make haste and lose no more time. The coarse violence of his language, and the air of a master which he assumed, had now alarmed my wife so much, that she stopped short, and turning with clasped hands to her companion. "For the sake of God!" exclaimed she, "I entreat you, tell me who this rude person may be, and why he bears himself so strangely in my presence. Whither is he to conduct me? What is to be my fate? Have pity on a miserable creature, who is bowed to the earth by reiterated misfortunes!"

"I tell you," replied the woman, "that you are to be carried to Bogota, and that no harm shall befall you—I—"

"What is the meaning of all this?" interrupted the man gruffly; "Why keep up a farce like this any longer? Why not tell the truth at once? You belong now to me, young woman. I am, among bandits, a slave merchant, I furnish them with young and beautiful girls at their palaces in Bogota, and get good prices from them. I buy captured girls from all the mountain chiefs, and dispose of them to persons of rank, in the bandit way, at good profits. Amadeo's mistress has sold you to me; I paid her her own price for you, and you are now to be carried, with some other young ladies, who are in the same situation as you are, to the city of Bogota."

A thunderbolt could not have produced a more sudden effect than this unfeeling speech upon the wretched Payneta. With a piercing shriek, she fell senseless to the earth, where she lay for some minutes, as if her spirit had departed. Motives of interest, if not of compassion, now induced her master to render her every possible assistance; nor was it without a great deal of trouble that she recovered under the old woman's care. But she revived only to a keener and more torturing sense of treachery of the bandit's mistress. With frantic exclamations she addressed the slave merchant, entreating him to spare her—to restore her to her husband; and her ravings became so alarming that he began to fear her brain was turned, and set himself to soothe her as best he could, directing the old woman also to make use of every method of kindness in effecting the same purpose. Fortunately, a new idea struck my wife, whose mind till then had only been alive to the dreadful impression that she was a slave, the property



of another, liable to be sold to any one who might fancy her,—to be exposed, without reserve, to the same evils from which she had with so much difficulty escaped,—or to live, perhaps, a household drudge, forever separated from her husband. “Did you say I was to be taken to Bogota?” exclaimed she eagerly. “Certainly,” replied the woman; “it is to Bogota you are now going.” “Oh! then! I may once more meet with my husband after all! Oh! mother! if you have any pity, if you can feel the least compassion for a poor, unhappy creature, be a friend to me now; speak in behalf to the merchant, my master. I will give no more trouble; I will ask for nothing more; only let me be carried to Bogota without delay; let him seek out my husband, and whatever price he chooses to demand for me, he shall freely command.”

“Be calm, my daughter,” replied the woman, moved at the poignancy of her distress; be contented. I have told you the truth: you are now quitting this wild country for the city of Bogota. Old Alfredo, though his manners are rough, is not a hard-hearted man: he is a slave merchant, it is true, but what then? every one must have a calling, and follow it. All he requires is his fair profit; and all he has promised Amadeo’s mistress is that you must never return to the castle—a pledge which, I doubt not, you will readily confirm. And as to your ransom,—if, as you say, you have a husband who chooses to recover you, he will have a fair opportunity of doing so; nay, I am confident that old Alfredo will take pains to seek him out, provided he sees a likelihood of receiving a just compensation for his trouble. Collect your scattered senses, child, and hope for the best, while I speak a word or two with Alfredo.” After some conversation with the old woman, who, in fact was a species of duenna, whose duty it was to watch the conduct of his slaves,—the merchant, approaching my wife, assured her, with a more respectful air, and in less offensive terms, that she should have no cause for complaint so long as she might remain in his possession, and promised his best assistance, on their arrival at the capital, in discovering her husband. “You see, madam,” added he, “that I am inclined to place every confidence in the truth of your story: should you be deceiving me in any part of it, the consequences will rest upon your own head.”

No farther time was now lost in commencing the journey. Payneta was placed in one of the cradles suspended on either side of a mule, and in the other was stowed the old woman, whom she preferred to an utter stranger, and who was by no means deficient in kindness. The merchant was as good as his word; and as far from giving any reason of complaint during the journey, he paid great regard to the health and comfort of my wife; and in more instances than one curtailed the day’s march to accommodate her. They reached Bogota on the seventh day without accident; and no sooner had old Alfredo established himself and his slaves in a secret and convenient lodgings, than in compliance with the impatient wishes of Payneta, he commenced enquiries regarding myself. It was not long before he found out one of my agents, who, the moment he became satisfied that the

slave he offered for sale was no other than the wife for whose recovery his employer had lavished so much money and suffered so much anxiety, lost no time in paying round the price required, and added such a present as left the merchant no cause to regret the attention he had shown her, or the trouble she had cost him.

It is needless for me to dwell on my delight at recovering, after so many perils, the dear object of my unswerving love, pure and unsullied, kind and affectionate as ever. On my bended knees I vowed to God that I would henceforth watch over her with double vigilance, and devote my life to make her happy. Of her happiness and joy, it is scarce worth trying to describe it, and I leave it to your imagination.

AUGUSTUS H. MANDEVILLE.

*Baltimore, July, 28th, 1853.*

