



AN AUTO-DA-FE, OR BURNING OF THE HERETICS. SEE PAGE 319.

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THE

PRINCESS OF VIARNA:

OR, THE

SPANISH INQUISITION,

IN THE REIGN OF THE EMPEROR *

CHARLES THE FIFTH.

By Thomas Pictor.

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TO
THE PROTESTANT COMMUNITY
OF THIS
LAND OF RELIGIOUS TOLERATION,
THE FOLLOWING PAGES, AIMING TO ELUCIDATE, IN A
FAMILIAR MANNER,
THE INIQUITIES OF PRIESTCRAFT
DURING A PERIOD OF
ECCLESIASTICAL SUPREMACY
OVER THE
MIGHTIEST OF ROMAN CATHOLIC EMPIRES,
IS FRATEERNALLY
DEDICATED BY THEIR AUTHOR,
IN A FERVENT HOPE
That the Historical Experience of Man's Degradation in the Past
MAY FOREWARN
ENLIGHTENED CHILDREN OF LUTHER,
THAT, ALTHOUGH
THE SPANISH INQUISITION
IS NOMINALLY EXTINGUISHED,
THE RELIGIOUS SPIRIT WHICH CREATED IT,
NOT ONLY
LIVES AMONG US,
BUT
ARDENTLY STRUGGLES TO RE-ERECT,
IN EVERY QUARTER OF THE GLOBE,
ITS BLASPHEMOUS TRIBUNAL.

PREFATORY REMARKS.

WHILE claiming an historical quality for the following romance, the author has no desire to enforce that decided tone of authority, inseparable from strictly historical productions. He has simply ventured upon a natural delineation of the political and social condition of an individual community during a period of Spain's most conspicuous sovereignty. He has, furthermore, attempted to shadow forth causes for the decadence of a vast empire, with colonies upon either hemisphere, as well as to illustrate the enervating effects of ecclesiastical, conjoined with political, absolutism.

During the reign of the Emperor Charles V., Spain was accredited the most powerful kingdom of the century; still, almost immediately upon his abdication, the singular spectacle became apparent, of a mighty nation sinking gradually, as regards wealth, influence, and political character, during three centuries of accumulating enlightenment, until its declension has, at the present period,

reached a comparative degradation, at variance with the progression of civilization. To a political mind, an ethical cause for this national fall is obvious; and in his romance, the author has presented, in his opinion at least, a veritable description of Spanish manners during the reign of the Imperial monk, and has striven to delineate, in familiar phases, the ecclesiastical scourge, and its social effects, undeniably the motive force for Spanish decadence.

Seville has been selected as the scene of the drama, as a remarkable monument of decayed municipal greatness. During the early reign of the Emperor, that famous city contained a permanent population of over five hundred thousand souls; in the succeeding century, it boasted one hundred and thirty thousand operatives, chiefly employed in silk fabrications; while, in our day, the municipality claims jurisdiction over an aggregate of less than ninety thousand inhabitants, while the army of artizans has entirely disappeared. Seville can justly be cited as an appalling example of the ravages originating from the Holy Office.

The author, anticipating charges of anachronism, cannot suffer his intentional variance with accepted dates of chroniclers to pass without explanation.

The Dominican, PEDRO ARBUES, was in reality canon of the Cathedral of Saragossa and Inquisitor-General of Arragon, under its founder, Torquemada; he therefore

lived contemporaneously with Ferdinand and Isabella. Assassinated in 1485 by the Arragonese, terrified at the increasing atrocities of the Inquisition, Arbues was beatified, in 1664, by Pope Alexander VII. This presumptive martyr has been, therefore, employed as a living type of an Order, unto whom, after death, he became a saintly protector.

The author would, moreover, incidentally allude to other historical variances, which have been amplified to develop antagonistic qualities of the social state, engendered by the progress of the Lutheran Reformation among Continental nations. For instance, he has carried down the existence of the feudal principality of VIARNA long after its extinction from natural causes, and transplanted its equivocal authority into a kingdom, in which its pretensions could never be tolerated. This voluntary deviation from perfect historical accuracy—similar to the introduction of *THE SORCERERS*, a religious body of the seventeenth century—is sought to be justified as serving to render more obvious the thralldom of temporal tyranny, when united to the all-absorbing power of the Church.

A final word as to the connection of the Garduna with the Holy Office. Upon the arrest of Franseco Cortina, in 1821, and the destruction of this criminal Association, the registers of the Fraternity were brought to light. From these documents it appears that, during a period of one

hundred and thirty-seven years, that is, from 1520 to 1667, no less than nineteen hundred and eighty-six outrages and crimes had been committed by the Garduna at the instigation of members of the Holy Office, for pecuniary considerations, designated for each offence. One-third of these outrages consisted in abductions of females; another in assassinations; while the remainder was composed of mutilations of the body, forgeries, perjuries, and crimes of a meaner description. This register, whose authenticity was fully established before the criminal court of Seville, formed the most convincing proof of Cortina's criminality, and he was consequently executed, with sixteen of his brethren, November 25th, 1824. Thus, the Garduna in Spain survived its rival of the Inquisition, while branches of both, transplanted to this continent, exist in Mexico, Brazil, and other sections of South America, to the present hour.

NEW-YORK, *May*, 1857.

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THE PRINCESS OF VIARNA

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CHAPTER I.

THE BRIDGE OF THE TRIANA.

DURING the sixteenth century, the Inquisition ruled supreme throughout Spain. Instituted by a fanatical friar, under the auspices of the weak-minded bigot, Ferdinand, and his consort, Isabella, the terrible tribunal of the Holy Office, nominally extirpating heresy in the name of the Supreme Judge of the Universe, had augmented its powers and enforced its judgments to such an extent, as to assume judicial cognizance of almost every transgression. Supported by the arms of a powerful militia, enlisted in its service, although enrolled beneath the banner of the Roman Church—served by an indefatigable army of spies and domestic agents, countenanced by the voluntary assistance of the Roman clergy, and patronized by the most influential and ambitious of titled laymen, the institution had, during the earlier days of the reign of the Emperor Charles Quint, attained its climax of sovereignty over both the minds and persons of the inhabitants of the Peninsula. The Inquisitors and their familiars, relying wholly upon the undisguised dread, inspired as well by the treacherous deception of rumour, as from the public expositions of the auto-da-fe, far surpassed, for many years, in political influence, the disciples of Loyola, the sole religious order,

which, emboldened by the indirect patronage of the royal government during the ensuing reign, ventured to dispute their ecclesiastical empire.

Created shortly after the fall of the Moorish Kingdom of Grenada, and the consequent dispersion, in scattered bands, of the relics of that unfortunate race, throughout the very land their ancestors had conquered in the name of God and his prophet, the Holy Inquisition aggrandised its religious influence by a warm, zealous and uncompromising persecution of the descendants of the Moorish subjugators. A feeling of hatred and revenge, engendered by a fervent reminiscence of Gothic legends, aggravated popular prejudice against the Oriental stock, and thus lent a specious disguise for the perpetration of ruthless barbarities under the cloak of Christianity and of chivalry. Beneath the sanction of the Pontiff, under pretence of a crusade against the Infidels, Ferdinand had accomplished the extinction of the Moorish Empire in Spain; beneath an authority from a like fountain-head, and assuming the final extirpation of Infidelity, the judges of the Inquisition had claimed themselves in a similar manner to be recognized as soldiers of the Cross. They warred and destroyed not with the lance and battle-axe, after the fashion of their chivalric fathers, but with the more secret and destructive weapons of torture and death. Primitively confined to adjudication upon cases, wherein the transgressors were denounced for an adherence to the maxims of an Oriental faith, vulgarly stigmatized as Moors, Jews and Gipsies, the jurisdiction of the Inquisition had insensibly been extended to the cognizance of spiritual crimes, enumerated in the equivocal code of the Romish Church, under the multifarious subdivisions of the general heads of Heresy and Schism. Consequently the iron hand of this invisible ruler grasped alike the destinies of the expatriated Moor, of the homeless Israelite, of the wandering Gitano, of the mendicant friar, of the speculative philosopher, of the titled noble, and of the humble tradesman; in a word, upon the breath of the

Inquisitor-General hung the fate of every inhabitant of Spain, with the single exception of those protected by military rank, ecclesiastical dignity, or Imperial favor.

Beneath the withering influence of the Inquisition, Seville, the once gay and joyous capital of Andalusia, had grown dismal and gloomy. The enervating blast of pestilence could not have bestowed a more sombre tone upon this charming Moorish city, which, in the middle of the sixteenth century, seemed rather a sepulchre for the dead than an abode for the living. Stately mansions, relics of a former magnificence, slowly mouldered into decay; beneath their arabesque and sprightly balconies, no longer covered with the running vine and flowering shrubs, the voice of the midnight serenader, chanting the praises of his lady-love to the tuneful notes of the mandoline, was ever hushed in silence; and if, perchance, the dark eyes of a timid beauty peered through some bolt-studded lattice, they darted but a momentary glance of timorous anxiety. The public fountains of the plazas, heretofore the rendezvous of confiding lovers, the scenes of gallant feats of arms, ceased their jets of cooling fragrance; and even the bosom of the Guadalquivir, the famous theatre of mirth and love, of revelry and intrigue, slept unruffled by the prow of a solitary pleasure barge.

The orange groves bloomed unattractive to a large class of youthful mirth-seekers; and the far famed fascinations of the public gardens had been dispelled by the gloomy apprehension of an unseen, ever present danger. The streets and thoroughfares of the city were comparatively deserted, although in the wide-spread windows of numerous work-shops were displayed a store of rich and motley goods, of fair-woven laces, and of tinseled garments, so tempting to the gaze of beauty, and particularly to the vanity of the belles of Andalusia's resplendent metropolis. Trade, commerce, love, intrigue, shared a common destiny; all seemed paralyzed beneath the invisible evil genius which had spread its wings over the accepted home of gayety. Mounted cavaliers dashed along, as if afraid

of the dust cast from their horses' feet, while wary pedestrians watched the approach of each passer-by, as if in dread of a virulent contagion.

After the shades of night had fallen upon the town, the sullen silence became more terribly palpable than during the daytime; a handful of vagrant Gitanos, strolling Bohemians, or wandering outcasts, occupied the streets and squares, from no motives of theft or crime, but solely from the home-despising characteristics of their several races. Notwithstanding the national stupor by night and day, one quarter of Seville exhibited signs of comparative activity, wherein the natural restlessness of the mongrel character of the lower class of Spaniards at that period exhibited itself. That section was the faubourg of the Triana, a dirty, ill-built, irregular suburb of the city, situated upon the further bank of the Guadalquivir, and connected with the main city by means of a narrow wooden bridge, whose frail balustrades seemed to convey a happy allusion to the almost insuperable barrier between the social condition of the inhabitants of the two localities.

The faubourg of the Triana was, and still is, that portion of the town inhabited by the meaner and less reputable class of inhabitants—a motley crowd of artizans, laborers, boatmen, muleteers, and water-carriers, huddled promiscuously together within a narrow precinct. Tall, heavily-built houses lined each side of the dirty, mire-covered streets—houses, whose over-hanging eaves and projecting balconies almost intermingled at the centre of the narrow, winding thoroughfares, thus presenting a confused and picturesque aspect to the straggling wayfarer. Heavy blocks of stone, cast rather than placed on each side of the door-ways, served as a barrier to the encroachments of a chance vehicle, and at the same time afforded a secure retreat for the slumbering vagrant. The black, slimy pavements, well greased with oil and mud, presented a serious obstacle to the progress of pedestrians, whose troubles were in no wise alleviated by a total lack

of lanterns, ordinarily suspended from the projections of balconies—articles of utility wholly despised in the Triana. The only illumination cast upon the narrow streets of this quarter, was the fitful light which penetrated through the half-glazed, rudely-wrought windows of the encircling tenements, a vast majority of which were occupied as taverns known to be of an unenviable repute.

One evening in May, 1534, shortly after the setting in of night-fall, a pedestrian crossed the bridge of the Triana with a firm and decided tread, apparently unconscious of the route along which he was proceeding. He moved with a steady, sullen progress, at times hesitating in his march, or stopping abruptly, as if in deep meditation, and then again resuming his fixed and precise tread, similar to that of a man walking with a step acquired from military discipline. Having leisurely attained the end of the bridge, the pedestrian halted, and leaning upon the vibrating balustrade, gazed intently upon the tranquil waters of the Guadalquivir, flowing beneath him.

The actions of the wayfarer were such as to attract the attention of passers-by, not a few of whom, in their hurried progress, paused a moment to catch a glimpse of his half-concealed features. The poverty of his costume, evidently that of a disbanded trooper of the Emperor's guard, noticeable from the long steel scabbard of his formidable rapier, as well as from the distinctive mantle he bore upon his arm, eluded the suspicions of more than one who hovered around his person, in evident distrust of his intentions. The stranger, notwithstanding these breaches of etiquette, noticed them not, but continued in his attitude of meditation, until the sounds of a female voice, running over the words of an affecting ballad, aroused him from his reverie. Nervously and sharply he turned towards the direction whence the tones proceeded, drawing his figure to its full height, apparently excited by the low, measured and semi-audible accents of the songstress.

By the dim light of the rising moon, whose beams

gleamed on the Triana in straggling rays, through the casual apertures formed by the curves of the tortuous streets, branching from the termination of the bridge, whereon he had casually assumed his position, the soldier was enabled to discern the indistinct outlines of a female form.

The notes of the air, a relic of the once famous minstrelsy of Cordova, a fragmentary lament over the decadence of the Moorish dominion, fell upon the ear of the stranger with grateful enchantment. Unable longer to restrain the emotions, imperceptibly engendered within his breast, he hurriedly approached the songstress, who had proceeded to attune the rich, gushing wildness of her natural notes to the regulated cadence of a gittern, whose strings, touched by her light hands, sent forth a full volume of harmonious melody.

The songstress, who had had taken a seat upon one of the many huge blocks of stone defending the portals of the edifices fronting the trivial plaza, formed by the intersection of several streets at the end of the causeway, noticed the respectful and sedate attention of her auditor. She arose, and infused into her ballad a degree of plaintive emphasis and melancholy accent, which thrilled the soul of the stranger, evidently familiar with the mournful burden of the ditty. The unknown gazed upon his enchantress spell-bound, his countenance grew fixed and immovable; he was plunged, if possible, more deeply in the revery from whence he had been partially awakened, and into which he had again so suddenly relapsed.

Evidently encouraged by the perceptible approbation of her auditor, the songstress continued her minstrelsy, gradually augmenting in intensity of expression, until she terminated her ballad with a rapturous outburst of disconsolate melody, which reverberated among the sullen nooks and corners of the Triana, like the re-echoed wail of a nation's lamentation. Then her hand listlessly dropped from the strings of the gittern, and her voice expired in the modulated tones of a deep-drawn sigh.

She was a young and beautiful girl, habited in the costume of a wandering Gitana, although divested of the numerous and meretricious ornaments with which these migratory beings bedeck their persons; on the contrary, her simple and modest attire, which displayed her charms to a rather coquettish advantage, was fashioned with a keen appreciation of native grace, adding a fresh glow of animation to her tall and sprightly figure. Her appearance was that of a damsel just budding into that premature womanhood, distinguishing the daughters of Andalusia: straight, thin waisted, and symmetrically conjoined, her form, as airy and ethereal as that of a hamadryad, united the attributes of health and vigor with the most delicate proportions of classic beauty. Fascinating as was the general outline of the Gitana's figure, the superlative beauty of her face constituted the main attraction of her person. A pair of black eyes, expanded and beaming with perpetual animation, illumined a countenance whose tawny complexion and oval contour gave evidence of a Moresco descent; her jet-black hair, inclining to fall in waving curls, was partially collected by a formidable metal pin at the back of her head, while the stray tresses fell upon her neck and bosom in the full luxuriance of massive ringlets; upon her exquisitely arched mouth, which smilingly displayed the whitest of teeth, ever hovered an expression of commingled mirth and melancholy, while upon her brow was written the pure sign of nervous intellectuality.

The young girl, as she dropped the gittern to her side, suffering it to hang carelessly by the species of baldric to which it was attached, modestly addressed the stranger:

"Does the Senor desire I should attempt again to please him with my rude minstrelsy?"

"Nay," rejoined the stranger, drawing from his doublet a glittering coin, and placing it in the hands of the Jonglouse—for the girl was one of those wandering minstrels who discoursed the airs and chaunts, surviving the extinction of the more noble attributes of the epoch of chivalry,

the fragmentary relics of the period, when the professors of the "gay science" were welcome guests at royal courts and baronial halls—"I would only inquire where you have learned that ballad, for it is both ancient and melancholy."

"I was taught it by my only friend."

"Your only friend! Came he from Grenada?"

"He did!" ejaculated the songstress, somewhat astonished at the question thus pointedly addressed her.

"And pray, who is the only friend of my pretty damsel?" continued the stranger, affecting a tone of gayety.

"Balthazar, the apothecary, an old man, and therefore better fitted to be the only friend of a young and wandering Jongleuse," responded the young girl, relaxing her features into an arch smile, which died away ere the words were fully spoken.

But the stranger heeded not the innocent coquetry of the songstress, for he had again sunken into one of those repeated fits of mental vacancy in which we have already seen him indulge.

"Balthazar, the apothecary! Can it be!" he muttered inwardly—"has the old man fallen into such degradation?" Then, as if unwilling to admit the correctness of his surmises, he bent his keen eyes upon the maiden, and interrogated her most earnestly:

"Tell me, damsel, hast thou long known thine only friend?"

"Oh, yes! for over ten years I watched at the side of his couch, when, after singing merry roundelays in the streets, I have won him to slumber by chaunting the gloomy ballads which seem to be the sole joy of his existence."

Thus spoke the Jongleuse, with hearty earnestness, as she noticed the sombre expression of the stranger's features, and the steadfast glare of his eyes.

"He is my only friend, for he has raised me from the bowels of the earth," continued the girl, waxing warm in spontaneous enthusiasm. "He has rescued me almost

from the jaws of death, and elevated my soul above my kind. Yes, yes, the good, kind Balthazar—I would be an ingrate indeed not to sacrifice even my life to repay such heavenly kindness?"

"Yes, my pretty maiden," returned the soldier, touched at the innocent simplicity and archness of one, whom he expected to find as callous-hearted and volatile as the many of those strange anomalies of society, whose peculiar costume she, for some reason inexplicable to his passing judgment, had adopted; "you are right in respecting and esteeming so benevolent and venerable a man as the humane and learned Balthazar. Pray, tell me your name, that I may join with you in soliciting the benediction of Heaven upon one of the worthiest of men?"

"I am called Zelda, the Jongleuse," unhesitatingly responded the girl, delighted to discover in the words of the stranger so warm an appreciation of her aged guardian. "I was the child of Malchior, the Gitana, but he, alas! is dead; and I—I am the daughter of Balthazar!"

The girl sighed deeply at this reminiscence of the past.

"Malchior!" repeated the stranger—"the Gipsy of Cordova—and he, too, is dead? Verily we are falling to dust like the leaves of the forest! Where died he, my gentle maiden?"

The Jongleuse cast her eyes about her keenly and vividly; more than once she essayed to speak, but the words died upon her lips; apparently some internal feeling stronger than mere will stayed her in her speech.

"I knew your father in my youth," resumed the wayfarer, in accents of encouragement; "many leagues have we wandered together, many hours have we spent in companionship, in weal and in woe. I knew him in his days of honor—I knew him in his days of misery. I was the friend of Malchior, the rich scholar, and of Malchior, the beggared outcast, and will not his daughter tell me where he breathed his last?"

The stranger took the hand of the songstress, and gently saluted her by a kiss upon the forehead.

Again did the maiden essay to speak, but without avail. Tears suffused her pale cheeks, some fearful emotion rendering it impossible for her to give utterance to her voice. At length, by a violent and energetic action, she mastered her physical difficulty.

"He died——"

Again her voice faltered

"In the dungeons of the Inquisition!" uttered a deep, sonorous voice, apparently within a few paces of the two speakers.

The songstress withdrew her hand from the friendly grasp of the stranger, gave vent to a low, harrassing groan, and disappeared beneath the shady portals of one of the numerous court-yards or blind alleys of the neighborhood, where the obscurity of the darkness precluded the possibility of tracing her retreat.

The soldier, with a readiness of action which exhibited long participation in campaigning, instantly drew his formidable rapier, and exclaimed, in a harsh tone of voice:

"Come forth, child of earth, or imp of Satan—come forth, I say! Who art thou?"

"A Soldier of Christ!" responded a tall man, as he emerged from the arched entrance to a house, within a few steps of the stone abutment where Zelda, the Jongleuse, had first assumed her seat. "Who art thou?" he added, as he advanced with his weapon drawn, ready for a passage at arms.

"A soldier of the Empire," courteously returned the stranger.

"Then we are brothers," rejoined the unknown, in a firm voice.

"In the eyes of the people, at least," resumed the stranger, saluting the intruder according to the military formalities of that ceremonious period; and returning his sword to its ponderous sheath, he advanced and extended his hand to him he had summoned in so violent a manner. The intruder imitated his example, and both cemented this roughly made acquaintance with a fraternal grasp, more a symbol of courtesy than of brotherhood.

The familiar of the Inquisition, or the Soldier of Christ, as were legally entitled the satellites to the Holy Tribunal, a blasphemous appellation, as derogatory to the profession of Christianity as to the honor of the sword, was a man of deepset features, and of a tall, wiry frame, unprepossessing and awkward both in action and in address. He was richly habited in the costume of his order, in a full suit of black cloth, ornamented with Italian velvet; upon his breast gleamed the metal cross, the cognizance of the Holy Office, rarely worn in public, but which formed the necessary accompaniment of his station. His beard was neatly trimmed, and his clothes arranged with a cautious regard to the rules of fashion, while a tall black plume waved from his broad hat, equally garnished with a brilliant religio-military emblem. A finer contrast to his figure could not be imagined, than the stout, thick-set, yet active form of his casual acquaintance. Despite the negligence of his attire, destitute of almost every mark of his profession, the Imperial soldier would have been recognized by the most casual observer as a veteran warrior. Although comparatively young in years, his countenance was bronzed by exposure to the hardships of weather, while the furrows of many wounds, slightly perceptible upon his brow, added to, rather than detracted from, the manliness and dignity of his expressive face. His motions were rapid, yet graceful; his carriage firm and easy, his speech frank and dignified; in a word, he appeared the embodiment of those rare qualities distinguishing the Castilian adventurers of an epoch when wealth and honors were alone to be attained by courage and the sword.

"Brother," continued the Inquisitorial familiar, after a cautious survey of the stranger's personal appearance—"thou art a stranger in Seville; by what name goest thou?"

"I am called, by my comrades, Manuel, and for want of a better appellation, they style me the Wanderer."

"And I am the soldier, Francisco Estrada, of the best

blood of Castile, whose father smote the Moorish Infidel in the ever glorious crusade of our sovereign lord, Ferdinand, and of his saintly consort, Isabella, righteously surnamed the Catholic. But what business calls thee to Seville? Pardon a bluff soldier's inquiry."

"None."

"Thou art in search of thy relatives, perchance?"

"None have I."

"Or, it might be, thou hast come to seek some old friends, gay companions of former days, whose smile might welcome thee to the gay capital of Andalusia, the gem of sunny Spain."

"Gay capital, forsooth!" rejoined the Wanderer; "gay indeed, when mothers mourn lost children, and children bewail parents swallowed from their sight; when men are even deprived of the melancholy pleasure of bedewing with their tears the graves of their fellows." The stranger shook his head mournfully, and continued: "Gay, indeed, as the breath of pestilence at the wedding feast."

"God has been pleased in his judgments to punish his children for their sins against his most holy religion."

"God!" impetuously rejoined the Wanderer, "blaspheme not his name! These deeds are the workings of man's malevolence, not of the Creator's beneficence." Then, checking himself suddenly, he continued in a lower tone of voice: "The way of the transgressor is hard, and the mercy of God washes out a multitude of sins."

The familiar of the Inquisition gazed intently on his newly formed acquaintance, and at once perceived that he had truly comprehended the equivocal language of his remarks, for in the conventional conversation of the initiated, the word God was a synonym for the Inquisitorial Tribunal, whose workings were ever conducted under the style of that omnipotent title. He was astonished at the vehemence of his companion's speech, for although the personal servants of the Emperor were exempt from citation before the Holy office, its judges had inflicted punishment upon soldiers of his service for their

frequent denunciation of the tribunal. It was truly a strong hazard at that moment in Seville, to indulge in vituperation against that invisible and deadly power, which had decimated the population and robbed humanity of its fairest fruits.

"Knowest thou, comrade," said the Soldier of Christ, "that the Holy Inquisition, whose unworthy servant I am, invariably punishes those who detract from its righteousness?"

"An honest soldier, whose life is ever at the mercy of his Creator," rejoined the Wanderer, in solemn accents, "has little fear of the power of man, who, in the blindness of his vanity, has sought to render himself superior in justice to the Ruler of the Universe!"

"Yet," interposed Francisco, "you have seen the awful fate of those who have despised the mandates of our Holy Church, and trampled upon the decrees of its august representative."

"I have seen my country's ruin," resumed Manuel, the melancholy emphasis of his words betokening the depth of his feelings. "I have seen fathers, brothers, husbands and wives, all engulfed in a premature tomb. I have seen friends and relatives disappear before the devastating breath of this enemy of man, until I am left, solitary and alone, a houseless, homeless wanderer upon the soil of my nativity."

During this conversation, the two soldiers had progressed slowly along the *Calle de los Gitanos*, a narrow thoroughfare of the Triana, lined upon either side with innumerable taverns, the nocturnal resort of bacchanalians and of vagrants, until they had reached the very centre of that quarter. They proceeded along in silence, the Imperial soldier being enwrapt in his meditations, until he was awakened by the voice of his companion.

"Thou art assuredly an honest and a brave man," spoke the familiar, "still I would advise thee to caution, and above all things, to revile not the justice of the Holy Inquisition, whose soldier I am."

"Soldier, indeed!" interrupted the imperialist—"soldier! Art thou not ashamed to defame a noble calling by such a comparison! Soldier, forsooth! a warrior against old men and weak women! A thief in the night, who steals away the jewels of humanity and the treasures of domestic wealth! A true soldier bathes his sword with the blood of his nation's enemies, and not in that of his own countrymen."

The Soldier of Christ stood greatly amazed at the presumption of his companion in thus defaming an occupation accredited among the highest honors conferred upon the youth of Spain; indeed, the military force of the Inquisition was recruited almost wholly from among the cadets of noble families, as the glory of the military profession was enhanced, in their eyes, by the superaddition of clerical service. Hence the dignity of the Soldier of Christ was publicly appreciated as equal to that repute once conferred upon the Crusaders in Palestine.

"Wouldst thou insult our holy calling?" shouted the familiar, his rapier flying, as it were, from its sheath, and quickly crossing that of his adversary, as they stood in the narrow, dark street, only illuminated by the flickering light emerging from the windows of the taverns.

"Remember, furthermore, that I was the denouncer of Malchior," quoth the Inquisitorial familiar, making a heavy lunge at his opponent, who coolly parried his advance with the address of a skilful swordsman.

"And I am his avenger!" replied a strange voice.

A muffled figure at that moment passed near the two combatants; the blade of a long knife glistened in the faint light, shed upon the scene from the windows of the inn, and in a second Francisco Estrada, after the utterance of this sinister declaration, lay bleeding at the feet of his casual adversary.

"Help! help!" exclaimed Manuel the Wanderer, raising the fallen body, from whose back the blood gushed in a strong current—"murder most foul!"

The wounded man breathed heavily as he rested in the

arms of his fellow combatant. Instantaneously the alarm was given, and the numerous taverns vomited forth their crowds of noisy idlers and brawlers. Within the lapse of a few minutes the Soldier of Christ was encircled by a dense mass of vagabonds, Gitanos and night strollers, who gazed in breathless amazement at the blood-stained garments, and then burst out in an unanimous expression of wonder, that any miscreant could have been found in Seville hardy enough to deal a murderous blow upon a servant of the Holy Inquisition.

"This way! make room! here the King of the Revelers holds his court!" shouted a tall halberdier of the guard, emerging from the "Angel," a tavern famous in the annals of Gitano revelry, and driving back the crowd right and left from the wounded man—"room, room for the guard!"

With a half-suppressed sigh, the humane soldier yielded his former adversary into the custody of a couple of stalwart spectators, and giving them ample directions as to his carriage, had the satisfaction of seeing the unfortunate familiar borne off in order to receive the more skilful attentions of Balthazar, the apothecary; while with sorrowful looks he watched the progress of the cortege, followed by the floating crowd of idle spectators, and preceded by the guard, whose office it was to attend to emergencies, similar to these, created by almost nightly brawls.

CHAPTER II.

THE COURT OF THE REVELERS.

FOLLOWING the stalwart halberdier, the Wanderer entered the main room of the "Angel Inn," by which ostentatious title was designated a long, low and dark room, around which were placed a row of rude tables, coated with grease, well rubbed into the shining wood by the constant friction of elbows upon the boards. The walls of this gloomy place, half destitute of plastering, were stained with innumerable tints of dirt and of oil; the ceiling was blackened by the smoke of half a hundred flickering candles, placed in front of pictures, delineating scenes in the auto-da-fe and other horrible mysteries connected with the Inquisition—spectacles already familiar to the masses by the public realities occasionally presented to their notice—or portraying the features of those Madonnas so popular with the Spaniards of every age. Across the vault of the apartment ran heavy rafters, into which were inserted iron hooks, whence depended hats, cloaks, hams, articles of food and warlike implements. The floor had originally been paved with well-burned tiles, the majority of which had disappeared, leaving in their stead a damp clay, amply moistened by the refuse from the earthen jugs, out of which the customers to this caravansery quaffed the half fermented wine of the neighboring districts.

The "Angel," on the night in question, was filled with an unusual crowded auditory, for on that evening it was the theatre of a strange relic of the feudal age, the extemporaneous tribunal of the captain of the guard, familiarly styled the King of the Revelers. The jurisdiction of this migratory court, which wanders from tavern

to tavern, as occasion required, although its members were of the military profession, was not confined to the commitment of disorderly offenders, but included the adjustment of minor claims and indebtedness. Its judgments were summary, its constabulary, the archers of the guard, being ever ready to inflict condign punishment upon those discovered in transgression. The halberdier having formally notified the proprietor of the "Angel" of the intention of his majesty to hold his levee within that venerable hostelry, a halberd was planted at the door, in order that suitors for justice in that quarter of the Triana might be properly apprised of the dignity bestowed upon the dingy mansion. Consequently, long before the entry of the formidable functionary, who was to rule supreme over their destinies for the night, a dense crowd of vagrants, Gitanos, artizans, and day-laborers, thronged within the apartment, to the sore discomfort of little Marquita, the pretty bar-maid, and of grumbling José, her brother and proprietor of the hostelry.

The suitors for justice came with blackened eyes and blood-begrimmed visages, with palpitating hearts and sorrowful countenances, some in dread and trembling, others in anger and petulance. The captain of the guard, as monarch of this domain, assumed his seat upon a high stool, elevated, in order to add to the altitude of his moral position, upon the top of a rickety table, from which rather insecure seat he dispensed justice with the solemnity of an arch-deacon. He had already disposed of many cases, from time to time causing unruly clients to be expelled from his august presence before the staves of his myrmidons, when the cry of Manuel, demanding help for the unfortunate Soldier of Christ, fell upon the startled auditory. In an instant the living mass became all confusion; each one rushed tumultuously to the door, whose narrow portals could scarce suffice to suffer the exit of so vast a column of human beings. With difficulty were the curious suitors driven back by the halberds of the guard, and a clear passage afforded to those sent out to inquire into the cause of the tumult.

The King of the Revelers was busily occupied in the decision of an important case, wherein a small-sized tailor figured as complainant, and his accredited wife, a large, raw-boned gipsy, sustained the part of defendant, upon a plea of assault and battery. The lady was engaged in a long defence, urging justification on the score of numerous threats made against her personal safety, and a total disregard for her ease and comfort, in an unwarrantable neglect of the marital duties. This oration was stopped with difficulty, about the middle of its delivery, by the peremptory summons of the magistrate, who, in order to gratify the evident desire of the motley rabble, condemned both parties to be incarcerated within the guard-house until the next session of the court, when he would be at leisure to decide on the merits of the case.

"What's the tumult in the street?" inquired the king of his attendants, as his emissaries returned to his audience.

"A foul murder!" replied Manuel the Wanderer, proceeding directly to the judicial throne, where the greater body of the throng pressed around him, to swallow with avidity the details of the occurrence.

"And who is the unfortunate person?" inquired the legal monarch.

"Francisco Estrada, a Soldier of Christ."

The crowd could scarcely restrain evidence of their approbation at learning this intelligence, so heartily despised and dreaded was this redoubtable champion of the Holy Tribunal. Their excitement vividly increased, and the eyes of all were bent upon the Wanderer, as he proceeded in his testimony.

"Did you observe the assassin?" continued the captain.

"The Soldier of Christ boasted himself the denunciator of Malchior, who died in the dungeons of the Inquisition; and while thus talking to me, a muffled figure smote him to the earth, loudly proclaiming himself the avenger of the martyred Malchior. Further, learned captain, I know nothing."

The mention of the name of Malchior elicited some approbatory remarks at the heroic conduct of his avenger, who had thus ventured to invoke the vengeance of the Inquisition, certain to wreak retribution upon the head of the murderer of its accredited servant, so warmly was the memory of the deceased Malchior treasured by those who were acquainted with his eccentricities and his virtues. The poor rarely forget their friends, neither felons their benefactors; consequently, the hallowed name of Malchior was ever mentioned with respect by the inhabitants of the Triana, who endeavored to reciprocate the kindness evinced by him toward them in his lifetime, by watching over his daughter after his demise. Thus was it that the fair and feeble Zelda floated, as suited her unrestrained inclinations, through the tortuous channels of the district, without apprehension. Well knew she that a hundred sturdy arms, a thousand sympathising hearts, were leaping to perform some one act of kindness, whereby they could more sensibly obtain the affections of the Jongleuse.

"Well," said the King of the Revelers, musingly, "the Holy Office has lost one of its most brilliant ornaments, and the Inquisition of Seville a most particular friend. Halberdier, close our court to honor the memory of the soldier Francisco Estrada; and ho! landlord, a bottle of your best wine—the nearest approach to that of Xeres—that I may wash down my grief in tears of the grape; and while I am drinking, arrest this man as his murderer."

The archers advanced to Manuel, to fulfil the mandate of their captain, but the stranger waved them back with a dignified gesture.

"Señor Sanchez," uttered the Wanderer, in a solemn tone, "I am a servant of the Emperor, and beyond your control. I am a soldier; I have slain many in battle; yet, I am no midnight assassin."

"Neither is he. Estrada still lives, and will be as well as ever," interrupted the musical voice of a female,

who had at that moment entered the dingy hostelry. It was Zelda, the songstress, who had come from the house of her guardian, impelled by an irrepressible curiosity to ascertain some more definite particulars as to the condition of the wayfarer, manifesting so friendly an interest in the fate of her accredited father.

"How knowest thou such to be the case, fair damsel?" inquired the mock monarch of the night.

"The good Balthazar, who dressed his wounds, pronounced him out of danger. Oh, good captain, release the soldier, for he was the friend of Malchior."

The eyes of the crowd were instantly turned upon the imperial trooper, who at once rose in their eyes to the dignity of a mysterious hero.

"Maiden," quoth the Reveler, "thou art a good girl, one well known to us as of irreproachable veracity, and of tender modesty ; and, therefore, we honor thee for venturing hither, through the darkness of these vile streets, upon an errand of mercy. With courage hast thou braved dangers, to lay thy supplication at our feet, and we grant the tenor of thy prayer."

"Thanks ! noble Sanchez, thanks !" warmly ejaculated the Jongleuse. "In my prayers will I remember thy favor ; but I know thou wouldst never disgrace thy trust of mercy by the punishment of an innocent man. It was I, noble captain, and I alone, who wert the indirect cause of this turmoil."

"Thou, Zelda !" interrupted the martial justiciary, gallantly descending from his extemporaneous throne, and advancing to the still agitated maiden. "Nay, blame not thyself, for the repute of Malchior and reverence for his name prompted this sore dispute. Soldier," he continued, addressing the Wanderer, "thou art free to go as thou wilt ; I was in fault to charge an Imperial trooper with evil prepense. Pardon me, and let me greet thee that thy gallant protection of this wandering maiden has wrought thee a multitude of friends. In peace, therefore, I salute thee."

The Wanderer courteously returned the salutation of the captain of the guard, who, drawing his arm through that of the trembling Jongleuse affectionately and respectfully, as if to assure her of his protection against the dangers he had mentioned, proudly and tenderly emerged with his charge into the darksome thoroughfare, preceded by his attendant halberdiers. Still, ere the damsel quitted the scene of legal revelry, she bent upon the unmoved countenance of the Wanderer an expressive glance, as if to transmit to him a knowledge of that interest his sudden apparition, and the subsequent consequences of their casual meeting, had engendered within her bosom. The Imperial soldier smiled, as he detected the unquiet restlessness of the fair Zelda's dark flashing eyes, and, in acknowledgment of her courtesy, waved her an expression of gratitude, as her frail form, supported by the young soldier, noiselessly glided through the narrow aperture, serving as a means of egress from the smoke-begrimmed and dirt-covered hostelry.

CHAPTER III.

THE ANGEL TAVERN.

THE unsettled state of Christendom, while respiring afresh a partial air of regeneration, had created strange political anomalies. Religion, wrapped in a garb of preternatural sanctity, had generated its hosts of mendicant friars, domiciled monks, imprisoned nuns, and fanatic wanderers. Superstition, transcending the utmost limits of delirious passion, claimed its votaries of despotic frenzy, torturers of their species in the name of their Creator; while the expiring sparks of a nobility, founded in gallant deeds and a rude justice were uselessly fanned to keep alive the tyranny of power, wrung from a plebeian rabble, whose sole ambition seemed to consist in a lowly adulation of the yoke which pressed them to the soil. Spain, at the epoch we have selected for illustration in our story, was but in the first stage of political resuscitation. That unhappy country, relieved from the almost imperceptible dominion of a foreign enemy, had been heretofore surrendered into the possession of petty princes, each of whom robbed, pillaged, and plundered their dependants, to magnify their fractional dominions into a regal importance. The conquering arm of Ferdinand, whose prowess had been transmitted to the Emperor Charles, had cemented the bonds of a national unity, and nominally, at least, beneath his monarchy, Spain assumed a high position among the nations of the earth. Still, this reunion of the dissevered parts of the Gothic Empire could not be viewed as the result of inclination, but rather a fusion of factions crumbled into impotence by the stout arm of the conqueror, each one impatient for a re-assumption of its primitive independence. Spanish society presented a

strange intermixture of discordant elements, concentrated by a single power—the terrible bond of Romish superstition. The reign of feudality, or of physical force, had given place to the more obnoxious sovereignty of mental terror; the sword of the crusader was sheathed in the presence of the crozier; the gay songs of the troubadours were melted into chants of the clergy; the sceptre of oppression had passed from the hands of temporal barons into those of spiritual fathers.

The discovery of the new continent, the news of its immense and easily-acquired riches, opened a tempting field for the adventurous energies of the few stalwart knights whose imaginations glowed with the wild fantasies of romantic chivalry. In the unexplored wilds of another hemisphere, the gallant cavalier could turn his course as suited the bent of his ambitious inclination; unchecked, he could roam amid fields of glory and of gold, free from the dread of hereditary animosities or political treacheries. Little wonder, then, that the obscure courtiers of fortune preferred the natural dangers of an attractive wilderness to the unpitiable destiny of a civilized and home-born enemy. By the inflexible law of decaying chivalry, children inherited the avengement of a relative's wrongs; and where could there be found a Spanish noble, whose father or ancestor had not suffered injury at the hands of a high-born enemy? This comparatively large emigration of the children of the sword had been further encouraged by the policy of the ecclesiastical orders, who, in the absence of the martial power, assumed the supremacy of government by virtue of their peaceful calling.

By the natural decadence of the nobility, and the increase of the ecclesiastical dignity, the populace of Spain passed imperceptibly into the servitude of the Church. Agriculture, commerce, science and mechanism had been prostrated before the devastating pestilence of civil war; the people of Spain were therefore a race of vagrants, dwelling in the memory of the past, and existing for the emergencies of the future. Descendants of divers races,

the common feeling of patriotism was denied them ; each, however, high or low, affiliated with those of a similar physiological origin, and thus contributed to the perpetuation of the differences of parentage. An instinct of mutual security compelled the low and poorer classes to unite into anti-social conspiracies against the common weal ; hence was re-created a long series of fraternities—generated by the necessities of the political system—who not only spurned, in a disguised manner, the edicts of the Church, a potent auxiliary to the centralization of the Imperial regime, but openly braved the mandates of the State. Law, order, and justice were buried in the turmoil of a disordered era of political affairs ; the people had discovered themselves within the power of their oppressors, and they now sought a remedy in their individual energies.

The crowd, attendant upon the Court of the King of the Revelers, had slowly dispersed ; plaintiffs and defendants, witnesses and officials of that eccentric tribunal, even its wine-quaffing judge, and the square-shouldered soldiers of his retinue, had severally assumed their homeward march, and the dingy hall of the "Angel" remained tenanted only by its ordinary occupants. The occurrences of the night appeared in no wise to affect the hilarity of the assemblage ; their glasses clinked and rattled ; their voices rose in bacchanalian chants ; and their eyes rolled in intoxicated frenzy, as they mingled indiscriminately, Gitanos, beggars, Castillians, and quasi-reputable citizens of the Triana. The disappearance of the archers of the guard had relieved them of the only attribute of royalty they in the least respected, and, in their case, respect for these officials was easily purchased by the compromise of vanity, for the archer was more dependent upon the influence of wine, paid for from Imperial bounty, than upon a terror of the sword. The nationality of Spain was indeed an indiscernable attribute to the generic race, while the distinctive peculiarity of each specific division expanded, rather than declined, beneath the oppression of a confused administration of law and justice. The Gitana was

equally a vagrant with his unfettered ancestor. The Castilian, proud in the hours of poverty, spurned agricultural employment, and wasted his energies in perpetual indolence, awakening only from the monotony of his drowsy existence to an indulgence in quarrels, or in the fascinations of the dance ; while the Jew toiled noiselessly and secretly, denying, it is true, the tenets of his ancient faith, but in reality hoarding up the treasures of the earth, in anticipation of the arrival of the hour for the re-erection of the temple, planned and left unfinished by the wise Solomon, when its walls, beaten down by Pagan soldiery, and its site desecrated by Christian Crusaders, should again be re-erected by Jewish offspring as a citadel for the faithful. But one portion of this mixed Spanish society of Seville held themselves aloof from communion with their equally oppressed fellows—they were the descendants of the Moors, who, remembering their fathers to have been masters of the civilization, science, and greatness of former days, isolated themselves to preserve, in private, the reminiscences of a former greatness, and to perpetuate the wisdom of their ancestors.

Despite the noise and revelry of the occupants of the "Angel," Manuel the Wanderer tranquilly maintained his seat, in a retired corner of the room, beside a wooden table, upon which stood a half-finished jug of wine, in which he had pledged the newly formed acquaintance of the King of the Revelers. His bronzed countenance had assumed an iron rigidity of muscle ; his eyes were partially closed in reflection ; his stalwart frame leaned listlessly upon the table, and, to a casual observer, he appeared lost to the contemplation of surrounding scenes of noisy merriment—the orgies of midnight bacchanalians.

"Sanchez !" soliloquized the Wanderer, in slow meditation, "could thy honored father, the best lance of Navarre, but see thee, the monarch of a drunken band, where, then, would be the blush of Agramontese shame ? Tears would trickle from his fiery eyes, and bedew his haggard,

war-worn cheeks. Such, indeed, is the gratitude of princes, in whom the brave man puts his trust. Vain, forsooth, is the vanity of mortals!"

The hardy soldier paused in his self-colloquy—his hand nervously clutching the handle of his rapier, upon which at times he carelessly rested his head; the picture, conjured up by his imagination, appeared to cast a still more solemn darkness upon the shadows of his dream.

"Malchior," he resumed, reviewing in his mind the passing incidents of the night, "thou, too, hath passed from this world of agony and trial, to find, perchance, in another and a purer sphere, a balm for the many trials thy soul endured in this. And what a terrible death was that of thine, my trusty friend! Alone, imprisoned within gloomy walls, when thy haughty spirit could ill brook the restraint of the mountain air; racked—perchance thy body polluted by the executioner's leprous touch; thy limbs torn piece-meal from a living corpse—cursed," added the Imperial soldier, his eyes rolling in a paroxysm of frenzy—"cursed, cursed, trebly cursed be these vile fiends of a mundane hell; may their hearts be wrung from them in agony to feed the jackalls of the plain—may their entrails be wrenched from their breathing bodies"—the Wanderer stopped, as if terrified at the intense horror of his half stifled malediction. "It is not for me to curse—no, no; their judgment is reserved for Him who created all erring men. May He have mercy upon those who had no mercy on us."

"Amen!" uttered a neighboring voice, in a chanting accent, as if attuned to the solemnization of Church service.

Manuel was aroused from his mental torpor, and cast an unquiet glance upon this intruder, as if annoyed at finding his confidential observations overheard by a casual listener during these troublesome days, when the terror of the Holy Office forbode evil to the adventurous orator attempting a denunciation of that tribunal.

The intruder observed the Wanderer's look, and pro-

ceeded to calm his nervous trepidation by some words, falling like oil upon the disturbed waters: "My son, thou hast spoken rashly. Doubtless from loss of friends and relatives, punished for crimes beyond our feeble comprehension—for we, humble mortals, cannot pretend to adjudge upon the acts of God."

"God, forsooth!" interrupted the soldier, recovering his self-possession with marvellous celerity—"I little expected blasphemy from one of your calling; that indignity you commit by endorsing the vulgar terrors of those unacquainted with the knowledge of his divinity."

The Dominican friar, for such was the profession of the new comer, bent his keen eyes upon the honest countenance of the soldier, and smiled benignly: "I perceive, my son, thy aspirations would condemn the authority of the Holy Inquisition. Hast thou reflected upon the value of a life to jeopardize it by indulgence in error?"

"I may err; man ever errs," rejoined the Wanderer. "As to my life, it belongs to our noble Emperor—him I serve with my sword; and God, with every other act of my existence. My religion I will maintain against all the priests of Christendom."

"Son, thou art so willing to barter away the essence of thy temporal existence," resumed the priest, "hast thou prepared thyself for sacrifice by making thy peace with that deity whose presence thou covetest?"

"I covet not death, neither tremble I at its coming," responded the Imperial veteran, his throat distending with the swelling of his voice, his eyes glistening with the warmth of enthusiasm—"to me the approach of the King of Terrors is but the harbinger of a better world, and the joys of celestial beatitude will recompense my weary hours of earthly toil. I am, I hope, too fearless and honest a soldier to quiver at the coming of that hour of mortal oblivion, before whose opening portals tremble only the craven, the traitor, the tyrant, and the false prophet. I am none of these."

"My son," blandly observed the Dominican, "I sur-

mise from thy words that thou wert the friend of a wandering outcast, whose daughter interceded for thee before the judgment-seat of the captain of the guard. What knowest thou of the maiden?"

"Simply that she is the daughter of Malchior"—

"Protector of the Garduna," interrupted the priest—"a man who lent his influence to deeds of sacrilege and violence."

"Blaspheme not his memory, after casting his child an orphan upon an inhospitable world," warmly ejaculated the soldier, with measured bitterness of manner. "I reverence your profession, holy father, but in the eye of God we are equals. I warn you to tread lightly over the grave of a people's benefactor."

"Your pardon, my son," interposed the friar, somewhat alarmed at the impetuosity of his comrade's language, and not altogether at his ease, while surrounded by the motley occupants of the "Angel," whose attention had been attracted by the angry tones of the soldier—"I intended no offence to the memory of thy friend;—may his soul rest in peace."

"Aye, and so it does," responded the Wanderer, with becoming gravity.

"But then he was no Christian, and the words of the Church bore him disrepute," remarked the Dominican, in a soothing tone.

"Christian! He was a better one than a myriad of tonsured monks!" exclaimed the Imperialist. "Gipsy as he was, his whole life was spent in acts of charity and kindness. Did a widow's sigh reach his ear, his consolations dried her tears; did the betrayed maiden seek an asylum from the gaze of a malevolent world, the purse of Malchior furnished her redemption, and his good sword protected her from insult. In the days of his manhood, his deeds of benevolence rivalled those of the proudest knight in Hispania; he fought, bled, yea, all but perished in the noble works of saintly beneficence. And call you him no follower of our Saviour? No, not of the Christ

of thy imitation, who, were he similar unto you, would burn, rob, plunder, debauch and slaughter his race, instead of healing the wounds of their bleeding hearts! Oh, Malchior, Malchior! from thy resting-place on high, I call on thee to smile upon thy brother in arms!" The eyes of the soldier were elevated devoutly heavenward, and then, as if oppressed by the energy of his thoughts, his head fell heavily upon his breast, while his hands rested supinely upon the hilt of his rapier.

"Could I but see thee again, my Malchior," resumed the soldier, awakening from his apparent lethargy, "aye, as thou wert before the blood-hounds of the Inquisition were let loose upon thee—the gay and worthy cavalier, the faithful spouse, the happy father—how could I press thee to my arms! But, thou hadst wealth, Malchior, accursed wealth, coveted by the Holy Church, and its minions hunted thee from town to town, from forest to forest, until thy eternal resting-place was found in the Inquisition's most oblivious tomb! And it ill becomes thee," added the soldier, his features distorted with unearthly animation, as he addressed the friar, "to revile the memory of him thy comrades so basely murdered!"

Although the presence of a priest in such localities as the "Angel tavern" was a matter of common occurrence, not sufficiently strange to attract general attention, the violent dialogue between the Dominican friar and his casual companion, breaking upon their ears in broken syllables, produced a sensation among the rude bacchanalians congregated within the murky hall. Taking advantage of the curiosity evinced by the crowd, the friar arose, and urbanely addressed to them his subtile speech, first crossing himself with mock humility:

"Brethren, this bold, wicked man revileth the mysteries of our Holy Religion; he calumniated God and his worshipful ministers; he has even dared to heap curses upon the elect of Christ, the directors of God's Inquisition. Are none of you faithful enough to arrest his person and hold him secure until the arrival of the alguazils of our blessed tribunal, which he has so foully accursed?"

The priest smiled grimly. A dozen of the revelers seized their weapons and rushed to secure the prisoner, while Marquita, the bar-maid, whose zeal for the Holy Office was assumed to cover a taint of heretical blood, hastened to give the alarm to the passing familiars. The instant, however, she opened the door of the main entrance, an athletic figure rushed past her, with a significant glance, and placed himself by the side of the soldier, who, drawing his rapier, held his assailants at bay—

“ Silence—comrade, follow me.”

The aspect of the unknown, and the formidable weapon of the Imperialist, at once cooled the courage of the volunteers in the ecclesiastic's service, and long ere they recovered from their sudden amazement, the soldier and his guide vanished into the dark and dismal street, where none of the crowd—their animation in the holy cause suspended by a sense of personal danger—cared to follow the intrepid fugitives.

“ Whither wouldst thou lead me ?” anxiously inquired Manuel.

“ Silence, my comrade, the shade of Malchior watches over thee,” rejoined the tall Gitana, hurrying along the dirty, slime-covered *Calle de los Gitanos*, with commendable rapidity.

CHAPTER IV.

THE COUNCIL OF THE GARDUNA.

THE Wanderer, whose entire existence had been marked by a series of adventures periling life and limb, submitted to the direction of his guide, whom he followed with a bold and martial step. Manuel was a man of too much penetration to undervalue the gratitude of the Gitano population, and, being intimately acquainted with their manners, he in nowise distrusted the benevolence of his companion's intentions in thus rescuing him from a dilemma which may have proved disastrous in its consequences. Hence, the soldier followed mechanically along the rude streets, until, after two or three circuitous windings, he discovered, from his feet being no longer harrassed by projecting stones or yielding clay, that they had skirted the faubourg and were attaining the suburbs of the city. The moon slowly rose in its beauty, shedding a stream of silver light over fields partially cultivated and overgrown with the wildest flowers of a prolific nature. The eye of the Wanderer rested upon a few architectural landmarks, sadly altered from neglect and the ravages of time, by observation of which he became aware that they had attained the ruins of a Moorish village, which in anterior days contained the luxurious wealth of the most noble Sevillians. How sad, indeed, was the aspect of these broken pillars, carved in the grotesque vagary of Saracenic architecture ; of these mouldering pavements of tessellated-work ; of these crumbling walls, overrun by moss and creeping ivy ! These relics told the melancholy tale of the Christian's gradual, yet enduring triumph.

Halting by the remains of a public fountain, from whence the gentle Moresco maid, with bright eye and

smiling face, had often drawn, in a past century, grateful draughts to quench the thirst of the wayside traveler, now but a rude heap of polished blocks, the Gitano motioned his companion to assume a seat upon some fragments of the desecrated well.

"Tarry thou here, my friend, and await my returning. The Master of the Garduna has charged me to bring thee into his presence. I must forewarn him of thy approach; so fear not, but tarry till I come."

The soldier bowed his assent, and assumed a seat upon the broken stone.

Shortly after the King of the Revelers adjourned his court at the "Angel," the majority of his auditors bent their way towards the Moorish village, in the midst of whose ruins we have left Manuel the Wanderer—not, indeed, in a mass, and by the direct road, but in pairs, and by the most circuitous and obscure routes. That evening was the anniversary of the Garduna, or criminal confraternity—an institution dating its origin from the Civil Wars harrassing the reigns of the petty monarchs of Castille, Navarre, Leon, and Aragon. This association was in the full glow of prosperity at the epoch we attempt to delineate, and descended, strange to say, in partial vigor, to the commencement of the present century. The spirit of chivalry, based upon the fallacious maxim of possession giving title to lands and goods acquired by the strong arm and sturdy lance; the perpetual change of ownership in property during the troublesome times of civil commotion, and, above all, the grasping and avaricious oppression of the monarchs and their nobility, were prime causes creating the fraternization of felons and thieves of a minor order of audacity into a community for self-protection. The Garduna, organized at the outset as a predatory band of mountain robbers, augmented in strength as the individual power of the barons decreased, or the laxity of religious morality became familiarized by the growing debauchery of the Romish priesthood. The robber chieftains, generally men of warlike repute, outlawed at the

will of successive sovereigns, ruling over frivolous domains, until disposed of by conspiracy, poison, or the sword, allured to their fastnesses adventurers of every clime and nation, until their formidable power became an acknowledged element in the adjustment of intestine quarrels. Many of these redoubtable freebooters had entered the royal service as captains of free lances, and followed by their hardy retainers, humbled the pride of noble knights and attendant men-at-arms. They emulated the dignity and state of feudal barons, imposing tribute upon districts adjacent to their strongholds, avenging in their turn all wrongs inflicted upon the tillers of the land paying them tithes, and, when they indulged in forays upon the property of their baronial neighbors, such deeds were ever consummated according to the strict etiquette of the domestic warfare of the age. Hence, systematized robbery at that period bore the same relation to feudal institutions as privateering in our own time bears to the action of a national navy.

But, as the power of feudality decreased, and the centralization of sovereignty in an individual monarch announced the spread of acknowledged rules of law and order; as the wealth of the nation grew to consist in articles of trade and commerce; as science and the arts familiarized the people with the value of peaceful occupations and enjoyments, the legitimized sway of the freebooters was repudiated, and their band decimated by the stern dictates of outraged majesty. Withering into insignificance, the leaders of various associations of outlaws found themselves compelled to an imitation of the political centralization, wrought in the sovereign's government. Singly they united the fragments of their bands, until the confraternity of thieves, robbers, and assassins, became completely conjoined into a close community, furnished with records of their acts and a constitution—a society handed down to us by chroniclers under the title of the Garduna.

On this night of May, 1534, the Council of the Master of the Garduna was to be held among the ruins of an

ancient villa, in the environs of Seville. The mansion had formerly been the favorite residence of the Moorish governors of Seville, but the hand of time, with its withering touch, had destroyed the fair features of its architectural beauty. The terraces of the oriental garden, with their alternate elevations covered with dainty flowers and rare fruits, had gradually merged into a vast and uncultivated lawn, bearing little resemblance to the broad-spread and undulating beds of blooming exotics, and of tufts of sweet-scented shrubs, whose petals exhaled a refreshing perfume, borne on the gale to the remotest recesses of the pavilions, now crumbled into dust. The ancient portals, leading into the centre of the edifice, were mutilated and half destroyed; the corridors were blocked up and almost impassable from heaps of broken columns; the external balconies, supported by arches of a fairy lightness and of daring construction, had partially disappeared, while the lofty dome, once encrusted with gold, had completely vanished from the vault of the gorgeous palace. One apartment alone had preserved the prominent features of an arabesque creation—the inner court, the hall of the fountain, appeared as perfect as on the day the skilful artizan had pronounced it faultless. Encircled by a highly-embellished wall, encompassing the inner hall of columns, the marble pavement was divested from rubbish and under-grass, desecrating every other portion of the building; the lions of the fountain frowned, as unblemished as when first entrusted with the guardianship of the waters, and the massive doors, closing the main entrances from each point of the compass, with the sole exception of that towards the East—a peculiarity in Oriental architecture—were preserved by studious industry. This hall had been consecrated as the grand council-room of the Garduna.

Shortly before midnight, the ponderous portals of the North and West turned upon their hinges, and the members of the Garduna, a number of the younger ones bearing torches, giving off a brilliant flame, entered from the

surrounding corridors, a medley host of men, young, middle aged, and fairly gray-haired, with whom intermingled a few women, mostly of robust youth and passable beauty. These were the *Serenas*, famed in the annals of criminal history, whose enchantments deluded the designated victims into some well-contrived trap, whence escape was impossible.

Crowding around the eastern portal, whose doorway of solid masonry was encircled by a miniature court of pillars and arches, the Gardunas stood in silence, awaiting the arrival of their chief.

A violent commotion among the females of the reunion, marked the entry of a man of more than ordinary stature, of no mean features, plain in dress and rugged in frame. He was clothed in a peasant's costume, his bare feet, of a prodigious size, encased in coarse sandals, attached to his legs by a multiplicity of small cords, curiously inter-knotted. This man was Mandamiento, the redoubtable chief of the Garduna, one of whose successors, under the title of Don Roderigo Calderon, removed first to Toledo, and subsequently to Madrid, and there became secretary to his sovereign, Philip III.

The captain turned his eyes towards a portrait of the Madonna, suspended against the wall above his head, illuminated by lights from a small candelabra attached to the sunken frame, crossed himself, and muttered a few words, as if in prayer. Then, turning towards his expectant auditory, he beckoned his two lieutenants to a place beside him, and addressed his companions in the remarkable and ingenious slang of the institution, a language expressive, but unendurable to ears polite, as well as incapable of translation in the English tongue.

"Brothers," he commenced in a stentorian tone, "I hail thee all, masters, associates and apprentices, the three honorable degrees of our noble fraternity—and thou, affiliated daughters, captivating syrens, wily spies, and matronly decoys, I greet thee all. The time has now come, when I shall surrender into your hands the author-

ity invested in me by your voices. This night cease I my command over this most honorable company. What say you?"

This abrupt surrender of his authority instantly aroused the ire of the entire assemblage.

"Traitor! tyrant! will you desert us?" exclaimed a bright eyed Serena, who evidently felt personally interested in the non-abdication of her monarch.

"Silence, Daisy," (the slang name of the fair Serena,) shouted Mandamiento—"order, that all may be heard in time; what say ye now? Am I still to continue to govern faithful vassals?"

An uproarious affirmative response sanctioned his re-assumption of authority, when the Master continued his remarks:

"Brothers, you have done well! when I first assumed the command of your honorable body, the annual average of mortality, among your most expert leaders, was positively alarming: six at least *per annum* kissed the hempen cord. The remainder of the society were troubled with other legal maladies; let me see: in the very year before you honored me by accepting my services, ten were strangled by the neck, seventy-five served the Royal Marine in quality of galley slaves, and triple that number eked out a miserable existence, working their lives out, without pay, on the public works, omitting all consideration of the horrible fact that no less than twenty of our worthy sisters were publicly flogged at the cart's tail. Take, now, the statistics of the last year of my administration of affairs: two worthy companions have only undergone the rope exercise; five or six alone have turned involuntary mariners; a few dozen of inexpert operatives have merely solicited the courtesies of the alguazils, while none of our charming Serenas have exposed their bare backs to the inspection of the cat-o'-nine tails."

This last declaration was received with a burst of enthusiastic applause, and the bright eyes of the Serenas smiled upon their presumed benefactor, who graciously acknowledged the compliment.

"Now, brethren," continued the chief, "to the order of the day. We have been promised fifty florins, the half paid in, to deprive the provincial priest of his eyes. This reward is offered by his Holiness, Father Juan, for the reason that the provincial priest has stolen away one of his Holiness's fairest penitents. Hawkeye, you will attend to this case.

Hawkeye, the tall and wiry lieutenant on the right of his Master, nodded assent with perfect nonchalance, for, being a man of taciturn habits, he preferred not wasting the few words he uttered upon matters of business.

At this moment the guide of Manuel the Wanderer entered the hall, and proceeded to the Master, who conversed with him earnestly. Mandamiento suddenly turned to the assembly and addressed them seriously:

"Brothers, you remember our friend, Malchior, the gallant cavalier, who oftentimes shielded the children of the Garduna?"

"We do!" exclaimed the entire auditory, in vehement tones.

"This night a stranger in Seville, wounded at hearing that Malchior died in the dungeons of the Holy Inquisition, challenged the implacable Soldier of Christ, Francisco Estrada, to mortal combat. The dagger of an unknown Gitano laid the familiar bleeding at the wayfarer's feet. The soldier was a friend of Malchior; tomorrow he will be denounced to the Inquisition, and without our aid he will share the fate of his companion in arms. Shall we save him? What is your pleasure?"

"Save him, save him, if he is the friend of Malchior," vociferously repeated the members of the confraternity from all sides of the hall.

"Then he shall be saved! Show him in," quoth the chieftain.

Within the lapse of a few minutes the Imperial soldier was introduced into the centre of the miniature porch, at the eastern extremity of the apartment, directly in front of the Master, who, to render his athletic frame more

imposing, had donned a high crowned hat with a red cock's feather. The mass of members crowded around the stranger, and gazed at him in fitful curiosity.

"Manuel the Wanderer," commenced the Master, "be not astonished that we know your name, for the spies of the Garduna are as numerous as those of the Holy office. Before to-morrow's sun sinks below the horizon, the familiars of the Inquisition will be on your track."

"Arrest me!" ejaculated Manuel—"I am a soldier of the Empire."

"Thus thought your friend Malchior, our benefactor," resumed the Master; "and although we loved him, he spurned our assistance and perished, bequeathing our friendship to his orphan, Zelda, the Jongleuse, who has need of a strong guardian."

"I am her champion!" proudly responded the Wanderer.

"You will not be, after the setting of to-morrow's sun, should you despise our friendly offer. The Garduna, rejecting ancient formalities, and waiving the ceremony of a noviciate, have authorized me to admit you within the circle of our brotherhood."

"Nay, nay," expostulated the veteran, "I am told you are banded together for the commission of crimes, of robbery and murder, and I cannot honestly unite in so unhallowed a profession of faith."

"It is the misfortune of many of us that we are forced to crime," interposed Mandamiento; "we do openly that which even monks, and particularly the Inquisitors, perform under the cloak of religion. Still, if some of our brethren voluntarily tarnish their character and jeopardize their necks, it does not follow that we employ compulsion to increase their numbers. We have one among us as pure as the gentle lamb, and innocent as the new-fledged dove."

"Zelda? In gratitude for the protection you have bestowed upon her, in order that I may live a protector to Malchior's child, I accept the offer of you and your comrades. I will be one of you."

This declaration on the part of Manuel was received by the confraternity of the Garduna with unqualified marks of approbation, and amid the applause of the Serenas, each one appearing anxious to claim the hardy soldier as a suitor, he was conducted to the foot of an elevated chair, wherein sat the Master, a sword lying on his knees, so as to form a traditionary representation of the cross.

The chieftain, in an elevated tone of voice, read to the neophyte the statutes of the order, enjoining the exercise of moderation, the performance of charities, veneration for the old, and, above all things, an unflinching sacrifice of life and limb in defence of a brother in danger or in distress. Nothing appearing objectionable in the constitutional record, the oath with its penalty was duly administered to the Wanderer, who received the fraternal accolade at the hands of the worthy commander, and was thus addressed as a new made brother:

"You are now admitted to the privileges and immunities of the ancient fraternity of the Garduna. You have pledged yourself to perpetrate no wrong against society; we merely oblige you to practice charities and beneficent qualities towards us, who, by our own free will and accord, have isolated ourselves from the law, the Church, and the rest of mankind. Where can charity, philanthropy, pity or friendship, be better bestowed than upon us, poor outcasts of the human race?"

"True, indeed," rejoined the soldier.

While the signs, pass-words, grips, and other formalities were being explained to the Wanderer, the Master assumed his customary position, and called attention to the further reading of the order of the day.

"Brothers," he said, "we have now an excellent opportunity of currying favor with our enemies, the Inquisitors, who have already paid us most liberally for the works performed by us when their courage failed. Within a few days a stranger will arrive in Seville, a noble cavalier, laden with the gold of New Spain; his name, we are told, is Don Alphonso de Estella."

At the mention of this name, the countenance of the Wanderer grew vividly discolored ; his breathing ceased as he attempted to conceal his curiosity, and he leaned forward, distinctly to catch every word uttered.

"A thousand florins will be paid for his assassination," continued the Master, laying emphasis on the greatness of the reward.

"Who offers such an immense recompense?" inquired several voices.

"The Inquisitor-General of Seville, Pedro Arbues," responded the Master, "and one half will be given to the perpetrator of this great deed, for they say he is the best swordsman, and bravest soldier in the Imperial army. Who volunteers for that service?"

"I will!" warmly answered the Wanderer.

"Know you the man?" inquired the Master, with astonishment.

"Intimately," responded the soldier. "I have served with him. Grant my first boon; if Alphonso de Estella dies by the hands of a brother of the Garduna, let him die by mine."

It is impossible to describe the outburst of enthusiasm with which the Gardunos hailed the bold declaration of the neophyte. Apart from the attractiveness of the reward, offered for the assassination of the valorous cavalier, whose reputation for courage and dexterity was as familiar as a household word, the honor of being entrusted with so dangerous a charge superadded a high favor to the service to be rendered the confraternity by the execution of the mission, and, therefore, all were pleased at discovering a trace of honest gratitude, as they deemed it, in Manuel's voluntary assumption of the desirable task.

"Thy request is granted, most worthy brother, for it is not within the province of the Master to deny a youthful member full opportunity to attain the summit of his profession," responded Mandamiento, his sharp eyes wandering upon every individual as if in bitter rebuke; "still it grieves me to find none among our veterans equally

ready to jeopardize their worthless necks for the greater honor and glory of our time-honored institution. Now hence, valets, to your beds, for the blush of shame tingles upon my cheeks, as I dwell upon your degradation. Fie to ye, who call yourselves men—go to the women and learn deeds of valor."

The deep, sonorous tones of the Master reverberated through the hall, as, in silence, his passive subjects received the expression of his anger, to which they were too well accustomed to accept this sudden explosion as the mark of an enduring displeasure. Tranquilly they disappeared among the columns encircling the audience chamber, or imperceptibly glided through the portals, and scattered themselves beneath the broken arches of the mansion, to woo a grateful slumber from the calm midnight breeze.

Mandamiento awaited the dispersion of the convention, and then addressed the Wanderer in tones of friendliness:

"Sorry am I that thou hast assumed the death-warrant of this noble cavalier; thou hast trouble already adequate for thy broad shoulders, without inviting the enmity of a potent baron. Still thou hast chosen thy calling, and may I not be disappointed in thee."

A few more seconds sufficed the Master and the neophyte to emerge from the chamber, and to traverse, in opposite directions, the road near which was seated the palace of the Garduna.

CHAPTER V.

BALTHAZAR THE APOTHECARY

BALTHAZAR, the apothecary, was the enigma of the Triana. His history was unattainable to the few, who were tempted to institute inquiries as to his origin: by his actions alone became he an acknowledged fact. Poor and apparently penniless, he maintained himself and his youthful protégé, the wandering Gitana, upon the proceeds of a small, obscure store, in which he retailed drugs and medicaments, noted throughout Seville as infallible remedies in all cases of affliction. His fame as a surgeon allured to his humble retreat the invalids of Andalusia; not only were his professional services invoked by mendicants of his faubourg, but by the young nobles, the haughty dames, the gallant cavaliers, and even by the sombre directors of the dreaded Inquisition, who solicited his medical aid and advice against the ravages of disease, and the more devastating inventions of malicious fellow creatures. Before his healing art, blood, trickling from the wounds of stiletto-stricken wretches, tarried in its flow, and returned to the natural channels, feeding the vital stream; beneath his hands the deadliest poisons, the long cherished secrets of alchemical lore, were converted into elixirs of life; by his almost magical compositions the bloom of health glowed upon the cheek of age, and the fire of love glistened in the eye of youthful beauty. Adorned by the preternatural attributes, originating from the ignorant superstitions of his age, in which fanaticism smothered scientific intelligence as obnoxious to the light of religion, it is not to be wondered that Balthazar, although poor and apparently stricken in years, was a character of marked distinction among Andalusians of all

classes. The wealthy citizens courted his favor, as an invaluable auxiliary to the preservation of life; the gay and dissipated sought his wondrous compounds to enhance and to sustain the enjoyments of their nature, weakened by their repletion in revelry, while by the poor and humble population of the Triana, he was almost venerated as a prodigy of learning and as a miracle of science. Hence came it that Balthazar was probably the only living being in Seville unafflicted by envy, malice or jealousy.

Balthazar sat beneath the porch of his obscure store, at the bottom of a dismal court-yard, leading into the gloomiest street of the Triana, in deep thought, when Zelda, returning from her interview with the Wanderer, threw herself into his arms, her limbs yielding beneath the weight of over-exertion.

"Father!" she tremblingly exclaimed, "I have seen that man again."

"What man, dear child?" inquired the venerable chemist, with an air of solicitude.

"The Soldier of the Inquisition, who boasted that he was the cause of the death of my first father, Malchior."

"Nay, Zelda," interposed the apothecary, tenderly wiping away the tears streaming from the eyes of the Jongleuse, "although grieved at the martyrdom of a good man, never harbor feelings of enmity against the poor tool of fanaticism, who incautiously bestows a crown of glory upon the most unworthy of us earthly creatures. Where didst thou encounter this servant of the Holy Office?"

"Solitary, by the bridge of the Triana," replied the Jongleuse, "I was playing on my gittern, and singing an old ballad to the murmuring waters of the Guadalquivir, when a stranger accosted me and gave this golden token. He asked me where I learned the words of my song, and I told him I had been taught them by Balthazar the apothecary. Then did he seem confused in thought, murmured to himself, and asked me further questions. Again, when I told him I was akin to Malchior, he spoke to me of strange things."

"What said he, my Zelda?" inquired the old man, gazing intently into the face of his youthful companion.

"He spoke of Malchior as his friend, a student, a wealthy man, an outcast; and bade me inform him where he died. My tongue clove to the roof of my mouth, and I could not tell my father's friend who it was had rendered his child a helpless orphan. At that moment there came from the darkness of a portal that terrible soldier, who harshly spoke the awful word. With fear and dread I shrank from the spot, to bury my sorrows upon the breast of my good benefactor—my only friend."

"Who was this stranger?" anxiously inquired the old man, after musing for some time upon the communication of his ward. "Of what quality and make was he? Was he priest or layman?"

"He seemed a poor soldier, a kind and benevolent man, who had traveled many miles. I would have given him back his golden present, but fear has thwarted my honest resolve."

"Nay, Zelda, preserve it as a talisman. The gift of thy father's friend can bring thee naught of harm. This stranger, it is evident, has known Malchior in the days of his youth; he may tell us news, so we must discover him ere his departure from Seville forever closes upon a trace of thy earlier existence. Perchance he may have tidings of thy parents?"

The Jongleuse started nervously. The few words which fell from the lips of Balthazar, in his incautious observation, acted upon her mind with the power of an electric shock; her eyes distended as she turned them upon the visage of the old man; her whole frame quivered as she nervously inquired:

"What of my parents? Oh! tell me—was not Malchior my father? and is he not dead?"

The apothecary instantly perceived the error he had committed in his solicitude to gain information with regard to the Wanderer. Thus, to avoid a further disclosure of some secret entrusted to him, he hurriedly responded,

but in such a voice as to further alarm the maiden's doubts:

"Yea, Zelda; but Malchior was once the companion of princes."

The curiosity of the Jongleuse was heightened; a reminiscence of her early childhood burst upon her; through the vista of long past years, her memory treasured a dream of hours spent in a fairy land. A shrewd suspicion she had ever entertained, a faint impression of a noble origin, strengthened by serious reflection in melancholy moments; and, above all, the deference extended her by her humble associates, had prompted a belief that she was not always of a grade similar to the companions of her present condition. Her curiosity was roused her pride was touched; for the first time in ten long years did she doubt the veracity of her guardian. Her eyes assumed a momentary glare, her speech became faltering and indistinct, as she spasmodically uttered the brief inquiry:

"My mother!—does she live?"

"In another world, Zelda, far beyond the reach of persecution and of sorrow," slowly responded the apothecary, anxious to turn the conversation into some other channel. "Her spirit, however, hovers around, and shields thee from the darts of calumny and the arrows of persecution. Zelda, thy mother has long since passed to the world of shades, to the company of seraphs and of angels. She was a being of light upon earth, and must be one in Paradise."

"Who was she? Oh, tell me!" interjaculaed the Jongleuse, in affectionate humor.

"The wife of Malchior!"

The songstress drooped her head, the dream of her ambition had departed, the vagaries of her fancy melted before a stern reality, and the long cherished delusion of her reveries foundered at the blunt assertion of the only being who might be able to solve the mystery ever encircling her vagrant destiny. The poor songstress inwardly mourned this declaration of her low-born origin; no longer could she feed the deceptive flame to illumine

her path to future greatness. She remembered Malchior, her father, only as the outlawed chief of a wandering band, a despised, maltreated Gipsy monarch, whose humble followers hovered around the cities of Andalusia, nestling in ruined edifices, or burrowing in cots, all but excavated from the mountain's sides. Zelda felt sick at heart; the wife of Malchior, she reflected, the woman who would share the vicissitudes of his precarious existence, could be no haughty dame, no proud lady, none other than one of the forlorn tribe over which her husband exercised his questionable authority. Unchecked tears suffused her cheeks, the outpouring of a heart overlaid with the grief of disappointed hopes.

"Stay, Zelda, my dearest child," affectionately spoke Balthazar, smoothing the jet black hair of his ward, and essaying by words of comfort to assuage her augmenting desolation—"dry thy tears, let us enter into our apartment, and I will read unto thee a fair romance of some Moorish chronicler, and on the morrow we will go hence to seek the stranger."

"On the morrow!" interrupted the maiden, her dreams of exultation again regenerated by a passing hope that the Wanderer might cast some light upon the subject, so dear to her pride, which inwardly tormented her; "why tarry until the morrow? Let us go forth, and seek him this very night."

"Peace, child! knowest thou not that after the shades of night have fallen, the gloomy streets of the Triana are beset with thieves and assassins?"

"Have we not the pass of the Gardunas?" interrupted the Jongleuse.

"Truly so, but then I am old and feeble; the pavements are besmeared with slimy dirt, and I am almost blind."

"And will I not lead thee as oft before?" continued the maiden. "Oh, come, take thy staff and mantle! Come, good Balthazar, dear guardian, let us go forth."

"No, I cannot venture hence, lest accident deprive thee

of thy father," remonstrated the old man, alarmed at the earnest impetuosity of the songstress. "Well knowest thou that but a day or two since our neighbor, honest Pedro, stumbled into a pitfall and died, despite my most potent elixir."

"Indeed I do, dear father, but am I not young and agile? I will guide thy tottering steps; so do come, ere the stranger forever vanishes from Seville. Oh, haste thee, I pray!" and the girl encircled the knees of the poor old man, and redoubled her entreaties for him to facilitate their departure on their errand, to her more dear than one of life or death.

"Zelda," urged the apothecary, his patience evidently shaken by the continued importunities of his ward, "thou knowest that I never fail to grant thee a reasonable request; but to-night a sinister spell seems to have enwrapped thee, alluring thee to death and destruction. Thinkest thou not that, were we to venture forth, we might perchance meet the gloomy Soldier of the Inquisition, who in anger would consign the body of thy only friend to the tortures of the Holy Tribunal?"

This allusion to the Soldier of Christ, whose appearance was a source of such dread to the Jongleuse, acted as a master-stroke of argument. The dismal figure of the familiar, so intimately connected with the demise of her parent, presented itself to the timid damsel, in the exaggeration of fear, and from that moment she was docile and silent. The full danger of her orphan position at once occupied her naturally reflective mind, and with reason she adjudged that the destroyer of the father must be inimical to his child. In silence she gave herself up to meditation; with a bitter sigh she relinquished the prosecution of her design, and mechanically followed the aged chemist into his rude laboratory, or rather ill-lighted shop.

Scarce had Balthazar extinguished his office-lamp, secured his fragile door, and arranged matters for the evening repose, when the heavy tread of a multitude

greeted his ears. The noise of many footsteps gradually increased as they neared the house of the apothecary, who, accustomed to the midnight orgies of his neighbors of the Triana, was in no wise startled by this sudden disorder.

The procession halted in front of the porch, where the soldier of the guard, at the head of the motley rabble, announced their mission.

"Friend Balthazar, in the name of charity, open to us; we have a dying man, stricken with an assassin's hand, and we desire thy famous services, else he will depart his sinful life without a priestly absolution."

"I will attend thee, friends," responded the humane surgeon; but ere the words had fallen from his tongue, the nimble feet of Zelda, well aware that the heart of her guardian was never closed to the calls of the distressed, had borne her to the door, whose open portals afforded a clear entrance to those bearing the wounded man.

Scarcely had she scanned the pale features and blood-stained garments of the injured familiar, ere her countenance became as livid as that of the suffering guest. With a rapid movement she approached Balthazar, and sharply whispered in his ear:

"'Tis he!—the Soldier of the Inquisition."

"Peace, Zelda!" interposed the venerable leech; "our enemy suffers; let us reward his evil ways by restoring to him a life wherein he can repent of his transgressions, and then appear before his Maker with a clean and fresh conscience."

Within the lapse of a few minutes the body of the unfortunate man was partially divested of his garments, and deposited upon a comfortable mattress in an inner chamber of the apothecary's house. Assisted by the soldiers of the guard and the friendly aid of some bystanders, the surgeon examined the wound, and applied the most available remedies known to Moorish surgery. Balthazar gravely shook his head as he girt the final bandage.

"This is a foul wound. Art thou prepared to die?"

"No, no!" ejaculated the suffering man, with an enun-

ciation scarcely perceptible, from weakness consequent upon the effusion of blood. "Heal me, good Balthazar; my purse is thine."

"Money buys not my skill," answered the old man; "but to the glory of God, whose providence is marred by the deeds of wicked men, have I devoted my humble talents. Thou shalt have treatment the same as I would bestow upon a prince. Thou shalt live, if virtue be in science."

"Thanks!—my grateful thanks!" reiterated Francisco Estrada; and, from sheer exhaustion, the familiar sank into a passive slumber, his pallid face writhing in pain, and his nostrils distended, to allow his heavy breathing a free escape. It was the slumber of overwrought physical agony.

"By whose villanous hand was he smitten?" inquired Balthazar, as he assorted and prepared some balsams for the relief of the sufferer, whose changing features from time to time he watched.

"We know not," returned the guardsman. "Hearing a cry for help, as we held our Court of Revels in the 'Angel' tavern, we sallied forth, by virtue of our duty. Hard by the hostelry we found a strange soldier, a servant of the Emperor; and, lying at his feet, the blood streaming from his wounds, this unhappy man. We learned this Imperial soldier not to be the author of the crime, but rather, some vagrant assassin, who, in the darkness of the night, eluded observation."

"The stranger! what became of him?" inquired the Jongleuse, attracted to the spot by the mention of the Wanderer's connection with the attempted assassination of the familiar, Estrada.

"He entered the Court of the Revelers, within the 'Angel,' and is there held to respond to the charge of murder, should it be found that this man came to his end by violence at his hands," responded the guardsman, deferentially, to the maiden.

"Good Balthazar!—dearest father! tell me," exclaimed Zelda, "will this man die? Can he not be saved?"

"Yea, and he will live," confidently answered the apothecary, in a low, measured tone. "It is necessary that he should live, for he has many sins to answer for."

Leaving the group around the bed of the wounded man, the songstress glided noiselessly into the street, and in a few moments presented herself before the King of the Revelers, as a mediator for the liberty of Manuel the Wanderer; where, as we have recorded, she was successful in her mission.

The personal comfort of the wounded familiar having been attended to, and the sufferer placed beneath the charge of Rachel, (an aged female, for many years a domestic of the chemist,) Balthazar withdrew to his laboratory, a small and dismal apartment, wherein he was wont to concoct the wondrous compounds of his profession.

"Francisco Estrada," he muttered to himself, as he descended into the subterranean scene of his alchemical labors, "by what strange dispensation of Providence has the relentless murderer of hundreds of the fairest and best of Seville, the sullen executioner of the Holy Office, been forced to beg his life at the hands of a poverty-stricken apothecary? Dear to him is that life treasure he so prodigally robs from others, without benefit to himself. Little knows he of, and still less cares he for, the torments and the miseries of his fellow creatures, that he may live to enjoy the horrible wages of his cruelties. Poor idiot! could he but be aware that, were I inclined, I might show myself the avenger of their shades, he would not prate of purse to me. One trivial drop of Paduan water, the mystic essence of deleterious odors, wrung from the deadliest flowers, would curdle the blood in his veins, and leave him a lifeless lump of worthless clay."

The old man paused in his soliloquy; it was the temptation of the demon, pouring into his sorrowed soul the breath of vengeance for the many years of misery he had suffered by the indirect workings of the Holy Inqui-

tion. Now appeared unto him the moment of vengeance; the death of Malchior, and those of a thousand more, could be avenged by the act of a single moment—one pillar, at least, of the Holy Office was within his grasp, which might suddenly crumble into dust. His eyes wandered around the apartment, crowded with phials, crucibles, mortars, jars, alembics and other chemical implements, until they rested on an earthen vase of singular construction. The apothecary arose, and cautiously removing its massive lid, drew out a phial of the purest crystal, hermetically sealed with a stopper of some precious metal, wrought with wonderful ingenuity.

"Within this brief space, I hold the means of extirpating the scourge of our race," he added, examining the phial, to perceive if any of the vapor from the rosy liquid it contained had penetrated to the air. "This paltry water, distilled through years of toil, by the arduous process of art, will deluge the Inquisition with tears of woe—it is more precious to the revengeful heart than the imperial crown, more enduring than a throne. A single drop will usher the proudest of our persecutors beyond the portals of eternity."

A grim smile passed over his stern countenance, and he stroked his long white beard as he still mused:

"Why waste this kingly beverage upon so base a creature?" he continued: "upon a mere tool of more gigantic tyrants. I will save the liquid in its fatal purity for Pedro Arbues, the Inquisitor-General, he alone is worthy to taste its perpetual flavor, and, king-like, pass from temporal power to eternal punishment. As for his dog, Estrada, he shall live, the chalice of his misery is not yet overflowing; within a week he will pace the court-yard of the Holy Office a perfect miracle of health—poison to wound him unto death must be distilled with his own brain."

Thus speaking, the venerable Balthazar replaced his crystal phial, closed the jar with more than ordinary precaution, and lighted a fire beneath the retort of his alembic, which stood in a corner of the vault.

CHAPTER VI.

THE ELIXIR OF LIFE

CHEMICAL study had sadly deteriorated during the regeneration of Christianity in Western Europe, and most particularly in the petty kingdoms of Spain. The persecution of the Moors, who constituted the more learned and scientific portion of the community, not only closed the numerous universities, established beneath the auspices of the Moresco commanders, but drove into exile the most skilled and accomplished scholars in the natural sciences, an irreparable loss, which rendered Spain subservient to the meanest principalities of Italy. The ignorant monks and itinerant friars, the moral instructors of the people, were destitute of the first principles of physical knowledge—nature to them was a sealed book, and in their haste to perpetuate copies of missals and rituals, they destroyed all valuable manuscripts, surviving the ravages of the Grenadian conquest, to secure the parchment, an article they knew not how to fabricate, whereon to transcribe their hymns and prayers. The fever of military service, the ardor of revived knight-errantry, obliterated even the favorable traces of science, remaining in Christendom as the relics of the Crusades. The nobles were ignorant and arrogant, despising literary attainments as unworthy of comparison with the mastery of arms; a warlike tribe, who valued the services of a man of letters as of little greater moment than the labors of the feudal serf, toiling in agricultural servitude. In such a state of society a necessary consequence was the neglect of natural science, except in so limited a degree as benefitted the progress of superstition, during which astronomy gave place in perversion to astrology, geomancy, necromancy, and the delusive speculations of the black art.

During that period alchemy, the ineffectual search after the common base of metals, more generally construed into a system of creating gold, took strong possession of scientific minds, a phantasy still cherished up to the present day. The alchemists of Spain, had, however, devoted their talents to a persevering study of the physical organization of the human body, and particularly to liquids, affecting the physical health of man. Beneath the title of the Philosopher's Stone, they attempted to discover the essence of the human body, for as they contended the soul to be immortal, by the constant reparation of the body, by the prevention of disease and of the ravages of time, by the infusion of an organic essential of material attraction, they attempted to secure perpetual youth and a never dying beauty. Arguing that antidotes to poisons the most destructive to the outer casing of the immortal spirit, would prove the most powerful artificial regenerators of animal life, they labored to produce those subtle and deadly poisons, which decimated courts of their bravest sons and fairest daughters, struck by an invisible and incomprehensible power, merely in the hope of discovering some agent neutralizing the fatal blasts of their own creation.

Balthazar, the alchemist, had traveled in many climes, prosecuting his favorite study with greater proficiency than others who had embraced the mystic art. He was aware of the secrets of his craft, and, mastering the occult mysteries of the Rosicruc in Padua, the very centre of alchemical lore, had attained the knowledge of composing the pestilential liquids in vogue among the children of Cornelius Agrippa. For years had he labored to attain the powerful antidote, a near approach to the long sought after elixir of life; for years he had bent his body over the ardent crucible, or watched the live-long night over the flame of his alembic, guarding its precious contents against accident or peril. In this laborious study of chemical art, the solace of his embittered existence, he had grown prematurely old, and wasted the manly vigor of a stalwart frame in a constant pursuit after the essence

of physical regeneration. Fortune had smiled upon his scientific toils, and each successive experiment convinced him that he had nearer approached the haven of his aspirations.

On the evening of our story, after depositing in security the mighty element of human destruction, the alchemist seated himself in front of his alembic, to watch the workings of the liquids contained within the crystal retort, fashioned in marvellous purity. Ever and anon he cast his eyes over a huge manuscript, inscribed with cabalistic characters; murmuring to himself, as in mental calculation he computed the minutes and seconds, during which the flames played around the vessel :

"Now is the propitious moment! Venus, guardian of beauty in the zenith of her transit, and Saturn, the destroyer, in the lowest house."

Thus speaking, he poured a few drops of richly perfumed liquid upon the boiling contents of the alembic. Almost instantaneously a dense volume of violet vapor arose from the bubbling waters, filling the apartment with a strong light of a similar hue.

"Good!" exclaimed Balthazar, as the vapor and flame subsided, leaving the boiling liquid as colorless as heretofore; "we will add some other ingredients," and while he spoke, he poured the contents of another phial into the miniature cauldron.

Suddenly, a flaming vapor of the deepest indigo illuminated the room, changing as suddenly to a brilliant cerulean blue.

"Better!" ejaculated the alchemist. "Now for the test of the learned Cornelius Agrippa. Thus far have I succeeded to a wonder."

As the liquid from his hand mingled with the boiling compounds within the alembic, a brilliant hue of the purest green was diffused throughout the chamber, which speedily settled into an equally dazzling yellow of most golden richness.

"Better and better!" muttered the alchemist. "Now for the talisman of the wizard, Michael Scott."

Upon the application of this test, the highest known to alchemical science, the vapor assumed the tinge of a magnificent orange color, and subsided into a red of a gorgeous brilliancy; still, the liquid within the crystal retort bubbled as freely and purely as at first.

"Thus far have they penetrated the mystery," quoth the apothecary, in nervous soliloquy; "now for my great work, the labor of years."

Speaking in this wise, the old man, with palpable trepidation, poured in the contents of a Florence flask, then esteemed the perfection of chemical invention, and gazed in breathless anxiety to witness the success of his speculative experiments. After a short commotion of the boiling liquids, the vapor assumed a miraculous whiteness, bursting into a flame as brilliant as the rays of the noon-day sun, causing the alchemist to lower his eyes in pain and anguish. In a few seconds the flame subsided; but the alchemist, overjoyed at transcending the works of his brethren, overpowered by the fatigue of mind and body, had sunk in a state of exhaustion upon the floor of his laboratory.

Hearing the noise of his fall, the tender-hearted Zelda, ever dreading that some accident would befall her faithful benefactor in the prosecution of his chemical studies, rushed to the scene of the old man's labors, and was horrified to find him apparently dead.

"Father, father!—dear father!" she exclaimed, raising his prostrated head, and pressing it closely to her bosom, "what great evil hath befallen thee? Art thou injured?"

The current of pure air, introduced by the open doorway, and the sympathizing accents of Zelda, awoke the alchemist to a sense of semi-consciousness, although his intellect evidently wandered.

"Is it but a dream, or have I succeeded in my great work?" he inquired, in faltering tones. "Speak! tell me; oh! tell me truly."

"What great work? Of what are you dreaming? You are at home, and I am your daughter, Zelda," said

the maiden, disconsolate at the reflection that the mind of Balthazar had become impaired by the effect of some unfathomable cause.

"Ah, Zelda! I am now the greatest of men. I have found the great secret—the arcanum of hidden wealth. I am rich past all belief."

"Pray, father, speak not in parables. What riches?"

"Those riches which belong not to one man—the wealth of our kind," responded the alchemist, resuming his ordinary vigor. "God in his mercy hath chosen me to be an instrument of his will in solving the great question of the age. The labor of years has been duly rewarded, and I am the possessor of the first step towards eternal life upon this unworthy earth. Behold this paltry powder!"

The alchemist removed the flame from the alembic, and in lieu of the bubbling liquid theretofore contained, was a fine, almost impalpable powder, of a whiteness surpassing that of the driven snow.

"This dust, my child, is the wonderful elixir of our life, the common base of our physical frame; a few grains will heal the gravest wounds, and restore from the deterioration of ill-spent years the body wholesome against the corruptions of disease. The soldier, Estrada, lies in our house savagely maltreated; he, the first among men, will I raise from his bed."

"The familiar of the Inquisition?" inquired Zelda, lost in amazement, and not comprehending the full extent of the old man's discovery. "Is he not our most dangerous enemy? Why restore him to life?"

"The wise rule of charity," responded Balthazar, "requires that we should return the evil of our enemy by good to our Maker. So let us discharge our duty by restoring to health him who has smote us."

While uttering these words, the alchemist placed a few grains of the powder in a clear glass goblet, and filled the vessel with purified water; then he beckoned to the songstress to ascend to the apartment of the wounded soldier,

who still lay in a half slumber, unconsciously writhing from the intense pain of his wound.

Arrived in the chamber, the apothecary bade Zelda preserve a scrupulous silence, and intently to observe the workings of his most miraculous cure; charging her that the utterance of a single word would dispel the potency of the charm, and destroy the efficacy of the vital experiment. Balthazar presented the goblet and its contents to the familiar.

"Drink of this; it will bestow upon thee new life."

The exhausted soldier raised himself with difficulty, and, taking the goblet in his trembling hands, drained it to the last drop. The alchemist authoritatively motioned his ward to a seat by his side, and, extinguishing the lamp, left the chamber in total darkness.

After drinking the medicated potion, the form of Estrada extended itself at full length upon the couch; he breathed freely, and without any appearance of that restless difficulty he had hitherto experienced; his eyes gradually closed, and he imperceptibly fell into a profound slumber.

Then a phenomenon occurred, exciting the marvel of the untutored Jongleuse. Around the head of the sleeping Estrada gathered fleecy clouds of mournful light, whose glare penetrated every recess of the soldier's chamber. As they waved to and fro in the atmosphere, they arranged themselves in order, and from the centre the color of the light changed to the virgin blue of the pure morn, such as greeted the earth at its creation. In the midst of this cerulean blue, the wondering eyes of Zelda detected the faint outlines of a landscape, by degrees deepening in shade, until it stood forth in the full relief of natural reality. The scene developed a rich garden, ornamented with the rarest exotics; birds sang from the limbs of lime trees and lindens, and the most gentle waters bubbled within the marble basins of a dozen fountains. Surely that garden was an earthly paradise. A lady of haughty mien, splendid attire, and exquisite personal beauty, sat in loving converse with a youthful and manly cavalier,

whose nobility was apparent, from his jeweled costume and his ease of manners. In the arms of the lady rested a child of beauty, like unto her mother, which ever and anon both cavalier and dame caressed in the full warmth of parental love.

As the eyes of Zelda became riveted upon this picture of love, vainly endeavoring to trace the portraits of the shadows to some real and living beings, a memory of whom lingered in her soul, the tableau changed. The landscape now presented was a dark and dismal wood, through which wandered the self-same lady in the disconsolation of sorrow, trembling at every sound, yet still clasping the infant to her breast with fondness and solicitude. Suddenly she was beset by ruffians, led on by a cavalier of sombre guise, who tore the child from her arms, leaving the lady panting upon the ground.

Affected by the ethereal panorama, the Jongleuse could scarce refrain from giving utterance to a sympathetic cry, but amid the lurid glare, she saw the warning countenance of Balthazar. Again, not only the color of the vapor was transformed, but the scene changed to a landscape of golden summer. It delineated in bold colors the halt of a tribe of wandering Gitanos, loitering beneath the trees, in the picturesque beauty of their variegated costumes.

The bells of the mules tinkled musically amid the silence of the camp, in the midst of which a fair young girl, habited in the dress of her fellows, sported in happy revelry; she was sprung upon by a couple of masked cavaliers, who attempted to wrest her from the spot. Alarmed by her screams of distress, a horde of Gitanos rushed to her aid, the chief of whom strangely resembled the noble cavalier of the garden; but alas! how altered. His cheek no longer glowed with the blush of beauty, his jeweled costume was replaced by a coarse Gipsey habit, and his countenance bore traces of premature age. Before his sword the masked cavaliers quailed, and sought safety in flight; while the girl, released from their grasp, flung herself in gratitude into the arms of the Gitano chief.

The Jongleuse grew vividly interested; she had recognized in this ethereal landscape an incident in her own existence—she was indeed the Gipsey girl, and Malchior the hero of the sword; she longed to dwell upon this scene of her youth, but the figures disappeared from her sight.

Again the vapor altered in color, and the picture of pleasure gave place to a dark and gloomy prison vault, painfully palpable upon a sheet of lurid red. The chamber was filled with instruments of a construction unfamiliar to the Jongleuse's comprehension—huge massive engines, armed with screws, cranks and cordage. In the centre stood a wooden wheel of gigantic dimensions, and around it some half dozen attendants, habited in coarse monkish frocks, their capuchins drawn completely over their heads. Near this machine of horror was placed a wooden desk, at which was seated a Dominican friar; upon the other side could be perceived the stately form of Pedro Arbues, encircled by his subordinates of the Inquisition. A prisoner was brought in—it was Malchior! They asked him questions which he sternly refused to answer; the attendants, at the signal of their master, bound him to the instrument of torture. The songstress comprehended the reality of the revolting picture; her horror-stricken feelings obtained the mastery of her sense of duty; she could no longer obey the mandates of Balthazar, but gave vent to a piercing scream. The picture instantly vanished, and the room was left in dreary darkness.

"Zelda, my child, I pardon thee!" feelingly ejaculated the alchemist. "Thou hast seen thy past history and that of Malchior; hadst thou remained silent, thou wouldst have seen the future. Perchance it is better for thee to be ignorant of that to come; it may have been the anticipation of greater sorrows. Now go to thy couch, and on the morrow we will greet our suffering guest in the plenitude of restored health."

When the Jongleuse retired to her little apartment, her brain was in a state of bewilderment at the many adven-

tures of the day through which she had passed, all of them tending to cast some light upon the obscurity of her origin. The mysterious observations of the Wanderer, the warm attachment he evinced to the memory of Malchior, his encounter with the terrible Soldier of the Inquisition, and moreover one fact, which she had not communicated to her aged guardian, her clandestine visit to the King of the Revelers, and the courteous conduct of the captain of the guard, which prevented her from addressing the stranger, according to her intent, when she stole from beneath the eye of the apothecary, busied by attendance upon Estrada—all these events created a profound impression upon her mind. She was at a loss to explain the continued enmity of the Soldier of Christ against her accredited parent, and above all, his strange connection with the floating pictures, so magically conjured up by the scientific skill of Balthazar—one scene of which her memory had treasured up apparently to form a connecting link in the series, pronounced to illustrate her previous history.

These airy disclosures of the past, were they but pictures of the brain, or, were they portraiture of realities? Such questions perplexed the natural reason of the youthful maiden, unable to comprehend the psychological phenomenon, that, by the action of the famous elixir, the passing dream of the patient, Estrada, based upon reminiscences of the active part he had personally taken in the drama of Malchior's life, had been reflected upon the atmosphere surrounding his couch with a brilliancy similar to the pictures produced by the child's toy—the magic lantern. The strength of the elixir, elevating the force of the internal spirit beyond the control of the earthly frame, diffused impressions of the mind beyond the sphere of animal control, and, as each phase of curative regeneration passed over the body of the soldier, his brain produced an external picture of his innermost reflections. They were unconscious revelations of scenes transpiring within the memory of the dreaming patient.

Zelda, exhausted and wearied by the unceasing com-

plication of occurrences, commended her soul, as was her nightly custom, to the mercy of her Creator, zealously prayed for the welfare of her benevolent guardian, craved pardon for the transgressions of the persecutors of her father, and threw herself upon her simple couch. Soon her weary spirits gained an asylum among the balmy regions of dream-land.

CHAPTER VII.

THE GOLDSMITH AND HIS HEIRESS.

AMONG the most prominent arts which had flourished in brilliancy and almost flickered into obscurity, during the troublous times of the intestine commotions of Spain, was that of the working of gold and silver. The discovery of both the Indies, and a knowledge of their inexhaustible treasures, re-awakened the dormant knowledge of its mysteries, and conferred a proud distinction upon those who followed the master-craft. Not only were the workers in gold, artizans in a practical sense, but they had gradually become the bankers, brokers, and commercial agents of the country. Well freighted argosies, as they floated their white sails on the waves of the Levant; staunch galleons, proudly stemming the rough waters of the Atlantic, bore the insignia of some goldsmith whose fame was by them borne beyond the pale of chivalry. Moreover when a spendthrift heir to an encumbered estate longed to commute the monies of his ancestors to feed his nocturnal revels and debauchery, he had but one pecuniary friend, whom he could safely trust with this custody of his broad acres; that friend was the operative goldsmith. When a town, commune, or municipality, in the gravity of a civic exigency, required the advancement of a loan, hypothecated upon the fluctuating duties of the *octroi*, or the more obnoxious tax upon the head, the counter of the goldsmith was loaded with the coveted bullion. In a word, the goldsmith, at the period of our romance, was the most influential and opulent of merchants, mechanics and traders, combining in one person that multiplicity of employments demanded at the regeneration of adventurous commerce, and subsequently

diverted into a dozen separate channels by the ingenuity of trade. This golden wealth gave its skilful owner an importance rarely attainable by deeds of arms, and his confidential liens upon both persons and goods, bestowed upon him a popular attribute of esteem by no means diminished by the utilitarianism of his profession. Gold, the coveted ambition of the Spanish race, erected its popular idol as securely as it embellished the temples of their saints.

The mansion of Miguel, the goldsmith, was one of the architectural features of Seville, where traces of its magnitude and unparalleled richness are still to be encountered. Alone, of private citizens, untitled and a plebeian, the artizan maintained a species of chivalric court, which, in numerous attendants and liveried lacqueys, rivaled that of the gayest noble. His halls were ever crowded by a long train of expectant clients, willing to devote their lives and limbs to the service of the magician, who could dispel their cares by exhibiting the miracles of mammon. There came to him a throng of many tongued people, armed knights, tonsured monks, prelates of the church, soldiers of the Free Lance, grey bearded men, wandering Gitanos and mendicant outcasts—the burden of their songs was a common prayer, an unremitting cry for gold, gold, gold.

The vast front of the artizan's mansion presented the aspect of a prison-house; its long row of two-story windows studding its dark and solid face of massive masonry, with casements of well wrought iron, cast a dismal glance upon the wayfarer, whose eye would alone be attracted by the huge portals opening upon the inner court, graced with the enameled escutcheon of their opulent proprietor. Indeed, Miguel boasted the insignia of chivalry, for he had done the State much service, and in gratitude, the Emperor had bestowed upon him a shield of honor, not, as usual, covered with devices of lions, or other heraldic beasts, but a plain escutcheon of three golden coins (besants) upon a field azure—a characteristic emblem of his professional calling.

Within the courtyard of the goldsmith's mansion, bloomed a garden of rare and unequaled beauty; statues, imported from classic grounds, rare exotics from the East and the West, braving the sea-breezes to yield a perfumed essence in the gay capital of Andalusia, encircled a series of fountains whose ceaseless murmurs played upon the air in tuneful melody. The richness of that flower garden, the boldness of the winding terraces and marble flights of grotesquely carved stairways, circuiting the internal face of the mansion, as elaborately and gaily ornamented as its exterior was sad and gloomy, the skilful taste betokening in its architectural design an appreciation of the picturesque, seemed better fitted for a court of love, than the abode of a master workman. This locality was, however, the favorite abode of the opulent artizan—it was the world of his being, over which he reigned supreme—the paradise of his affections.

On the day of our chronicle, Miguel, the goldsmith, had finished his evening meal, and was enjoying himself within a species of artificial bower, constructed of masonry of so light a nature, as in appearance to resemble the work of a fairy hand, so delicate were the pillars supporting the gaily painted dome, so elaborately carved and ornamented the façades and sidewalls. The artisan was not alone, for, at his board was seated a guest who weighed the destinies of life and death, and for whose reception more than ordinary preparations had been devised. Pedro Arbues, the Inquisitor-General of Seville, despite the fancied holiness of his profession, and the austerity of demeanor incumbent upon the carriage of his person in public, was a man whose carnal appetite existed sufficiently keen to appreciate the delicacies of a richly furnished table. The Inquisitor was well aware from experience, that the mansion of the goldsmith was furnished with every culinary appliance, while the viands therein served up, were of a character and delicacy tempting an imperial palate. Little is it to be wondered then, that Pedro Arbues, oblivious of his semi-saintly

reputation, should be a frequent visitor at the residence of Miguel, who was too happy at the distinction conferred upon his comparatively humble condition, to omit any opportunity for lavishing hospitality upon the great spiritual monarch. In fact, the exhibition of courtesy was fully repaid by the popular appreciation of the honors rendered, and no one in Seville contemplated either wronging, calumniating, or otherwise injuring a man, whose whisper into the ears of his constant guest might consign a fellow being to the dungeons of the Inquisition. Pedro Arbues on such occasions threw aside all the assumption of dignity it was his wont to wear in public, and subsided into a species of grotesque familiarity and blunt pleasantry which betokened his plebeian origin, to which cause could be attributed a part, at least, of his enmity against scions of nobility who casually fell within his unsparing grasp. An unscrupulous Dominican, he despised the ecclesiastical dignity, envying the bishops neither their luxurious ease nor worldly authority; a man of the people, he detested the trammels of rank, as not having been born to enjoy the immunities of nobility. Having raised himself to the head of the Inquisition, his ambition was satisfied; his position was more authoritative, more coveted, and more dreaded than that of clerk or noble. His will was the sole law within the walls of the Inquisition, and the consequences of his mandates extended in ever-widening circles beyond the gloomy theatre of his judgments. He was courted, flattered, and nominally worshipped by all, both great and small; for an imputation cast upon the character of the Inquisitor-General would be conveyed to him by the countless hosts of spies, interwoven through the main body of society, and any such declaration of disrespect boded evil for the destiny of the transgressor. Thus was it that Pedro Arbues reigned supreme; the curses and maledictions of the widow and the orphans, of the fatherless and childless, died upon the lips, vainly attempting utterance to their denunciations of the foul fiend of domestic slaughter.

The table of the goldsmith, well loaded with fruits and other luxuries, not only native to the country, but imported in his galliots from other climes, while the rich coffee of Mocha, breathing its perfumed flavor from cups of the purest porcelain, mingling with the aromatic fragrance of the Indian tobacco, had been left in the possession of the artizan and his guest, by the withdrawal of his daughter and her clerical companion, a Dominican friar, charged with the superintendence of her education. By the etiquette of that period, it ill became a maiden of Inez' years and unmarried state, to grace the table longer than was absolutely necessary ; and thus was it, that the heiress of Miguel had early retired from her father's banquet-room. Still, on this occasion she had tarried long enough to have re-inflamed the heart of the Inquisitor-General with a wild passion of love, an almost palpable outburst of a sentiment which he had long concealed within his breast, and struggled as ardently as man could to extinguish, ere it rose to a living flame. Pedro Arbues was deeply enamored of the goldsmith's daughter ; had he been a man of different state, and not deprived of marital rights by the exigencies of his Inquisitorial capacity, he would have declared his ardent attachment to the gentle Inez and sought her hand in marriage ; but encircled by the barriers of conventional law, his mind was preyed upon by the violence of a passion he found it impossible to subdue, and, eternally racked by the pains he endured, he hesitated to stoop to violence to accomplish a consummation baffling his moral ingenuity.

"Thy argosies from the Levant," commenced the Inquisitor, willing to divert his thoughts from the unceasing channel in which they flowed, after gazing upon the fair and animated form of the Maid of Seville—the proud though familiar title by which the daughter of the goldsmith was hailed by the inhabitants of Andalusia, who respected, in the person of the heiress, the manifold virtues of her sire—"have they returned in safety from the far-off haven of their destination?"

"Aye, have they," returned the artizan, his keen eyes glancing significantly upon the prior, Pedro, and his hands nervously moving upward and downward upon the richly furred robe thrown across his shoulders, as if by a spasmodic action of the muscles. "They have voyaged quickly, and come hither laden with dainties for the Emperor, and in honor of this return, I have fulfilled my vow, and two silver candlesticks of sterling metal grace the altar of our blessed San Jago."

"Thou hast done well, my son," resumed the Inquisitor ; "the blessing of God will ever rest upon thee. And thy galleons from beyond the sea?"

"They have returned likewise to the custody of the Imperial argentier," replied the merchant goldsmith, anxious to divert the conversation to some other train ; "and to propitiate the mercy of providence, a golden candelabra surmounts the shrine of our most virtuous Lady, Star of the Seas."

The goldsmith arose to pour forth some golden wine—the juice of the Cephalonian grape—into the goblet of his guest. In so doing, he displayed his manly and noble form, enveloped in a garb of the richest cloths of Italy, garnished with furs from northern climes, and the brightest jewels of oriental repute. His stalwart frame showed him to be beyond the medium age, still light and elastic in his actions, though dignified by the maturity of passing years. His face was sharp and expressive, and his whole manner bore the marks of a bold and decisive character ; his eyes keen and penetrating, while his voice was ever mild and cautious. As a merchant, he had encountered great difficulties in many lands, obviating them all by an obstinate resolution and stubborn integrity of character, which, while they enriched his purse, had cast a blighting wither upon the bloom and freshness of his cheek.

The lineaments of the Inquisitor presented a striking contrast to the well marked, energetic, and impressive features of his entertainer. Pedro Arbues was a man of some forty odd years, above the ordinary height, thick

set, sensual looking, inclined towards corpulence, and of an exceedingly coarse and vulgar countenance. His costume was that of a Dominican friar, with flowing vestments of ample dimensions, although adjusted with an awkwardness and want of care betokening little the mental activity for which he was said to have been distinguished. An animated expression of the eye, rolling in a deep-set socket, alone relieved the plain monotony of his features. Such, in personal appearance, was Pedro Arbues, who ruled the destinies of the townsmen of Seville.

"Drink," said the artizan, resuming his seat; "'tis but the wine of Cyprus, and greets one with a smile of joy. I have received intelligence of the coming of my intended successor—he who is to be the heir of my wealth—the husband of my adored Inez."

"Whence comes he? for the common fame of Seville reports Donna Inez to have rejected all suitors," interposed the Inquisitor, unwilling to revert to a subject harrowing to his soul. "It is even said that she intends becoming a bride of Christ."

The goldsmith sighed inwardly, and then, as if unconcerned, resumed his discourse:

"The mere gossip of a few crones; but such pious resolves will melt before the amatory entreaties of a young and gallant cavalier. Depend on it, despite the warmth of her monastic inclinations, she will not refuse a husband of real flesh and blood."

"The ways of heaven are mysterious, Senor Miguel," rejoined the Inquisitor, crossing himself with reverential humility. "Who is this favored suitor who is to win paradise itself in the gift of the virgin Inez and the wealth of our trusty argentier?"

"A noble of Navarre, one who has won his way to glory in the newly discovered world of the west," responded the goldsmith, with an honest outburst of feeling; "a gay cavalier, known to every court in Spain, and a worthy and illustrious man. He is, Monsignor, Don Alphonso de Estella."

The mention of this redoubtable nobleman, whose deeds had been truly chronicled in the ballads of the day, and whose name had been popularized by the laudations of the strolling troubadours and wandering minstrels, caused the features of Pedro Arbues to assume a sinister expression, and the gayety of his conversation subsided into reflective silence.

"How knowest thou, good argentier, that the noble knight hath returned to Spain? Hast thou conversed with him, and has he, in person, come to woo the gentle Inez?—for I long to see the redoubtable warrior from *Outre-Mer*."

"He comes not in person, but he has sent his equerry, a trusty squire, with a good will and stalwart frame; but stay thee, here comes the fair Inez and worthy Father Ximenes," continued the goldsmith, hastily arising, and throwing open the lattice door opening upon the garden terrace.

The Maid of Seville then entered the apartment, accompanied by her confessor. Tall and beautiful in the extreme, of delicate complexion and raven hair, Donna Inez appeared the very model of Andalusian elegance, full of native grace and of winning courtesy. The contour of her face was faultless as to the lines of classic beauty, her form finely and fully developed, her waist slender and tapering, while beneath her robe appeared a foot and ankle of fairy-like dimensions. Her full black eyes were bent to the ground in modest retirement, and her raven tresses were almost devoid of jewelled ornaments. Her dress was modeled after the national costume of her country, but divested of the gay and meretricious colors characterizing its peculiar taste. Her robes were of black velvet, rich, chaste, and well fashioned to display the rotundity and perfection of her form as well as the beauties of her person, and arranged with no eye for coquetish enchantment, but with a view to display the modest elegance of her mien.

Advancing to her father she saluted him meekly, and

assumed a seat by his side. The expression of melancholy and meditation upon her features at once attracted the goldsmith's attention, who calmly addressed her:

"Seat thyself, Inez, the evening air is perchance too strong for thee—thou lookest unhappy."

Before the maid could respond, the eyes of Pedro Arbues caught her own. There was a wildness in the steadfast gaze of the Inquisitor which shocked her; and vainly did she endeavor to escape their lurid glare, warming in intensity at the view of her personal beauties, and augmenting the passion which consumed his brain. Never before had she experienced so strong a disgust; still, as if enchanted by the spell, she returned his inflexible stare with a look of tranquil resignation.

Pedro Arbues gazed in silence upon the peerless beauty of the maid, and critically examined each salient point of her lovely form. He was lost to the present, as his mind conjured up a picture of the future; and were the reflex of his heart to be unveiled, it would have revealed a scene of disgust. He was no longer the monkish Arbues, the chastiser of heretical sinners, the humble follower of the Holy Church, but Pedro, the man of debauch and of intemperance, re-animated by the flame of long dormant passion, now bursting forth in the full glow of unbridled license. After a few moments of tumultuous reflection, he arose, and, with professions of humility, addressed the goldsmith:

"Prithee excuse me for the moment, I have words for the ear of our worthy Father Ximenes relative to the welfare of our blessed religion. Anon will we return, ere we take our leave from thy bountiful hospitality. Pardon us, fair lady."

The Inquisitor bowed obsequiously, crossed himself, and withdrew into the garden, closely followed by the Dominican friar.

The clerical couple walked at random for some minutes. Pedro Arbues was lost in the deep meditations engendered

by the re-appearance of the beautiful Inez. Heated by his repeated draughts at the wine cup, excited beyond measure at the intelligence of the arrival of her betrothed husband, from whose arms he had sworn to wrest the lovely prize, the object for whom his brutal soul glowed with vilest passions, he muttered imprecations deep and loud against his cruel destiny, condemning him to preservation of celibacy, or to the perpetration of crimes threatening to overwhelm him.

"Ximenes," he exclaimed, harshly grating his teeth and biting his lip, as the burning accents escaped him, "can I trust in thee—art thou mine, and wilt thou do my will?"

"Monsignor," responded the confessor, "thou hast no truer friend. I was a thing of naught, thou hast made me that which I am; command my poor abilities, and thou wilt find me worthy of thy trust."

"Be it so," slowly resumed the Inquisitor. "Hast thou strictly performed my instructions touching the religious education of the Donna Inez? Hast thou disgusted her with a life of vanity and vexation, and taught her that one of holy penitence is better fitting her moral state? Above all things, has she conversed with the Abbess of the Carmelites?"

"All these things have I attended to," answered the Dominican. "I have but to break down the last trace of parental affection and she will espouse the habit of a holy nun. Allured by the soothing words of the Carmelite, she hesitates not to forswear her marriage vow, her wealth, and her future, to attain a crown of virgin sanctity; in a word, but for her affection for her father, she is a creature of the Church."

"Virgin sanctity!" ejaculated the Inquisitor, with a hoarse chuckle. "Pedro Arbues will be loth to bestow that martyrdom upon so fair a lady. Ximenes, go forth, seek Francisco Estrada, my trusty follower, bid him apprise the Abbess of the Carmelites to receive a penitent, and this very night induce the Lady Inez to seek a refuge from this world of care beneath her wing."

"Assuredly, Monsignor," interposed the confessor; "but you forget the newly arrived husband, the famous Don Alphonso."

"Bah!" exclaimed Pedro Arbues, "I will take care of him. By the way, hasten thee to the Master of the Garduna, and in my name, announce a high reward for the blood of this accursed cavalier."

"Thy will is mine," rejoined the Dominican. "I will labor for thee, as the servant of the vineyard toiled for his master."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE TRIALS OF THE SOUL.

AFTER the departure of Ximenes, the Inquisitor still paced the flower garden, enwrapt within himself, and perplexed with his distracted thoughts. To possess the person of the lovely Inez was the object of his depraved ambition; to that end he had foisted a creature of his own upon the household of the goldsmith, who had little suspicion that the wiles of his guest would so suddenly tend to render his bosom childless—his mansion homeless. Aware of every circumstance transpiring within the doomed circle, the Inquisitor was convinced that the present was the golden moment to reap his harvest. The success of his intrigue was evident, still the mishap of a single hour might dash to the earth the brightest anticipations of the pleasure now apparently within his grasp.

When the Inquisitor and his companion passed out, the Maid of Seville threw herself at the feet of her father, and, with her eyes swollen by half-checked tear-drops, poured forth her lamentations:

"Why, why am I condemned, young as I am, to such a life of misery?"

"Misery!" ejaculated the goldsmith, in profound amazement, as he raised the prostrate girl from the marble pavement, "why speakest thou in such terms? At thy age thou shouldst be as happy as the uncaged bird. Of what sorrow hast thou, my child, to complain?—tell me, Inez."

"I am persecuted by the vision of that fearful man," sobbed the maiden; "he turns upon me his glaring eyes—they freeze the blood flowing in my veins; even now a

cold shudder passes over me. Oh, why dost thou suffer him to taint thy mansion with his breath?"

"Inez, Inez my child!" said the artizan, "thy brain wanders; he is thy father's most devoted friend—the Inquisitor of Seville."

"Name him not!" exclaimed the maiden, placing her hands before her face, as if to obscure the vision of a dreaded object, "his very garments smell of blood—yea, of the slaughtered innocent."

"Hush! speak not thus," timidly urged Miguel, attempting to assuage the consternation of his daughter; "should he but hear thee—"

"Aye, and what then?" firmly demanded the maiden, in a proud tone of voice.

"Thy secret thoughts would perish in the dungeons of the Inquisition."

"Better were it to be so," responded the young girl, "than I should live the creature of an agonizing destiny—why should I live?"

"Daughter," quoth the argentier, "I have news to communicate to thee. Now seat thyself and be calm, that thou mayest view the full realization of the future for which I have labored so long."

The maiden, reassured by the kind words of her parent, assumed her allotted position, and patiently listened to the words of the goldsmith.

"Thou art the affianced bride of a most illustrious and noble soldier—"

"Whom I have never seen, and therefore cannot wed."

"Nay, Inez, I will vouch for him—a gallant worthy of thy love."

"Stay, father, drive me not to destruction—I can never love him."

"Nay," added the goldsmith, bewildered at this contradiction of his favored scheme, "thou hast not seen this Navarorean cavalier."

"Neither wish I," returned the maiden, with marked determination; "a husband I long not for; I am wedded already in the spirit."

"Already wedded!" ejaculated the artizan, observing the entire temple of his future ambition cast down. "What meanest thou? Hast thou, too, deceived me, Inez?" The eyes of Miguel gleamed with the wildness of fury, as he bent his sharp, penetrating glance upon her, as if to read the secret mysteries of her heart.

"I am wedded to no man," solemnly responded Inez, raising her eyes towards Heaven. "Woe betide me when the fatal day arrives upon which I forget my sacred troth. I am wedded, if not in the act, at least in heart, to the Virgin Queen on high, the blessed mother of Christ!"

These words, uttered in the full enthusiasm of religious zeal, fell like a thunder-bolt upon the ears of the goldsmith, who vented his imprecations in strong, unmeasured terms. When he had recovered in some degree from his paroxysm of wrath, he sharply inquired of the religious enthusiast, now trembling at his feet:

"Who, then, has dared to bid thee trifle with parental love—to turn thy doting father childless on the world, that thy body shall ornament a cloister, and my wealth build prison walls?"

"The holy Father Ximenes, the blessed man of God!"

"Viper!" ejaculated the artizan, the words hissing through his teeth. "The begging knave would repay my manifold kindness by driving me an outcast through the land; would rob me of my only prop, the staff of my old age, that candles may burn before gilded images, and gold glisten on their painted walls. Thus has the ingrate tampered with my child, and, in the name of God's most holy work, would bring a parent's heart in sorrow to the grave."

"Speak not thus against a friar," continued Inez, anxiously endeavoring to arrest the storm of indignation she justly foresaw was about to break upon the head of the Dominican, "who has taught me the blessings of a holy life, where, without guile and corruption, I can imitate the blessed saints, and work deeds of charity most acceptable to the angels on high."

"This is the work of Ximenes, the monkish traitor," energetically resumed the goldsmith. "Why did I suffer him within my portals? I am, indeed, alone in the world; for in this hour hath my child deserted me. Hast thou no gratitude within thee, girl, to spurn divine command, and to leave thy father to baffle the arts of the wicked world, solitary and alone? Why was a child born to me?"

"Father!—father!" interposed Inez, kneeling at his feet, "wouldst thou not rejoice at having thy daughter one of the blessed of the Virgin, in whose daily prayers a voice would arise to beseech pardon for thy transgressions at the very foot of the altar of grace?"

"No!" vehemently responded Miguel. "I am not thus duped by the machinations of designing monks—drones on the face of the earth, robbing in the name of high Heaven. To thy chamber, girl; to-morrow thou wilt, perchance, have another preceptor—one who knows the duties of life, and who will render thee the worthiest matron in Seville."

Inez was happy to escape from the presence of her father, whose anger, boiling to the utmost pitch, deadened his reason to any justification of her intended course of religious conduct. Well aware was she of his impetuous will, of his moral influence among the municipality, and, above all, of his stubborn determination to espouse her, his heiress, to the Knight of Estella, a man whose character had been related to her by the complacent Father Ximenes as being calculated to render her after existence a temporal purgatory. True, she had neither seen nor conversed with the redoubtable soldier; and before her mind had assumed the sombre tinge at present obscuring its tendencies, she often anticipated with pleasure the approaching nuptials. But the teachings of her confessor had caused her repudiation of the frivolities of this life, and bent her zealous soul towards an existence of seclusion as the only means of attaining eternal happiness. By what measure could she esteem the vanities of the world, when the perpetual glories of the future were hidden from her view?

Sadly she withdrew to her chamber—a gloomy apartment at the further end of the garden, away from the noise and bustle of the main edifice. Her room was barren of ornaments; a small rough bedstead occupied one corner, while upon the wall hung an ivory crucifix of gigantic dimensions. Opposite this emblem of her faith was a small altar, surmounted by a painting of the Virgin, before which feebly burned the flame of a silver pendant lamp. Such was the sleeping apartment of the fair Maid of Seville, she who had been nursed in luxury, caressed by grateful fortune, and was destined for honor, rank, and unlimited wealth. Strange, indeed, are the workings of religious fanaticism.

No sooner had Inez entered her chamber—a fancied imitation of the penitential apartment she was hereafter to occupy as the chosen bride of Christ, one of the elect of the Immaculate Mother of our Saviour—than she threw herself before the altar, and, divesting her mind of every extraneous matter, prayed honestly and devoutly that the resolution of her heart might be strengthened, so that a gleam of hallowed light might penetrate into the recess of her soul. Thus prayed she, by an internal appreciation of godliness, fervently inspired, having no basis save in the creation of her individual hallucinations in the theory of self-sacrifice, of self-denial, and of temporal seclusion, approximated to a knowledge of beatified glory, such as was said to be enjoyed by the miraculously-endowed virgins transferred to the calendar of saints.

Inez loved her parent with all the devotion of a dutiful child; but filial love to her became a secondary consideration, viewed as militating against the superior duty to the Church. The living parent was but the ephemeral being of the hour; the Church was the never-dying fountain of universal love. Could the penitential devotee hesitate in a choice of service? Her reason was convinced. Better to sacrifice the moment, than to forego the delights of a blissful, hallowed eternity.

The deeper she reflected, the more determined grew her

resolution; the smooth, oily words of the Abbess of the Carmelites had tainted her spirit with imaginary griefs; the calm solitude and tranquil seclusion of the monastery had won her soul as if by a fascination. Inez determined to accept the noviciate, and thus enter within the portals of that place, which she deemed the anti-chamber to Heaven; anxiously she awaited an opportunity to escape from the supervision of a parent, whose love she dreaded as an insurmountable barrier against the prosecution of her holy mission.

While she prayed in ardent devotion, the heavy door of her chamber turned upon its hinges. Expecting the return of her father confessor, she noted not the occurrence, and continued on perusing the pages of her breviary. But as the guttural voice of the Inquisitor-General broke upon her ear, with a wild shriek she started to her feet, and throwing her arms uplifted towards the crucifix, she exclaimed:

"What brings thee here? Why trespass thou on this holy spot?"

"Daughter!" responded Pedro Arbues, drawing his tall form to its completest height, "I came to join with thee in thy orisons—it would be better that the voices of two should unite to entreat the mercy of Heaven!"

"Leave me!" exclaimed Inez, recoiling from the intruder in evident disgust—"depart from hence!"

"Daughter," continued the Prior, concealing the emotions of his breast beneath the smooth flow of honied words, "is it meet that thou shouldst address such words to a follower of the Lord Jesus? Listen to me, that my word exorcise a foul fiend raging within thy heart, which bids thee thus decry the holy brethren of the Church."

The Inquisitor pointed to his flowing robes, the insignia of his priestly office. The maiden cast down her eyes, and murmured to herself as if to ask his forgiveness for the crime she had committed. Encouraged by this show of penitence, Pedro Arbues continued, as if further to calm her perturbed spirit:

"I have heard, fair Inez, that thou hast determined to enter upon the blissful enjoyment of our true religion. Discarding the intangible joys of this world of sorrow, this gaudy prison of the suffering soul, thy will impels thee to abjure the pomps and vanities of a sinful existence, to revel in the beatitudes of a heavenly sphere. Am I rightly informed, daughter Inez?"

The repulsion which the maiden ever evinced towards the person of Arbues, dissipated before the religious tendency of his language, which harmonized so completely with the inclinations of her own enraptured imagination, that her instinctive repugnance melted into a semi-adoration of a celestial precept.

"Monsignor!" slowly returned Inez, "thou hast indeed penetrated my secret soul."

"And beneath the holy guardianship of our mother of the Carmelites, you are to trace your erring steps to the bright sphere above, where angels and seraphs greet thee?"

"Such is my solemn resolve!" firmly responded the maiden.

"Then, in token of thy sincerity, before me, a priest of the Holy Church, upon yon image of thy martyred Saviour, swear eternally to preserve thy fidelity to the ecclesiastical cause thou hast espoused!"

The manner of Inez was transformed within a moment. No longer in trepidation and fear, she stretched forth her hands as if in solemn supplication of heavenly assistance, and fervently repeated the required obligation. A glow of enthusiasm spread over her countenance. No longer pallid and distracted by her emotions, her face became animated with a radiance of freshened beauty, as at that moment her spiritual triumph gleamed forth in the full luxuriance of physical divinity. Never before was Inez more lovely or beautiful.

"It is well," interposed Pedro Arbues, as he gazed enchantedly upon the animated figure, and preternatural outlines of the Sevillian Maid, "from this time forth thou art of the Church, a bride of things celestial." As he

spoke, his stalwart frame quivered with emotion, and, throwing himself at the maiden's feet, he exclaimed:

"Inez, lovely Inez, hear me—thy brother's prayer—give me but leave to press those rosy lips, ere thou art forever torn from my sight. I beseech thee."

"Man, what meanest thou?" ejaculated the maiden, evading the reach of the suppliant, and assuming a courageous fortitude.

"Dear Inez, I mean this, that I have loved thee deeply, and from my heart, and now is the hour of my triumph. I have waited long and in agony to win thy favor, and in vain. Surely thou wilt not refuse me, Inez?"

"Back—back—vampyre!" exclaimed the girl, wrestling within the arms of the stalwart Prior. "Oh! is there no assistance for the helpless?"

"Thy cry will penetrate to no sympathizing ears—they are deafened by the terrors of the Inquisition, whose chief I am," responded the Prior, in a scoffing tone.

"Yes, yes, there is a guardian for us all!" continued Inez, drawing from her bosom a crucifix, upon which was extended in miniature a lifelike representation of the suffering Christ. "Darest thou," she added, holding the emblem of the Saviour's torture between her and the struggling Inquisitor, "most wicked man! darest thou threaten the ire of thy Maker?"

With habitual reverence, the head of Pedro Arbues dropped in silence before the uplifted symbol of man's redemption!

For an instant, the awful dread of a sacrilegious crime, and the mysterious solemnity of a future punishment, held the unbridled longings of the Dominican in check; and he, who revelled monarch of an auto-da-fe, quailed before a carved idol.

As Pedro again advanced towards the maiden, he was startled by a prolonged whistle, sharply followed by the exclamation, "Chut!" the well-known sound of which suddenly deprived him of motion. His eyes wandered around nervously as he scanned the apartment; for these sounds



PEDRO ARBUES IN THE CHAMBER OF INEZ

constituted the signal of alarm among the affiliated of the Inquisition, and were only employed, by the initiated, to warn an associate of grave impending peril.

Pedro, petrified at the token of danger, and conscious that his villany had been observed by mortal eyes, preserved the marble frigidity of a statue, when the summons again rang through his ears with greater clearness; and with that cravenly appreciation of danger which ever accompanies premeditated crime, he turned one more glance upon the beautiful form of Inez, as she still held aloft the symbol of her faith, clinging to it as the palladium of her soul. Again the mysterious mandate re-echoed through the apartment, and the Inquisitor, trembling at every joint, as much from the reaction of his overstrung nerves as from the incomprehensible source of his imperative warning, slunk from the chamber with a slow and timorous retreat.

CHAPTER IX.

THE SOLDIER OF CHRIST.

FRANCISCO ESTRADA awoke from his deep slumber apparently recovered in health and physical strength; a painful weakness alone pervaded occasionally his frame, which was almost immediately dissipated by a copious draught of medicated wine. As the Soldier of Christ aroused himself to sensibility, his languid eyes rested upon the countenance of the Jongleuse, who watched every movement of the resuscitated man with undisguised solicitude. The internal feelings of the maiden had undergone an entire change with respect to Estrada, whom she formerly despised, as well as dreaded; but, perceiving his suffering condition, her heart warmed with woman's charity, and yearned to aid in the alleviation of his sorrows. He was no longer a formidable enemy, created for the destruction of her domestic peace, but a fellow-being, forlorn and deserted, whom chance had placed beneath her protection. She felt obligated by the dictates of conscience to extend to him the courtesies of her skill, for in such an action she merely recognized a token of gratitude to her benefactor.

"By what magic have I been healed?" exclaimed Estrada, assuring himself that his wound had been firmly closed, and that the deathly weakness had been driven from his frame.

"By no magic, save the skill of the learned Balthazar," responded Zelda, pointing to the formidable array of bottles and cups, phials and other instruments, encircling his couch side.

"Nay, it must have been magic, else it is a miracle!" continued the Soldier of Christ, "for the power of man

cannot work such wonders. And now, methinks, I see the hand of the Holy Virgin in this rapid cure."

"Then be it so," responded the Jongleuse, "and let us praise her for restoring you to life, and from this hour let your new existence be a day of thanksgiving."

Zelda comprehended the danger of her position, for the very restoration of the servant of the Inquisition was fraught with danger to the worthy Samaritan, who might be called upon to demonstrate the absence of any supernatural agency in the accomplishment of his surprising cure. His life might be sacrificed to appease a ceaseless craving after power, which denounced the incomprehensible miracles of science as the effects of occult mystery.

"I vow to the Holy Virgin a dozen of candles," and the bigoted fanatic conceived that with this paltry ovation he was to repay in ample generosity the debt due to nature for the prolongation of his existence. This offering of household chandlery constituted the external expression of his religious sentiments, and in due formality cancelled all spiritual obligations. The Soldier of Christ was but the exponent of the ethical feelings of his era, when the external expression of the attributes of Christianity were limited to the display of pompous ceremonies.

"And I will pray her ever to maintain her power over thee," remarked the Jongleuse, whose religion was more aptly confined to the heart.

"And I further promise to add another heretic to the coming auto-da-fe," remarked the Inquisitorial servant.

"Besides, in gratitude to thee, fair maiden, I promise thee a front seat in the grand plaza upon that occasion. Thou shalt have a full view of the glorious sight: thirty heretics to be burned alive, and one Jew to be broken on the wheel—it will be most glorious!"

Zelda responded not, for the mention of the Inquisition caused her whole frame to tremble, and brought to her mind the melancholy spectacle she had observed in the vision of the previous night. Beyond this, she was at a

loss to comprehend any good cause why the restoration to health of a true Christian, could demand a premeditated sacrifice of human life; still, such would be the natural consequence of the soldier's reanimated zeal in that which he, in common with his fellows, considered to be a holy cause.

While engaged in her meditations, the door of the apartment opened, and afforded an entrance to Father Ximenes, who, with crossed arms and down-cast eyelids, approached the couch of Estrada.

"I have come hither, brother," he slowly said, "to receive thy confession, as I am told thou art at the point of death."

"Quite the contrary, for I am completely healed!" answered the soldier—"a miracle, which none could accomplish but the Blessed Virgin."

"How was it? Is our poor city to be graced by a an emblem of divinity? Are we to be honored by a new saint?"

"It is even so—for wounded I came hither, as this maiden will testify, and now I am healed."

"Yes, and behold the bloody bandage with which we staunchd his weltering wound!" quoth the songstress.

"A miracle! a miracle!" shouted Ximenes. "Let the candles be lighted; let the parish bells sound their loudest peals; let all men rejoice, for Seville is honored by the presence of the Holy Virgin!"

Alarmed by the wildness of the worthy confessor's exclamations, Balthazar deserted his drug-shop and entered the sleeping apartment.

"Indeed, a miracle!" said he, anxious that some pretext should be afforded, whereby the knowledge of his great elixir and its marvelous effects, should be hidden from the penetrating inquiries of the wily priesthood, whom he shrewdly suspected would not fail to attribute to the employment of magic the wonderful cure of the soldier Estrada.

"Aye, my good friend," resumed Father Ximenes, "hast thou witnessed the miracle with thy own proper eyes?"

"Truly I have, most holy father," responded the apothecary, with great humility and clearness of speech, that his tale might be implicitly believed; "for as I watched the wounded man, tended by my daughter, Zelda, there came to us in person the Holy Virgin, who entered the room I know not how, or by what earthly means"—

"Son," interrupted the priest, "thou art talking of worldly things, when we treat of things holy, and that savors of contempt, yea, even of heresy."

"Pardon my error, holy father, for in tracing the connection of earthly effects I have acquired a knowledge of things marvellously divine. Therefore knew I that it was the Holy Virgin, who, coming with a halo of glory around her saintly head, touched the wound with her hand, and thus proclaimed her divinity by restoring this man to natural life. Thus, in faith, occurred the miracle."

The penetration of the Dominican was baffled; notwithstanding the great repute of Balthazar, his incompetency to accomplish so wonderful a cure by the simple means of surgery was convincing evidence of a supernatural agency. Vainly he attempted to detect any presence of magical practices; nothing was observable in the chamber save the ordinary appliances of medical art; consequently, in his ignorance of true knowledge, he was inclined to adopt any theory to satisfy his reason. Beyond this, the establishment of the fact of a miracle, at a period when the Holy Office was threatened with popular odium, and its honesty questioned, would serve to blind the eyes of the Sevillians to an appreciation of the purity of that terrible tribunal, which had more than once evoked the wrath of an infuriated populace.

Balthazar, through his cunning, eluded suspicion; and Estrada foresaw a brilliant future in his especial patronage by the Blessed Virgin. The Dominican reveled in the glory of his Order, which would obtain new laurels by being the

incidental means of this holy visitation. All were contented save Zelda, to whom the cause was more perplexing than the ethereal panorama of the previous night. Well aware of the policy of the apothecary, she tacitly humored his deception, for she well knew that his caution would alone tempt sacrifice of integrity. Naturally credulous, she would incline to a perfect belief in the marvel, and therefore credited its propagation, little foreseeing the honor and consequence it bestowed on Estrada individually. No interested motive accelerated her corroboration of Balthazar's version of facts, as the memory of the scenes displayed to her vision by the art of the apothecary awakened in her bosom a keen curiosity as to the further knowledge of her mysterious existence.

Preceded by the Dominican, the resuscitated Estrada took his leave of the apothecary, and passed straightway to the palace of Pedro Arbues, while within ten hours the good folks of Seville were astonished by a full knowledge of the miraculous healing of the Soldier of Christ. The Archbishop of Seville ordained the publication of a lengthy *proces verbal*, substantiating the accuracy of the miracle, and every painter of the town cleaned his pallet to commence a new portrait of the innumerable Madonnas haunting the Spanish imagination.

Francisco Estrada found the Inquisitor in deep revery, within his most private cabinet, pondering upon the means of compassing his intentions upon the heiress of the goldsmith, for whose possession his heart burned with an unholy warmth. Every hour his unquenchable love for the fair Inez grew more insatiable, and he turned to the familiar as a supple means to aid him in his designs. Sullen at his disappointment on the previous evening, when the religious fanaticism of his intended victim baffled the accomplishment of his purposes, Pedro Arbues received his visitor in silence, and bidding the Dominican confessor retire, he motioned Estrada to a seat near him.

"I am told, brother Estrada, thou hast influence with

the Abbess of the Carmelites, and can work her to thy will. Is it thus?"

"Monsignor, it is true," he humbly answered.

"Then hie thee to her, and bid her prepare a chamber, for this very night the Convent of the Carmelites must contain a new inmate. Mind, tell her that all due respect be shown the novice whom she will receive from the hands of Father Ximenes. Thus bear the message, and if she do object, the terrors of the Inquisition shall be brought to bear upon her."

Near the palace of the Inquisitor, on the high grounds of the Triana, stood the Abbey of the Carmelites, its dark turrets and gloomy walls frowning upon the thickly-studded houses of that dense quarter. Its portals, guarded by ever watchful sentinels, appeared to be perpetually closed, as, save upon feast days and festivals, they were only opened to afford an exit to the members of a community once numerous and honored as the best chosen of the Lord, whose ranks were yearly recruited from the noblest and the fairest of the land.

Francisco Estrada soon penetrated to the gloomy ante-chamber of this prison-house of female penitents, for the familiars of the Inquisition ever enjoyed a passport to all religious institutions. Summoned by the aged and deformed porteress, the Abbess presented herself before the visitor, within the narrow apartment, whose blackened walls and massive crucifix presented a sinister prelude to the dismal monotony of convent life. She was a tall, fair-haired woman, of middle age, her countenance giving ample evidence of former beauty, now corroded by a life of painful suffering. Inured by long continuance at the convent service, her features had assumed an expression of solicitude, and a calmness of melancholy somewhat enhanced by the effect of her monastic robes. Originally endowed with a meek and tractable temper, the vicissitudes of her life had given her a stern and inflexible demeanor, which weighed equally upon all entrusted to her charge, from whom she extorted a pliant obedience.

Years of hopeless incarceration had rendered the woman incapable of appreciating the tender outbursts of youth and gaiety, and had thus converted her into a ghostly reminiscence of the past. A heart once overflowing with kindness and sympathy appeared forever closed against all appeals of a better nature. Hence was it that the Abbess became a passive instrument in the hands of the Inquisitor-General.

"Thou here again!" exclaimed the Abbess, gazing at Estrada with earnestness; "what new crime is required by your insatiate master?"

"Nay, Agatha, I come not hither to upbraid thee, but to deliver a message from the most worthy Inquisitor-General, the intent of which you will comprehend."

"Speak and depart, for thy voice, like the raven's, grates harshly on my ear, speaking, as it ever does, words of desolation and of death."

"Agatha, I am bid tell thee to prepare a chamber for a novice."

"Again is a victim to be brought to the slaughter," slowly muttered the Abbess; raising her voice, she continued, "what if I refuse?"

"The horrors of the Inquisition await thee," responded Francisco—"the rack, the wheel, and particularly the whip. So says the Inquisitor-General."

"To whom am I to look for thus disgracing a maiden's name?" inquired the Abbess, in sullen dignity. "To whom am I indebted for loss of youth, honor, and life itself? Who has reduced me to the condition of a living corpse, haunting this side of the grave?"

"To thyself art thou in debt," responded the soldier; "didst not thou willingly embrace a holy life and desert thy benefactor's house?"

"Alas, too true; but not until it was ruined by the fatal devices of Francisco Estrada, the wretched minion of Pedro Arbues."

"Speak in more gentle terms, blessed Abbess," continued the soldier; "you appear to have forgotten the

fact, that I was thy truest friend; at least you were wont to tell me so, when we sighed our loves by the banks of the Guadalquivir."

"Mention not those days, I implore thee," quoth the Carmelite; "it tortures me to think of hours of happiness long since passed away. If in those times thou didst possess a heart, surely thou wouldst not come hither now to taunt me with my folly, but rather refrain from persecution of a creature, who wasted her happiness, her life, and her all, upon one she loved."

"Agatha," said the soldier, "I am here on business; knowest thou the lady whom my master consigns to thy holy charge?"

"I do," replied the Abbess, "one young, guileless and guiltless, a virgin of fair repute, the daughter of Miguel, the goldsmith; no smaller prize will satisfy the lofty aspirations of the most excellent Pedro Arbues. Will you not rejoice at her downfall?"

"It matters little to me," replied the Soldier of Christ; "besides, she is destined to be the bride of the Church, if not of Alphonso de Estella—"

"Alphonso de Estella!" ejaculated the Carmelite, "and is he to wed her? Is that noble cavalier still in this breathing world?"

"You know him then?" coolly inquired Estrada; "what of him?"

"He was my early friend, the playmate of my childhood; yes, Francisco, long ere thy serpent-tongue beguiled this feeble heart, that gallant youth was the pride and envy of our native home. Think you there is no risk from his bright sword—that Pedro Arbues and his gallant squire can complot in security against him?"

"I fear no man; and as to our worthy commander, he must look to himself. What answer must I return?"

"Go tell your master," deliberately responded the Abbess, "that his bidding shall be done, for in this house I have no will; tell him further, that even a forlorn maiden may yet crush the serpent, and, above all, bid him beware of the Knight of Estella."

"It will be done," answered the soldier; "and now, as we are to part forever, give me a kiss, such as thou wert wont to implant upon the thoughtless cheek of an Andalusian youth." Thus ironically speaking, he advanced to caress the Abbess, and endeavored to encircle her with his arms.

"Francisco, taunt me not; hast thou no respect for these holy vestments? That we have sinned is certain, but that we are to continue in a career of crime is no resolve of mine. In the dreary solitude of this wretched abode of broken hopes and blasted hearts, I had thought to forget thee; but thy image haunts me ever, and there is no peace for an erring heart."

"Then fare thee well, my constant loved one, and may thy virtues outlive thy years of penitence." Thus saying, the Soldier of Christ emerged from the sombre chamber of reception, secretly delighted at the complaisance of her he had so wretchedly betrayed, ere he donned the sable uniform of the Holy Tribunal.

The Abbess remained for some time in sober reflection, meditating upon some scheme, whereby the unhallowed machinations of the Inquisitor-General might be frustrated. But, alas! as she was alone, entrapped and imprisoned, she at last concluded that her mission of charity would be deemed fruitless.

Francisco Estrada, who had so disdainfully deserted the creature of his former passion, as an obstacle in the way of his promotion along the rugged acclivities of Inquisitorial preferment, spent little time in cogitating upon the consequences of the enterprise he had undertaken on behalf of the Inquisitor-General. Reckless in disposition, callous as to the past, and still more heedless as to the future, he viewed all current events as equally unworthy of minute consideration. Disunited from every human being from lack of common sympathy, he was isolated amid a crowd of more fortunate fellow beings, and gloried in being the sombre servant of a most gloomy institution. He rejoiced in his calling as a familiar of the Holy Office;

it pleased his vanity as entitling him to notoriety, to the good or evil will of the people. The distinction in nowise annoyed him; it offered him a secure method of repaying insults and injuries with certain and unavoidable vengeance; it marked him out as the child of Ishmael with every man's hand against him. Ambitious, Estrada comprehended not the first steps towards meritorious elevation; as to friends, relatives, or associates, he possessed none—no one claimed his care, his favor, or his friendship; an untensured monk, he moved within a contracted circle, knowing but one world, that of his individual self. The soldier served the Holy Office zealously, for the natural moodiness of his character conferred upon the institution a species of melancholic dignity, partaking of supernatural grandeur.

As Francisco Estrada progressed along the thoroughfares of the Triana, the undisguised respect of its inhabitants, made cognizant of his miraculous escape from the jaws of death, awoke within him an indescribable sentiment of inborn pride. He shrewdly suspected that the marvelous version could be turned to his individual benefit, and, therefore, while he resolved with humility to accept the religious distinction of a medium for the developement of divine favors, he labored to inculcate a particular reverence for his person among the ignorant, unable to comprehend the distinction between an emblem and a reality. By promulgating the report of his immediate patronage by the Madonna, he could assure his person harmless against assault, as well as assume a character for religious probity, whereby he could cloak the full depths of his sinister and personal designs.

While Pedro Arbues and his follower were enwrapped in their cogitations and suggestions, the priestly colleague lost not a moment in assisting their plans, by entering the mansion of the goldsmith, and there working upon the spiritual fears of Donna Inez to such a degree, as to render her introduction to the Carmelites a matter of voluntary inclination on the part of that young and innocent being.

Father Ximenes found his charge within her gloomy chamber, almost distracted at heart with contradictory emotions. The violence of Pedro Arbues in the brutal declaration of his passion—the terrors of the horrible Inquisition, whose yawning mouth threatened both herself and her beloved father—the insecurity of her present existence, which her virgin timidity aggravated by a stern refusal to intimate to the goldsmith the baseness of his guest's conduct—and above all, the deep-rooted reluctance she experienced to a nuptial alliance with a person, whose peculiarities had been calumniated by her father confessor into criminality; all these fancies, continually recurring to her meditations, contributed to exaggerate the melancholy in which her spirit had been, from false tuition, moulded.

"Sister Inez," remarked the Dominican, "thou hast sore trials in this world of sorrow—why not depart from them into serenity?"

"Whither, Oh! whither, holy father," nervously uttered the damsel, "can I fly to seek a refuge from the pains, the torments, the toils, and the inflictions of this wicked life, an existence I neither love nor desire?"

"The asylum of the Church," returned the priest, "has secured to the erring sinner a safe refuge against the tempest of unholiness; in the security of the cloister, dedicated by the Blessed Virgin, wilt thou find rest for thy weary soul."

"But what, holy sir," inquired the maiden, "will be the fate of my poor father—him I so dearly love? Can I desert him at this late moment, when the infirmities of his increasing age will require the best attentions of my duty? Oh! how can I leave him?"

"He is a man used to buffet the bitter storms of life," continued the Dominican, "and has already won golden wealth and fair repute; he can live companionless, upon his own strength. Besides, the light of our holy religion has not been diffused upon his sealed spirit, without which he cannot comprehend its holy joys."

"Truly has religion its joys," musingly murmured Inez; "and to gain the happiness of a future world—to enter among the celestial choir of happy seraphs, who hover around the altar of our God, thinkest thou I do an evil in deserting him to whom I owe my being?"

"Not at all, my daughter," responded Father Ximenes; "the Church is omnipotent, for its law is that of God, who has created us all, poor, weak creatures. The Church has given thee, and such as thee, a new home, a thousand times more to be valued than these gilded mansions of misery. Once within the portals of the Carmelites, none shall disturb thy peace and quietude, and in a life of perpetual chastity thy hours will pass away in sweet communion with fellow-saints. Canst thou not thus enjoy pure happiness?"

"True, true; thus can I be blest," joyfully exclaimed the goldsmith's heiress. "Heaven bless thee, holy father, that my steps have been directed in the right path—the straight roadway to salvation and redemption."

"Heaven's will be done!" meekly answered the friar. "Didst thou mark the serene and quiet countenance of the Abbess of the Carmelites? Thinkest thou that she is not trebly happy, surrounded by the chaste virgins of her Order? Is there a stain of sorrow, or of suffering, or of discontent on her face? No, no, Inez; be virtuous and pure as she is, and bid a lasting farewell to the vanities of this earth."

"That will I do," earnestly spoke the maiden; "and in her companionship shall steal away the hours allotted to my wretched life. This very night I will, under cover of the shades of evening, leave forever this abode of sumptuous luxury, and pledge my troth to Him, who was born in a manger."

"Be it so," responded the Dominican; "at the postern gate will I meet thee. Keep thy counsel, child, and have converse with no one, lest thy father, in plenitude of mistaken love, should bar thy passage to a happy abode of celestial bliss. Put thy trust in God."

"Father, father!" uttered the maid, as she knelt in humility; "and must I leave thee? But I will pray for thee, and thou wilt be happy. Oh, pardon my desertion, and rejoice to know thy Inez will be one of the blessed."

The Dominican gazed fixedly upon the novice, and inwardly rejoiced at the apparent success of his machinations. Already he depicted to himself the congratulations of the Inquisitor, the complacency of the Superior of his monastic Order, as he counted the untold wealth of the goldsmith's daughter; yes, his imagination carried him still further, and seated him in that Superior's chair, with a fair view of the Arch-Episcopal See. His work had been completed with skilfulness, and he was worthy of his hire. Such were the reflections of the Dominican friar, as he departed from the mansion of Don Miguel, to assure his patron of the accomplishment of his mission.

Hours rolled as slowly away for the expectant Inez as they did for the equally impatient Pedro Arbues, who gratefully received the tidings from his menials of the rare success attending their schemes. Vainly did he watch the shadows passing over the dials of the church turrets, and count each fleeting minute as the jewel of an age. On the other hand, the thoughts of the Maid of Seville were tinged with a profound melancholy, for at times her conscience smote her for this clandestine desertion of her doating father; still, firmly convinced that her sacrifice to the will of the representative of the Church was a compulsory obligation to secure eternal rest, she prayed the Divinity to yield her courage to encounter filial martyrdom.

The shades of evening had hardly set in, when, with a lingering glance upon the sombre furniture of her dismal sleeping apartment, the Maid of Seville stole forth, nervously and tremblingly, into the floral court of her father's mansion. The full moon, just rising, cast its beams upon the garden with a mild and mellow light; the evening birds carolled in wild minstrelsy; the budding flowers of spring exhaled their perfumes to the air; the dying zephyrs dis-

ported with the pendent branches of the lime and the linden; and the monotonous murmurs of the falling waters mingled with the dying echoes of the city's busy noise.

These familiar sounds fell unheeded upon the ears of Inez, who, casting a farewell glance upon the lattice window of her father's apartment, thrust the key into the lock of the postern and turned it noiselessly; a moment after, she passed into the open roadside, where she encountered a muffled figure, evidently awaiting her coming.

"Is it thou, Father Ximenes?" she uttered, trembling with fear.

"Nay, madam, it is not," responded the figure, in deep, startling tones. "I am the equerry of Don Alphonso de Estella, and a friend to thy father, who will restore his erring child to his arms."

"Villain, wouldst thou offer violence to the Donna Inez?" interrupted a second voice, as an armed man hastily emerged from beneath the shadow of the wall.

"I mean none, Francisco Estrada. I have watched thee, and have detected thy guilty machinations against this lady's peace. I am Manuel the Wanderer; we have met before."

The Maid of Seville uttered a piercing shriek, and tremulously withdrew within the court-yard, as the alarm-bell of the goldsmith's mansion summoned his retainers to arms.

CHAPTER X.

THE INFANZON OF ESTELLA.

THE noise consequent upon the arrest of Inez in her attempted elopement, and the violent pealing of the watch-bell which had summoned the goldsmith's retinue, alarmed Miguel, who rushed precipitately to the spot.

Manuel the Wanderer had scarcely drawn his weapon, when, upon a preconcerted signal, he found himself surrounded by the agents of the Inquisition, who sullenly demanded his sword.

"Villains!" shouted the Wanderer, "I am a soldier of the Empire, and suffer not the indignity of priestly rule!" Thus speaking, the Imperialist plied his sword with such alacrity and vigor, that, although attacking a single individual, the alguazils were forced to retire to a more respectful distance.

"What ho! my masters," shouted a powerful masculine voice—"why trouble ye the sword? Come, gentlemen," and the figure of the picturesquely costumed Mandamiento presented itself to view. "Why waste your valor upon a poor soldier? I will vouch him a right and proper man—one of my kind."

The simple words of the Master of the Garduna, bearing the susceptibility of opposite interpretation, produced the effect he desired, and in a few moments Francisco Estrada and his fellows disappeared in the gloom of night.

"You perceive, my brother," gaily said the robber chief, "that the Garduna hath its mysteries as well as the Inquisition. Now, thank me for a sound skin and unbroken bones—for the clutches of the Inquisitors are tender articles of mercy."

"I do thank thee, most worthy Master," responded the

Wanderer, "and although but a simple brother of the craft, I may return the kindness of the act. But what brings thee hither at this very nick of time?"

"To perform the very work you have done," replied the Master, "only from different motives."

"I can comprehend neither the motive nor the act, on thy part, friend Mandamiento," interrupted Manuel. "Hadst thou learned of the intended abduction?"

"Most assuredly had I," ejaculated the Gitano; "indeed I knew the lady was about to make a change, and I thought she might as well adorn the rustic retreat of my forest home as the walls of a convent."

"Wouldst thou have injured the girl?"

"Not at all, my brave fellow," rejoined the Master; "that is the work of priests of the Holy Church, and not of poor laymen of the Garduna. Women enough come to us willingly; besides, I have too high an opinion of my associates to charge them with such an offence against chivalry."

"Then why, worthy Master, wouldst thou have taken the body of the goldsmith's heiress?" asked the soldier, imperatively.

"Simply, companion, for safe keeping," returned Mandamiento, "for we are well aware that the goldsmith has ducats in his vaults, and would ransom his child at any price. Better it is that she should be in my hands than in those of the holy monks. Unfortunately, I was too late to be of service to the maiden, and therefore I am sorry to think our brethren of the Garduna must suffer for lack of her ransom."

"Then, worthy Mandamiento," said Manuel, who appeared to comprehend the bearing of the Master's statement, "how much wouldst thou have charged the Infanzon de Estella for his bride, for all Seville at this time knows that that cavalier is the betrothed of this beautiful lady."

"Merely a thousand or so of florins," said the robber chief; "we set a very small value upon them now-a-days."

"The money shall be paid you on the wedding festival, for, as the chamberlain of the noble Infanzon, I promise the amount."

"Worthy Manuel, I adore thee; and if thy master be as glorious a fellow as thyself, I will resign my commission in his favor," quoth the chieftain, with a smile of credulity. "Where lodgest thou, most potent soldier?"

"Here, at this very house. I am charged upon the goldsmith until the coming of my master, the Imperial courtier, hither," returned the Wanderer, "and then I know not whither service may call me."

"To thee, then, good health and merriment;" and with this salutation of Moresco politeness, the tall figure of the Master of the Garduna vanished into the shadows of the night, his waving cockplume glancing in the bright moonlight with the brilliancy of a passing meteor.

The soldier hesitated for a moment, as if to ascertain whether any of the adherents of the Inquisitorial office still hovered around the mansion, and then entered within the postern wicket.

As Inez withdrew to her apartment she found her chamber in the possession of domestics, who, under instruction of her father, obstinately refused permitting her the enjoyment of that solitude, which had become almost an habitual necessity. Within a few minutes after the diffusion of the news of her safe return, the excitement which prevailed through every portion of the goldsmith's hotel subsided, and ere long the same order and quiet reigned supreme, which usually characterized the well-regulated domicile of a man of wealth and reputation.

The moon had scarce attained the meridian of its course, when again the inmates of the mansion were aroused from slumber by a violent knocking upon the main portal. Instantaneously, every domestic sprang from his couch, and assumed their respective weapons, which were ordinarily concealed in a private magazine, forming an important attribute to a semi-feudal residence.

"Who comes here?" gruffly inquired the hall porter.

"The Holy Office!" was the stern and melancholy answer, causing a thrill of horror to pervade the crowd, who were ignorant as to the nature of this visit.

"Whom does the Tribunal require?" asked the Wanderer, placing himself at the head of the domestic forces.

"Inez, daughter to Miguel the goldsmith," was the calm and authoritative reply.

"The lady has departed," returned the Wanderer; "gone, perchance, to the Convent of the Carmelites," he added, casting a knowing look upon Francisco Estrada, whose figure was easily distinguishable by the clear moonlight.

"Gone! When left she?" inquired the Soldier of Christ.

"At full nightfall, an hour after you and I crossed swords," answered the Imperialist. "A valet came for her, and she departed."

"Gone!" exclaimed the goldsmith, in a fever of despair at the thought of again losing the treasured jewel of his existence. "Where has she gone?—beneath whose guardianship? Pray, tell me, good soldier."

"With the litter which bore her hence were several cavaliers, bearing uniforms I recognized as those of my worthy master, the Infanzon of Estella."

"Then, indeed, is she in safety!" exclaimed the goldsmith. "But why this untoward visit—this command from the Holy Office?"

"I know not, neither care I," returned the soldier Estrada; "for the mysteries of God are known to God alone, and I am only the servant of my divine Master, —though, perchance, the wisdom of the Inquisition has discovered in her blood a tinge of heretical composition, if not the rank essence of Judaism."

"'Tis false! and in the name of the lady, and of the Infanzon, her intended husband, I defy thee, and thy hated Inquisition!" shouted the Imperial soldier, in a voice so bold and clear that its reverberating echoes filled the midnight air

"Defy the Inquisition, forsooth!" calmly returned the Soldier of Christ; "a most gallant knight of errantry art thou, indeed. Hast thou no fear of the retribution of offended Heaven?"

"None for the acts of man," rejoined Manuel. "I have wandered too long to dread the consequences of mortal hate; and if thou art, as thou boasted yesterday, of the best blood of Castile, why tremblest thou to hazard the wager of battle with the Infanzon?"

"I tremble not. Why should I worry for so ignoble an object as the hatred of Alphonso, or any other vagrant cavalier?" inquired Estrada, pointing to the metal cross which adorned his dark-colored vestments. "Why trouble myself with affairs of trifling import, when vested with the authority of the Holy Office?"

"Simply," replied the Wanderer, whose words became painfully impressive, as he vented them in slow utterance—"because thou art impure thyself, that thou wouldst arrogate to thyself virtues not possessed. A very pretty varlet thou art to serve the holy cause, when thy livery is bedewed by besetting sins."

"Speak on, most valiant soldier," rejoined Estrada, with assumed indifference. "Let the man speak for his master. What know ye of me?"

"One single thing," responded the Imperialist, "which alone will drag thee to the depths of degradation. Hast thou forgotten the Abbess of the Carmelites? Has Agatha, the betrayed, no avenger, no friend to console her in her afflictions and in her sorrows?"

At the mention of this name, the face of Estrada paled, and then assumed a brilliant glow of supernatural redness. The Soldier of Christ was evidently abashed at the publication of his criminal conduct towards the unfortunate victim of his passion. Still, he maintained himself in silence.

"Is thy memory so poor as not to remember that in early days there was more than one suitor for the hand of Agatha—that more than one heart beat in unison with her

own? True, thou wert the victor in the amatory struggle, and bore off the prize in the contest; but was it by the rules of honor?—by the stern code of rugged chivalry? Not at all. Villain that thou art, thou hast betrayed the heart of a doting parent, as well as the imagination of a wayward child. And what now is Agatha? The pride of her soul is withered, and, under the vestments of a holy nun, she conceals the miseries of a compulsory religion."

As Estrada turned a deaf ear to the upbraidings of the Wanderer, the soldier became more excited and bitter.

"Where, too, is her child, the offspring of thy loins? Has the girl no friends, no relatives, to watch over her, and to console a lonely existence, which is sullied by none of her parents' crime? Yes, there is one who has watched, and who still does watch, over both mother and child, and he is thy bitter enemy."

"What man is he, who dare intermeddle with my affairs?" demanded the Soldier of Christ, in an authoritative tone.

"He has not intermeddled," returned Manuel; "he has consoled the widow and nurtured the orphan. Wouldst thou learn his name?"

"His name, that I may know him," interrupted the impatient Estrada.

"His name thou mayst not remember, and his features may be dimmed by the lapse of time to thy memory. On the morrow thou shalt meet him face to face. He is my commander—"

"The Infanzon of Estella!" ejaculated the Inquisitorial servant.

"The very same; and tell thy master, Pedro Arbues, that there is no need to hie to the Convent of the Carmelites, for the bird is not within that gloomy cage. To thy work, and—farewell."

The determined speech and action of the Imperial soldier, as well as his knowledge of the private history of Estrada, infused courage anew into the hearts of the trembling retinue, who gathered around their leader

and watched the disappearance of the procession of sombre officials with no slight satisfaction. The midnight summons of the Inquisition, and its devastating effects, were so well known to every inhabitant of Seville, that its visits were occasions of the utmost terror. Great, then, was the amazement of the assemblage at listening to the bold and defiant language of the Imperialist, who appeared to treat the Holy Office and its familiars with a scorn and derision which apparently brooked no curb.

The disappearance of Inez was no delusion on the part of Manuel, but a palpable fact, for which he was indebted to the ingenuity of the fair Daisy, the companion and help-mate of the lieutenant of the Master of the Garduna, who, overhearing a casual conversation of the monkish associates, volunteered to assist her in eluding pursuit from the persecutions of the Inquisitor-General. In consequence of this resolve, she had presented herself before the chamberlain of the goldsmith, and under the sanction of Manuel, assumed her position as an attendant upon the fair Inez; when, upon her retiring from the postern, that lady found herself a prisoner within her sombre apartment, whose dismal ornaments impressed the naturally gay Gitana with a deep foreboding of gloom.

"Who art thou?" inquired Inez, discovering this intrusion upon her privacy; "why am I thus fettered in my free motions?"

"Madam, I am Fretille the Gitana," said the Daisy. "I have been chosen to be thy waiting-maid. Lady, what a happy escape thou hast had in getting away from those wretches, who would have taken you to the prisons of the Inquisition, and there you would have lain at the mercy of the brutal Pedro Arbues."

"Of what speakest thou?" inquired Inez, whose isolated position, and natural confidence of soul, could not detect the presence of treason in her attempted elopement.

"Why, madam," added the Daisy, "they have been de-luding you to join the Nuns of the Carmelites; rest as-sured that it was a vile complot of the Inquisitor to com-pass thy ruin."

"How knowest thou this?" inquired the maiden. "By what means hast thou acquired a knowledge of this awful state of things?" and the fair Inez looked with wonder at the newly-created domestic.

"Simply, because I have seen the soldier Estrada coming forth from the Convent of the Carmelites, and knowing the Abbess, I soon learned the nature of the foul conspiracy which she revealed from friendship for the Infanzon of Estella, to whom, according to her own report, she is under great obligations, as she owes her life, almost, to his kindness."

"The Abbess then knows the Knight of Estella?"

"And, therefore, she has requested me to be forthcoming to aid her in her attempt to rescue thee from the machinations of those men, who would have wiled thee into their meshes. Oh, Lady Inez! thou may'st rejoice at thy salvation, and pardon an humble maid for having extended to thee consolation and advice."

"What consolation, what advice wouldst thou extend, my simple maid?" inquired Inez, anxious to ascertain the tendency of the observations of the Gitana. "What shall I do to avoid the persecutions of this man, Pedro Arbues, who, as Inquisitor-General, rules supreme over the destinies of Seville?"

"Trust thyself, madam, to the safeguard of that noble cavalier, the Infanzon of Estella, whose name is recognized as the very head of Navarorean chivalry. Hear me, madam, for I speak unto you truth, and would fain kiss the hem of thy garment. Fly from this place, for there is nought of safety left to thee. Obey, I beg of thee, for I have lived within the dismal dungeons of the Inquisition, and therefore know well the direful woes assailing thee. Madam, hence! let us depart for thy salvation's sake."

"Truly, thou appearest an honest maiden, well stricken by the terrors of this world," responded Inez, extending her hand in friendship to Fretille. "I will follow thee, for I am forced to fly, I know not whither."

The Daisy clapped her hands, and, in response to the re-

verberating echoes of the noise, an array of men-at-arms responded to the summons, each fully equipped, as if prepared for a deadly struggle.

"Who are these men clad in arms?" inquired the maid, gazing intently upon their jerkins and helmets, as if to decipher the cognizance they bore. "Who rules them in command?"

"In truth I do," answered the voice of the Wanderer. "They are good men and true, retainers of the Knight of Estella. Now, maiden, to the postern, and thence away where danger will not await thee, until the coming of thy worthy father and his friends."

"Soldiers, to horse, and ride for life!" he continued, in a sharp voice of command. "Let not a hair of the Lady Inez' head, I charge ye, be injured."

The commandant of the little troop bowed with stately obedience to the mandates of his chief, and Inez passed into the moonlight, encircled by the heavily-armed partizans of the Infanzon of Estella.

The Lady Inez hesitated not a moment to follow the brief directions bestowed upon her; for, in the appearance of the men, clad in rich livery of garnished velvet, which presented a strong contrast to the gloomy familiars of the Inquisition, she detected an exhibition of chivalric fidelity that bespoke well the confidence of her future husband.

She cast a glance upon the countenance of her attendant domestic, which announced a solicitous anxiety for their departure, and at once braced her trembling nerves for the task required of her.

"Wilt thou follow me, Fretille?" she falteringly inquired; "for thou hast won my esteem, and into thy hands I yield myself."

"On, lovely mistress, on!" exclaimed the Gitana; "there is no time to be lost; the wicked men of the Inquisition will be here to claim thee, and then, farewell to light and liberty. I beg of thee have courage, and on to freedom—on, for thy life!"

The goldsmith's heiress accepted the support of the Gi-

tana's arm, and, surrounded by the retainers of the Infanzon, slowly retraced her steps towards the postern, through which she had heretofore emerged to accomplish that which she believed to be a holy mission. How altered now were her thoughts, as she paced along the marble pavement, contrasted with those which, but a short time before, conducted her steps along the same path! Now, she walked in the obscurity of a doubtful destiny; then, she was borne on by the inspiration of a new-born enthusiasm. She had two worlds before her—the one a promised realm of everlasting bliss; the other, an earthly home of worldly happiness. Why pause longer upon the step to take? Her lot was cast, and she tremblingly submitted. Meekly, Inez, supported by the venturesome Gitana, reached the postern gate, and unresistingly entered a litter surrounded by a dozen cavaliers, whose horses were concealed beneath the shadow of the wall. No sooner were she and her waiting-maid seated within the primitive equipage—the only vehicle in vogue among the dames of chivalry—than the commandant issued his orders for the little cortege to advance; and in a few hours they had progressed many leagues from Seville.

After the visitation of the familiars of the Inquisition, the goldsmith, assured by the equerry of the Infanzon of Estella, that the departure of his beloved daughter was in accordance with the views of that mysterious cavalier, retired to rest, pre-occupied in mind by the strange events of the night. Naturally shrewd and politic, the artizan seemed aware of his uncertain position, in which neither his wealth nor influence could shield him from the covert assaults of the Holy Office, whose malignity and avarice afforded a key to the attempted abuse of her whom nature had designed as the heiress of his riches and of his station. With cunning and penetration, Miguel detected, in the instructions of Father Ximenes, a gradual perversion of mind, which would assuredly allure his daughter into the Convent, whence not even the power of the Emperor could forcibly

extricate the fallen victim. Therefore, he blessed God in his heart that she was in the hands of any one, save the creatures of an Inquisition which had ground to the earth the best families of Andalusia, if not of Spain itself.

Long ere the goldsmith awoke, the trumpet sounded notes of welcome in prolonged blasts, as an advanced body of knightly retainers defiled within the wide portals of the artizan's domicile. The desired hour of triumph had arrived, when the noble cavalier so long anticipated was about to honor the goldsmith's mansion with his presence; and thus, upon hearing the first summons, the argentier arose to don his most sumptuous suit, as it were to set a formal example of Castilian etiquette to the welcome stranger, the noise of whose coming had summoned all Seville to witness the jubilee of reception extended to the famous Infanzon of Estella.

It was indeed a day of revelry for Seville, upon which occurred this triumphal entry of the Imperial favorite, honored by the confidence of the fickle Charles V.,—a courtier who had dared to brave the terrors of the Inquisition, and whose very name was coupled with the ever-illustrious Cid, in the ballads of both hemispheres. Within the floral court-yard of the goldsmith were congregated the representatives of the motley population of Seville, and side-by-side with the familiars of the Inquisition jostled the soldier of the guard, the vagrant Gitana, and the thoughtful, speculative trader. In like manner were assembled the gay, the handsome, the thoughtless, the aged, the lame, and the blind. In the name of the goldsmith, Miguel, the people of Seville came prepared to pour forth an ovation to a knight of chivalrous renown.

Preceded by a herald, arrayed in vestments, displaying the armorial bearings of the Infanzon—a hawk in full flight upon an azure field,—came the standard-bearer of the knight, a time-worn soldier, clad in Milan steel from head to heel; one of those heavy-mailed men-at-arms, whose massive armor had resisted the shower of blows which had been aimed at the person of his master, in days

when he had wielded the lance in joust and tourney; next followed esquires, bearing solid shields, upon whose dented surface the burnished hawk gleamed with fearful accuracy, as it spread its wide wings over the blue-stained ground. These were the ordinary attributes to the progress of a knight-banneret, as he moved in ceremonious state from place to place, imposing evidences of dignity attached to men by the pomp and ceremony of heraldry. Behind these bearers of armorial designations, followed a lengthened cortege of archers, men-at-arms, and attendant lances, arquebusiers and foot-soldiers, a military medley of men, congregating beneath the banner of a celebrated chieftain, upon all of whose vestments were emblazoned the honorable insignia of the knight, whose service they assumed as much for honor as from the love of martial pastime, thus creating their leader into a petty sovereign, whose forces constituted no paltry addition to the imperial array. Unlike lacqueys and common valets, these men, honorably identified with the fortunes of an adventurous noble, maintained a specific dignity, which contributed to perpetuate in a manner the feudal system, long after its intrinsic decadence in spirit.

With feelings of pride the goldsmith welcomed the strong array of his future son-in-law within the precincts of his domains, inviting them to doff their armor and join in a jubilee of peace. He was rejoiced at the magnificent retinue of the Infanzon, as a sure evidence of the affection and esteem in which that soldier had been maintained by his companions, and a means of augmenting his own importance among the municipality of his native town.

"Welcome! welcome!" shouted the goldsmith, distributing largess to the crowd of beggars and vagrants which followed the knightly cortege as it entered within the court-yard; "and now, prithee, Manuel," continued he, addressing the Wanderer, before whom each member of the suite bowed obsequiously, as they passed in stately

review beneath the broad portal—"where is my noble guest, the celebrated Infanzon of Estella?"

"Is there none of these, among this gaily bedecked crowd, whom thou canst recognize as the Knight of Estella?" returned the Imperial soldier, "for he wished to come among ye in disguise, for fear thy penetration would fail to appreciate the merit of his mien."

"I see none, Manuel," responded the artizan, turning his keen eyes upon the crowd to detect the vaunted form of the Infanzon. "Have I been deceived? or have we been practicing some delusion?"

"Pardon me, venerable goldsmith, it ill becomes the Infanzon," quoth the Wanderer, "to indulge in such freaks of the mind; believe me, he is here, and will, upon command, present himself, should thy discrimination fail to detect his person."

"Why should he resort to subterfuge?" asked the artizan.

"Knowest thou not that the fair Inez is fickle, and were she to judge wholly by the words of men, she might, perchance, feel disappointed in thy choice, and seek to wed some nobler swain," calmly continued the equerry; "the Infanzon is no beauty in form,—hence from his deeds he desires to be adjudged, and, therefore, comes he silent."

"Of a verity desire I to behold this prodigy of valor, of art, of modesty, and of chivalric merit," quoth the goldsmith, in a melancholy tone of voice; "why prolong my curiosity? Speak, and let me see him that my heart longs to embrace above all men."

The Wanderer advanced to the front of the goldsmith, and kneeling in a semi-prostrate form, saluted him with a filial embrace of the knees: "Disguise is useless, most worthy father," he solemnly ejaculated—"I am Manuel the Wanderer, known among men as Don Alphonso, the Infanzon of Estella."

The artizan raised the knight from the ground as the wild huzzas of the populace greeted the re-appearance among them of a personage who had so long monopolized the curiosity of an incredulous community.

The goldsmith was tempted to shed tears of joy as he beheld in the stalwart person of the doughty trooper, whose personal prowess, exerted upon the inauspicious occasion of the Inquisitorial visit, had enlisted the fervor of the artizan's gratitude—a modest embodiment of those mental qualities, once possessed by the cavaliers of Old Spain, but sadly deficient among the tribe of titled nobles, then representing the chivalry of his native land. How different, thought the worthy mechanic, from the horde of ignoble courtiers, thronging the Imperial presence, comes this redoubtable cavalier to woo his lady-love! Undecked with the insignia of borrowed rank, clad in the plain garb of a rugged soldier, trusting to the temper of a sword oftentimes wielded in ardent strife, the honest frame of the Infanzon, rejoicing in the hard-earned distinctions of bodily trial, shone resplendent in the lustre of a chivalrous demeanor. The very simplicity of his mien, the firmness of his bearing, to the eyes of the argentier bespoke the genuine nobility of his nature; and as each Sevillean gazed upon the unostentatious display of Don Alphonso's individual qualities, his heart beat in unison with that of the goldsmith in proclaiming this gallant champion a veritable son of the most illustrious Cid.

CHAPTER XI.

THE ENEMY OF GOD.

WHEN the announcement of the departure of the Maid of Seville from that capital, and of the triumphant entry of the Infanzon of Estella into the mansion of the goldsmith, was conveyed to the Inquisitor-General, the rage of Pedro Arbues knew no bounds. With a wild ferocity of demeanor he paced his apartment, uttering anathemas upon the gallant cavalier, and curses upon the sorrow of his own lot in being debarred from espousing the maiden in loyal nuptials. Harshly his voice hissed from between his teeth ; he muttered to himself in tones of unrestrainable vexation, stamping the pavement with violence as he gave vent to incoherent sentences of mingled imprecation and of prayer.

"Pedro Arbues," he exclaimed, losing control over his temper, "what evil genius is it that always thwarts thy designs ? Why did I adopt a profession that dooms me to everlasting martyrdom ? Were I but a dainty cavalier, a smiling fopling bereft of brains beyond the playing of a gittern, instead of a tonsured monk, honored with the confidence of the Church, I might revel in the smiles of beauty. Oh, Inez ! Inez ! as I behold thy passing image, my bosom swells with tormenting agony."

The Inquisitor threw himself into his oaken chair, hid his face within his hands, and gave vent to a copious flow of tears, which moderated his passion into a moody melancholy. Recovering himself from this paroxysm of rage, and softened by the outburst of his pent-up emotions, Pedro Arbues summoned to his counsel his clerical coadjutor, Father Ximenes, before whose approach, however,

the politic Inquisitor had contrived, by an extraordinary effort of mental powers, to efface from his features all palpable traces of his recent and most violent ebullition of anger.

Upon the entrance of the Dominican, the visage of Arbues assumed that impassive and undisturbed composure which ever marked the deceptive countenance of this designing intriguer.

"Ximenes, my friend," calmly commenced the Inquisitor, "I am convinced thou servest God with equal zeal to that with which I do myself, and therefore we are both worthy companions in our blessed religion, and we must imitate each other in devotion to the Holy Office. I have called thee hither, Ximenes, to consult with thee upon some plan whereby the Holy Inquisition can be rid of one of its most dangerous enemies, whose machinations threaten immediate danger."

"Are the Jews in rebellion ?" inquired the Dominican, crossing himself most devoutly.

"No, they are servile, as well as the down-trodden dogs of Mahomet."

"It cannot be that heresy, imported from Germany, is preached in our midst," continued Ximenes, crossing himself with greater show of ardor.

"No ; we have an enemy much more bitter," resumed Pedro Arbues, "for he wields the power of courtly influence—a vagrant Infanzon—who, after earning laurels as a commander of St. Jago and of Calatrava—holy orders sadly degenerated—has cast aside his vows of chastity to espouse the daughter of Senor Miguel, the goldsmith, whom thou hadst destined, by thy wise counsels, to wed the Church."

"And in this would he rob the blessed Order of St. Dominic, beneath whose inspired patronage direct we the sacred tribunal," added Ximenes, with a mournful accent ; "then is he an enemy to us."

"Yea, even greater iniquities have been attempted,"

continued the Inquisitor, fired by hope of revenge, as the memory of Inez's precipitate departure flashed upon him ; " he has calumniated the Holy Office to the Emperor, and advised that the power of judgment be taken from us ; he has decried our councillors and familiars as murderers and felons, reveling in the blood of martyrs ; he has openly defied our officers, and challenged to combat our soldiers ; he has spurned our authority and insulted our dignity."

" Then why not summon him by force before our Holy Tribunal ?" suggested the Dominican, " that he may in person answer for his sins ?"

" Nay, nay, worthy Ximenes," remarked Arbues, with a portentous shake of the head ; " heretical villain as he is, he possesses the ear of our most noble sovereign, Charles Quint, and his arrest would do us grievous harm ; beyond this, the populace of Seville adore him with affection, and would avenge his death by the murder of our faithful soldiers through villainous practices."

" Then why not employ the dagger of Mandamiento ?" energetically inquired the Dominican, as if he had now attained certain means for the accomplishment of their purpose.

" Simply, Ximenes, for the reason that he is a brother of the accursed fraternity of the Garduna !" responded the Inquisitor, " and the reptiles cannot destroy one another. Thus hath the worthy soldier, Estrada, informed me, who hath twice crossed swords with our enemy, bearing a charmed life beneath the guise of a wandering soldier."

" Then are my wits confounded !" rejoined Father Ximenes, sorely puzzled at the ill-success of his last, and, as he deemed, most available scheme for the annihilation of the Infanzon.

" The task is left for us alone—by our hands shall the enemy of God be smitten !" spoke the Inquisitor, in a deep, sepulchral voice, which caused the Dominican to

moan inwardly, as he muttered a semi-audible response of " Amen !"

Father Ximenes, although well nurtured to the barbarities of the Inquisition, and regarding the mutilations of human bodies, the burning of heretics, the horrid sacrifices of the rack and wheel, as the merited punishment by clerical law awarded to the sinners adjudged by the Holy Tribunal to be beyond the pale of the Church, grew sick at heart at the mere insinuation of personal participation in a deed of murder. The Dominican adored the Order in which he had consummated his professions of faith, with a fanatical ardor, attributable mainly to a full credence in the miraculous legends, traditionally related with regard to the great St. Dominic, the fabulous possession of whose superhuman powers the friar implicitly believed to be a donation from the Divinity. Deeply was Father Ximenes versed in the corrupted theology of more than one superstitious age ; he had devoured volumes of monastic lore, each of whose pages successively confirmed him in his well-settled fanaticism, and hence came it that he had entered upon his part in the direction of the Inquisition with a zealous enthusiasm, as tending to the greater glory of his patron, St. Dominic, and through him to the loftier elevation of his Creator. Thus was it that the naturally humane heart of the Dominican, isolated as he had rendered himself from the intercourse of his fellows, and dreaming away an existence amid the fabulous creations of scholastic chronicle, grew hardened against the appeals of pity, until it finally closed against all compassion for the physical sufferings of those tortured in the name of the Holy Faith. Father Ximenes gazed callously upon the writhings of the unfortunate victims at the auto-da-fe, as the livid flames wreathed themselves around the half-consumed bodies of condemned infidels ; he listened complacently to the cracking of the limbs of an unhappy Jew, as each member was torn from its socket ; still, the suggestion of assassination, even of an

enemy, grated upon his ear with thrilling harshness—the priest was dissevered in spirit from the man! Torture, administered by the purblind and vindictive legislation of the Inquisition, he viewed and admired as an imitation of God's strict justice, but the application of destructive violence by the individual hand of man he could only regard as an earthly crime.

"There dwells, Ximenes," continued Arbues, "in the Quarter of the Triana, a learned sage, by name Balthazar, whom thou must remember to have encountered by the bedside of our then wounded friend, Estrada. This man of wondrous skill compounds potions of marvellous efficacy, for good and for evil; particularly, as the report of the town affirms, poisons of every hue and color—some smiting to the earth with instantaneous deadliness, while others prolong the wretched sufferings of the victim until an incurable leprosy exhausts his strength, and he expires the loathed of all mankind."

"Most horrible!" ejaculated the Dominican, with evident disgust.

"Yea, Ximenes," resumed the Inquisitor, evidently amused at the undisguised concern of the Dominican, as a smile of derision played upon his own countenance; "there are poisons distilled from plants and herbs, from the leaves of trees, and from minerals of the soil, so deadly insinuating that the touching of the purest crystal, or the smell of the most blooming rose, will insure a contagion, defying the leech's most skillful practice. With some of these must we rid Seville of the presence of this dire pest upon our honor and our dignity."

The young Dominican turned ghastly pale, as the thought struck him that upon his soul might rest the weighty crime. With nervous trepidation, he stammered forth broken words of excuse.

"Ximenes," sternly resumed the Inquisitor, his voice assuming a sovereignty of accent which brooked not control, "art thou a child, thus to tremble at the very thresh-

old of a newer triumph for the Church? Hast thou not sworn obedience to the commands of thy superior? A son of the blessed St. Dominic should never desert his master."

"Indeed, Monsignor," humbly responded the father, "I was unaware that the sacred rules of the Order compel the brethren against the warnings of their consciences. If thus it be, I yield me to thy service."

"Worthy Ximenes," tranquilly continued Pedro Arbues, "the consciences of men are in the keeping of God; and, as He evinces His will through thy superiors and mine,—priors, bishops, saints, and angels—that will must be done. The Church demands the death of Don Alphonso."

The Dominican bowed obsequiously, crossed his arms, and signified his acquiescence in the justness of the theory by a silent assent.

"Then," resumed the Inquisitor-General, "to fulfill the high mission entrusted to us, we must seek Balthazar, the apothecary; and, lest he should become cognizant of our intentions, we must assume disguises which may cloak our purposes and elude the penetration of the ever-vigilant people of Seville. I, as a Neapolitan trader, will purchase the world-renowned medicament in the name of some famous princess; whilst thou, thy features concealed beneath the garb of a Levantine argonaut, will cause thy poniard to be stained with the deadly extract of an oriental tree. Immersed in the revelries of the goldsmith's jubilee of welcome, the townspeople will suffer our costumes to pass unheeded; and, after the shades of night fall upon the city, we will depart to accomplish our most holy enterprise. Till then, my brother, fare thee well."

The Dominican again bowed acquiescence unto the mandate of his superior, and in silence, meditating upon the infamy in which he was compelled to participate, withdrew to drown his thoughts, by presenting himself among the admiring crowd which hovered around the portals of the goldsmith's domicile. Thither he directed his steps, and, allured by the air of joy and merriment which per-

vaded the throng, he struggled to mingle with its festive members, that he might dispel the melancholy which hung like a burden upon his soul.

The crowd respectfully opened to afford a free passage to the Dominican, as he essayed an entrance within the gates of Miguel's mansion. His dark and flowing robes contrasted strangely with the holiday dresses of the mass of citizens passing in and out of the hospitable domain of mirth and revelry, either to tender their earnest homage to the newly arrived cavalier, or to proclaim his merits to those unadmitted within the gates. Even this triviality in contrast of dress, now for the first time attracted the attention of Ximenes, and it appeared to him that these robes, which he had before borne with self-complacency and pride, were but the emblems of a life condemned to sorrow and shame. Furthermore, as he casually overheard the unpurchased praise of the multitude, their enthusiastic laudation of his feats at arms, their admiring approbation of the Infanzon's stately mien and gallant demeanor, with the uproarious chorus proclaiming the adventurer's glory, the heart of Ximenes sank within him, and the stings of an upbraiding conscience smote him to the soul.

"Am I," the Dominican moaned inwardly, "doomed to be the assassin of this man, whom every one hails as their benefactor? Can I murder, in the name of God, a man possessed of such valor, and gifted with such transcendent charms—a man, whom a new generation cannot replace? Still it is thus ordained, and this flower of chivalry must perish, yea, even wither to the stem, a forlorn, decrepit, leprous outcast, despised at the hour of death by those who fawned upon him in the bloom of manhood. Horror! horror!" Ximenes sadly continued, "yea, so it is written, and by the foul oath I have taken, I must drown repentance beneath the delusion of future absolution. Curse, oh! curse the day when I was tempted to don the mask of religion, as the hollow receptacle of a sinful conscience."

The Dominican had by this time attained the portals of Miguel's residence, wide open for his entrance. His courage failed him in his further progress, and he turned to retrace his steps; the contemplated murderer dared not regard his victim before the appointed time.

As Ximenes was about proceeding on his retreating errand, his attention was attracted by the appearance of a venerable man, habited in coarse garments, misfitting and sullied by the stains of time, conducted to the main entrance, near which the priest had been standing, upon the arm of a young and delicate girl, habited in the costume of a Gitana. In their features the Dominican recognized the apothecary Balthazar, and the fair attendant at the bedside of the wounded familiar of the Inquisition. Marvelling that persons of so common a stamp should attempt to obtrude themselves among the guests of this courtly mansion, curiosity prompted him to rest quietly for a moment, and thus to watch the termination of the marvel. The Jongleuse upon this occasion seemed to have assumed her gayest attire, which, although neat and picturesque, was fashioned of mean material, being composed of the coarse woolly cloth and stout muslins fabricated by the unskillful artizans of the Gipsy tribes. Entwined with her dark, curling ringlets, appeared a chaplet of fresh wild flowers, the dew of the plains still dropping from their petals—a natural coronet, putting to the blush the sparkling jewels of far nobler visitors. The bright eyes of Zelda beamed with the fullness of beauty, and smiles of expectant pleasure hovered around her lips, as she tenderly urged forward the tottering movements of the old man, who with difficulty could keep pace with his guardian's light and fairy-like step. Ximenes smiled, despite his disturbed cogitations, at the strange conjunction of years—the frost of age, guided by the spring of youth.

"Back! back!" shouted the stalwart warder at the gate, "thou art gone far enough; entrance is debarred such of thy quality."

"Nay, speak not so gruffly, Señor Coco," interposed a good-looking townswife, whose blandishments appeared to have some influence upon the surly porter, "these are the worthy Balthazar and his daughter, good people and true."

"Then let them mind their station and keep from where they are not wanted," returned the bluff official, anxious for a display of authority.

"Pardon, Señor," falteringly said the Jongleuse, "we have come, my poor old father and I, to trouble not my lord, the Infanzon, but to find one of his retinue, a soldier—"

"Whom thou wilt find carousing with the maids in the scullery," returned the porter, with evidence of self-complacent satisfaction at the scandal of his repartee.

"Nay, kind sir," replied Zelda, "he is not such as those, but a fine and noble soldier, who has traveled in many lands."

"Gentle maiden," respectfully inquired a youthful page, whose vest, of fine blue damask, bore the cognizance of the flying hawk, and who had been apparently allured to the spot by the soft and modest tones of the Jongleuse, "for whom dost thou and this venerable old man inquire?"

"We seek to find a wandering soldier, whom we were told by the Master of the Garduna to be equerry to the potent lord of Estella," returned the songstress, reassured by the kind words of the page; "methinks they called him Manuel, surnamed the Wanderer."

"Did he send for thee, worthy damsel?" inquired the youth, earnestly.

"Nay, he did not," responded Zelda, turning her fine black eyes imploringly upon the questioner, as if to beseech a favorable answer. "I was playing upon my gittern, as I encountered him in the street, when he spoke of my father, and bestowed upon me this golden token."

While speaking, Zelda drew from her bosom the golden coin, the reward of her minstrelsy, and placed it in the

hands of the youthful page, who examined it with attention.

"I will exhibit it to him whom you call Manuel," quoth the youth; "for he rarely bestows a gift of this quality, without reference to something to transpire in the future."

The maiden turned to her benefactor with a radiant smile of joy, to which the old man responded by a look of mute gratitude, for the apothecary loved beyond credence his adopted child; and nought offended his sensitiveness more deeply than to perceive her harassed or vexed, even by a petty annoyance.

"Follow me, my friends," said the page, who had returned after the lapse of a few minutes. "Manuel awaits thee to attend thy service."

The eyes of the Dominican anxiously followed the figures of the two, as they traversed the main court-yard, until the group of guests, encircling the strangely-assorted pair, concealed them from his view. With a deep-drawn sigh he turned his glances from them; and, while meditating upon the mysterious character of this adventure, he retraced his steps towards the inquisitorial palace. The songstress was no stranger to Father Ximenes, who had often encountered her during his rambles within the precincts of the quarter wherein she resided. In common with others, he had been fascinated with the childish simplicity of the youthful damsel; and as she had expanded into the bloom of womanhood, the friar had become more attached, and evinced a sincere affection towards her, enhanced, no doubt, by a knowledge of her dependent condition. This affection had imperceptibly matured, until it had attained a power over the young Dominican, which irresistibly created a sympathetic feeling far exceeding friendship for the object of his solicitude. True, Father Ximenes had rarely conversed with the fair Zelda, and then only in the monotonous language of a ghostly adviser; for, well aware of the isolation of his ecclesiastical position, and scrupulously observant of his vows of celibacy, the monk, who, in the case of Inez, had suffered

himself to be employed as a tool for the designing Pedro Arbues, carefully avoided every opportunity of engendering an amorous attachment for the Jongleuse. Then, and for the better, the man succumbed to the priest.

The songstress affectionately hurried the steps of the feeble Balthazar, heedless of the many glances cast upon her by the gaudily dressed cavaliers and dames, who, in amazement, commented on the peculiarity of their attire and the inexplicable cause of their visit. Following the page obediently, she passed along, disregarding the sneers of the noble guests, enwrapt solely with the solution of the mysterious problem which had, for so many years, agonized her spirit by ambitious fancies.

The attending page conducted the old apothecary and his ward into a secluded portion of the main edifice, and opening the door of a chamber whose lattice windows were thickly shaded by umbrageous lime-trees, bid them enter.

"Tarry here, fair maiden, for the coming of thy friend." Thus speaking, he slipped into the hand of the Jongleuse her golden keepsake, and noiselessly glided from the apartment, after assisting Balthazar to a cushioned chair, fashioned in an antique style, and ornamented with heraldic emblems.

Left alone with her kind guardian, Zelda seated herself by his side, and earnestly scanned the walls of the apartment, which were lined by an arras tapestry of a singularity in color and pattern. It was of damask embroidery, illustrating a strange and fanciful period of Moorish history, when the sceptre of the Western Caliphs ruled the fair domains of Grenada. Although faded, mildewed, and soiled, the keen eyes of the songstress readily deciphered the prominent groups and figures woven upon the frail cloth. The examination of their varied scenes of war, of pestilence, of merriment, and of sorrow, awakened a powerful sensation within her heart, and which she found it impossible to restrain. Suddenly, she joyfully exclaimed :

"Father!—father! truly, I have seen this room before ; but long, long ago."

"Nay, child," returned the old man, "thou art dreaming ; some passing delusion affects thy brain." But when the apothecary cast his glances around the chamber, a death-like pallor covered his countenance, and his lips closed with a convulsive gasp.

"O my father ! art thou ill ?" anxiously inquired Zelda, noticing the sudden movement of her guardian, and the extreme prostration of his nervous system.

"No, dearest child," responded the apothecary, with a vigorous action of the muscles, "I am merely faint and weary ; for we have walked a long way, and I rarely venture beyond our own court-yard."

"Thus is it ever, dear father," rejoined the Jongleuse, "when thou seekest not thy usual walk in the green fields. Hark ! I hear a step ; it must be the stranger."

The door of the apartment slowly opened, and the figure of a man stood before the speaker.

"Gentle maiden, I am here, and await thy service."

The full, clear, and melodious voice of the Wanderer announced his presence, but to the amazement of the Jongleuse, there was not presented to her the well-remembered form of the poorly-clad Imperial trooper who had accosted her on the Bridge of the Triana.

She distended her eyelids, that the full scope of her vision might solve the new mystery, another of the perpetual series appearing to afflict her external senses.

"Pardon, my lord," she tremblingly uttered, "we came to seek Manuel, the—"

"Wanderer. I am here," frankly answered the stranger, kindly advancing to the still doubting damsel. "Thinkest thou, fair maiden, that birds of winter have no summer feathers," he jocularly continued ; "in this guise am I not welcome to thy sight ?"

The Jongleuse smiled confusedly, as she turned her fascinated glance upon the rich garments of the Wanderer, for he had exchanged his homely buff jerkin for a rich

embroidered suit of purple and of gold. Upon his arm rested a short mantle of damask brocade, studded with golden stars, while in his hand he bore a French hat garnished with drooping ostrich feathers. Upon his breast glittered brilliant stars of military orders; the clasps of his mantle were diamonds from Golconda, while by his side hung a Toledo blade, within a scabbard, sown with precious stones, pendant from a chain of massive gold. Still, above this display of untold wealth, Zelda recognized the frank and pleasant countenance, bronzed and scarred, of the Wanderer, whose honest expression reassured her of his identity with the gallant cavalier before her.

"Fair songstress," resumed the Wanderer, "why hast thou sought me here?"

"Señor," responded the Jongleuse, "thou didst speak of Malchior and of Balthazar—"

"Aye, I did," interrupted Manuel; "and thou didst tell me, too, that the good man had nurtured thee since the fearful day when thou wert made an orphan."

"'Tis thus, my lord," sobbed the Jongleuse; "this is my father, Balthazar."

"Balthazar! art thou he?" exclaimed the soldier, advancing to the front of the arm-chair wherein the old man was seated. "Nay, nay, it cannot be; my vision must deceive me, or else the hand of time has wrought serious changes upon the dial of nature. Speak, venerable man, art thou he, Balthazar, the sage of Salamanca? Quick, keep me not in suspense!"

"Surely I am the same," responded the apothecary, astounded at the vehemence of the soldier. "What can so gallant a cavalier want of me?"

"Balthazar, forsooth!" continued the Wanderer, musingly; "is this poor shattered frame, prematurely grown old, the once manly form of him whose honeyed words discoursed the music of philosophy to many a youthful ear? Balthazar? Alas! how time works changes!"

"Not time alone, my friend," replied the apothecary, in slow, measured accents; "not time, but the hand of man

which createth miseries for our kind. Blame not the immutable laws of nature for the ravages of years, but the free will of men, who pervert their course. Blaspheme not the wisdom of God; curse rather the insatiable avarice of his creatures."

"True, true," said the Wanderer, again discoursing affectionately to his aged guest; "still there are oases in the desert; thou canst remember some, who were not ingrates to their benefactor."

"This one at least is left me—this frail and tender plant—the child of Malchior; the rest are gone."

"Not all, kind Balthazar," replied the soldier, "others live to bless you."

"Perchance in the dungeons of the Inquisition," answered the old man, as he shook his head at the reminiscences of the Gipse's death.

"Balthazar," demanded the Wanderer, as he drew the old man gently to the window, from whence the full light fell upon his bronzed features, "look now upon this visage—surely these lineaments have not entirely escaped thy memory?"

The apothecary bent his keen eyes upon the countenance of the stranger, and pondered well upon each distinctive feature; then he shook his head moodily: "they seem to me to have belonged to one whose image haunts me in my dreams: but he, alas! has passed away, buried in the inhospitable climes of a new world, where, if he lives, he breathes not the air of liberty."

"Balthazar," inquired the Wanderer, "knowest thou not the features of thy long lost friend and pupil? I am Alphonso, the student of Salamanca."

"Can my eyes deceive me? Doth my memory fail?" wildly exclaimed the old man, as he tottered forward to throw himself into the arms of his former pupil—"art thou indeed Alphonso, my more than child?" And with a ringing, hysterical laugh, the overpowered apothecary sank exhausted into the brawny arms of the cavalier.

"Moment of joy! a new sphere rises before me," ejacu-

lated the stranger, gently sustaining his powerless burden, and implanting a knightly kiss of fraternity upon the forehead of the almost insensible alchemist—"arouse thee, father Balthazar, for I have a myriad of questions to demand of thee."

"Verily," quoth the venerable sage, recovering in some degree his self-possession, "the ways of Heaven are mysterious. I well knew the God of my fathers would not desert even the most unworthy of his sons in the hour of tribulation and of sorrow. I had given thee up for lost, and lo! thou art restored to me again."

The alchemist fervently clasped the Imperial soldier to his arms, and vented his joy at his return in a thousand extravagant demonstrations of delight.

"The fatted calf shall be slaughtered," resumed the Wanderer, "but not in honor of me, for I have been too prodigal, save in those humble abilities with which a benign Deity has endowed me. On the morrow, father, shall be celebrated our festival, a jubilee of the soul, for although thou art poor and childless, before the morning sun arises thou shalt rejoice in the affection of a new-born paternity. After years of wandering, of suffering, and of sorrow, of misnamed glory, the rapacious hawk returns to his cot as tranquil as a dove."

"Pardon me," said the apothecary, "thy vestments betoken the possession of worldly wealth and of honored dignity."

"True, worthy Balthazar," rejoined the soldier, "the dream of my youthful ambition has been realized. I am rich, powerful, and celebrated. I am no longer, as when thou knewest me, poor, oppressed, and insignificant. The trying day on which I deserted thy scholastic guardianship, I closed the book of written lore, and commenced to peruse the great one—the living deeds of living men. To carve my ambitious path through this tempestuous world, I have braved the perils of the land and of the sea, of the sword and of the pen. These minor grievances I stemmed with the courage of a man, but still I

have been assailed, and am still assailed, by the more weighty machinations of designing men, by calumny, by envy, and by revenge; yet over all I have triumphed, and I harbor still at heart an ambitious discontent."

"Great and worthy Alphonso," quoth the old man, stretching his hands heavenward, "may the Just and Good God on high, for thy manifold virtues, bless and reward thee, as I would do."

The songstress had watched this curious spectacle presented to her, with tears in her eyes; for she beheld the object of her visit entirely annihilated, and the long-cherished mystery of her parentage, encircled in her imagination, with doubts triple-fold. The brilliant anticipations of her day-dreams had been dispelled.

"On the morrow, gentle maiden," commenced the stranger, "the child of Malchior will enter upon a new phase of her destiny. Re-conduct thy kind benefactor to thy humble dwelling. Until the morrow, fare thee well."

The Infanzon saluted his guests affectionately, clapped his hands, and noiselessly disappeared behind a panel covered by the arras tapestry. The youthful usher, who had previously attended upon them, made his appearance; and as the twilight of evening descended upon the Triana, Balthazar and the Gitana reached their humble residence among the dark and bleak streets of that faubourg.

Elated at the re-discovery of his ancient pupil, whom, as he was accredited an orphan, the professor at Salamanca, in accordance with the fanciful mandate of chivalry, had adopted into his bachelor family, the learned Balthazar grew garrulous and communicative, as to his early days, much to the regret of Zelda, who vainly attempted to turn the channel of his thoughts back towards the cardinal topic, interesting her individual self. At length the alchemist, growing weary of reminiscences, bent his eyes upon his ward, and affectionately addressed her:

"Zelda, the star of thy destiny is in the ascendant; thou art a good and honest girl, kind and humane, and deservest well of the future. My years are prolonged to the full

extent of my desires, and when it pleases the Great Master of the Universe to call me to his sphere, I would wish to have thee happy and content. My child, thou hast attained an age when the glow of youth commands attention, and the inclinations of thy maiden heart should yearn towards a sympathetic union with some blithesome cavalier. Zelda, is there none among the youths thou hast perchance encountered, to whom, in the sincerity of love, thou hast plighted thy affections?"

It was the first time in her existence that the Jongleuse had heard her beloved benefactor allude to the subject of her espousal. Zelda awoke from her meditation, for the alchemist had unintentionally touched a chord deeply disguised by her, and thus reverted to a theme which had been, in reality, the silent and primary cause for the violent emotions preying upon her bosom.

"Father," inquired the songstress, "thinkest thou any youth of note would bestow his love upon a poor and wandering Gitana, an humble songstress, whose only fortune is a stock of ballads, and a precarious livelihood?"

"True, my daughter," returned Balthazar; "but on the morrow thou art no longer a poor and wandering Jongleuse, thy fate is changed—thou art—"

"What, oh! tell me?" anxiously inquired the damsel, her black eyes gleaming brilliantly.

"The ward of the Infanzon," answered the old man; "thou art to leave me, to share the luxury, the dignity, the rank, and station of thy guardian."

"To leave thee?" tremulously ejaculated the maiden, "no never; not for all the wealth of India."

The songstress threw herself upon the breast of the old man, and hiding her face in his wretched garments, wept most bitterly as the mere idea of their separation suggested itself.

"Weep not, my daughter," calmly resumed the alchemist, "the sands of my hour-glass have run their course. Already upon me I feel the pall of coming death—

the strange presentiment of a dissolution which cowards dread, but good men hail with pleasure, when the will of their Creator is signified. I have lived long and braved misery with more than ordinary fortitude. I have lived and prayed for one end—thy happiness. Zelda, my child, I have dwelt upon earth long enough to accomplish my destiny; where mine endeth, there beginneth thine. Dry thy tears, for thou hast a greater and better friend than I can ever be. In the hour of peril and of danger, in the moments of affliction and of sorrow, rely upon the Infanzon Alphonzo, for to him, as thy early protector, did thy father, Malchior, bequeath thee."

"Malchior again!" exclaimed the damsel, "how knew he the Infanzon?"

"It is a long tale, a mystery the future will unveil," answered the alchemist. "Now deal with me in honor, child, for it concerns thy happiness, and honestly disclose the truth. Zelda, my dearest charge, has thy pure heart e'er known the pleasures or the pangs of love?"

The maiden blushed deeply, as with down-cast eyes she seized the hand of her benefactor, as if to beseech forgiveness for having concealed a secret from his confidence. "Yes, dear father, forgive me, I do deeply love, but he whom I adore knows not the existence of the passion which throws me into desolation. How could I aspire to infuse a kindred sympathy into the heart of a bold and noble cavalier, one so much above me in station."

"And who is this gallant, enrapturing thy youthful fancy?"

"The Señor Captain Sanchez, the King of the Revelers," modestly replied the Gitana; "that noble youth has unconsciously made me unhappy. Oh! were I rich and noble, were I proud and haughty, my wooing would be sought after; but a meek and dependent Jongleuse, the eyes of none look after the love of such as me."

The alchemist was about to reply, when the Inquisitor, Pedro Arbues, disguised in the habit of an Italian trader, closely followed by Father Ximenes, in the garb of a

Levantine shipmaster, entered within the little shop of the apothecary, and beckoned the alchemist to his presence.

"Thou hast been named to me," commenced the Inquisitor, "as a chemist of renown, who art skilled in the fabrication of the most subtle poisons, those which can infuse a deadly essence through the veins of men, so potent that the force of nature cannot withstand its irresistible shocks."

"Indeed," quoth the alchemist, scanning his visitor most thoroughly ere he would fully reply, "the superstitions of my neighbors, more credulous than myself, have conferred upon me honors of which I am unworthy."

"Nay," continued Pedro Arbues, "I am commissioned by a noble Italian princess, Giohanna of Monaco, to procure the choicest and most deadly of these noxious compounds, and, as a voyager, I have come to thee, who art famed for thy alchemical skill."

"Yea, but I deal not in the destruction of life, but in the restoration of the body, when the potency of my skill affords occasion," replied the alchemist; "and beyond this, were I to attempt the distillation of the deadly compound, it is a mortal sin, visiting me with the retribution of the Holy Office."

"Nay, spare thee that misgiving," rejoined the Inquisitor, "for, having letters to his Excellency the Archbishop, we have furnished ourselves with a dispensation, signed by his proper hand, and sealed with the great seal of his archiepiscopate, wherein thou art exempt from the commission of sins for the interval of one month, next forthcoming."

The Inquisitor presented the apothecary with a roll of parchment, sealed with the great seal of the Archbishop's estate, which Balthazar perused and re-perused, with evident reflection and caution. Ever and anon he lifted his keen grey eyes from the document to the faces of his visitors, and appeared to read their inward thoughts with well disguised satisfaction.

"This is well; and now," continued the alchemist, "thou

knowest the composition of the slow destructive poison costs more than is my mortal store, for I must employ emeralds, diamonds, and pearls, all articles of cost, to filter the waters, lest, perchance, some sediment may remain to counteract their deadly effect."

"The Princess of Monaco," answered the Inquisitor, "has sent me prepared to meet any demand, and fitted me to bestow on thee a recompense. This jewelled necklace will answer all thy mineral wants, and the gold will serve thee as a bounty for thy labors."

The Inquisitor placed before Balthazar a casket, containing a richly-wrought necklace, set with brilliants, amethysts, emeralds, and other precious stones. The eyes of the apothecary glistened, as he weighed in either hand the gorgeous prize, which could alone be estimated at some thousand ducats. Suddenly, as he examined it minutely, the tone of his complexion changed, and he turned the faces of the jewels more fully to the lamp, as if to examine their quality.

"Why tarriest thou, my learned friend," interrupted the fiery Arbues, whose suspicions became somewhat aroused at the cautious examination of the treasure, "for we have little time to lose; our caraval is ready to depart, and I have many miles to travel ere we reach its haven."

"I did examine the water of these jewels," coolly remarked Balthazar; "methought there may be present in them some pernicious ingredient untoward against the efficacy of our composition; some talismanic attribute with affinities conservative to life, which may rest within them."

"Use them as thou wilt, they are thine," hastily rejoined the Inquisitor. "When shall we return for the princess' flask, for we are hurried to execute her mission."

"The distillation must be wrought with patient care and superwondrous caution," quoth the alchemist, murmuring to himself; "the stars must be propitious, the planets in their proper spheres of the heavens, and above all, I must purify my alembic with the choicest acids and sublimates."

"Well, well," nervously interrupted Pedro Arbues, "how many hours must elapse ere the liquid be prepared for deadly use?"

"Come, gentle sir," answered the apothecary, "some two hours after the rising of the moon, on the day after to-morrow, and thy mistress shall possess the flask of Proserpinean nectar; one pure drop of which will annihilate the strongest Hercules, and its powers shall far transcend the reach of every antidote. If thou dost desire thy victim to linger in unconscious misery, thou hast but to add a solitary drop of distilled water for every day its final potency is to be retarded, and, at the expiration of the allotted time, he will waste away and sink into the grave, the mere skeleton of an ulcerated carcass."

"Thanks, thanks, my learned sir," said the Inquisitor, "the princess will ever bless thee, and—" he continued, pointing to Ximenes, "this worthy mariner here will, at the appointed hour, receive the sacred flacon."

"Be it so," coolly responded the apothecary, as he reweighed the heavy necklace, and eyed each glittering stone of price with the skill of a lapidary.

After the departure of the Inquisitor and the Dominican, Balthazar more carefully examined his treasure, testing the quality of its workmanship, and minutely analyzing the specific gravities of its metallic compounds.

"Of a verity, Pedro Arbues," soliloquized the alchemist, tossing the bauble from hand to hand, "thou art a fool as well as knave. Thinkest thou that, in the shallow device of the princess' messenger, thou couldst escape detection from my eyes? True, true, I am a poor old man, partially blinded, but were I devoid of sight, my memory has recorded thy features so sharply that I could trace thee upon the palm of my hand. The Princess of Monaco, forsooth! Fraudulent Inquisitor, for murder's sake thou hast robbed thy priory of its ill-gotten wealth, and unwittingly bestowed it upon its righteous owner."

The old man chuckled to himself, then laughed outright in a wild burst of unrestrained merriment.

"Zelda, dear child," he further soliloquized, "I can now meet my coming death contentedly. I have indeed fulfilled the mission of my life. I have saved thee in sickness, I have nurtured thee in misery, and now I bequeath thee as a dowry"—a tear dropped from the alchemist's eye—"the necklace of thy sainted mother!"

CHAPTER XII.

THE CASTLE OF THE SORCERERS

It was long after the setting of the moon, when the litter which conveyed the goldsmith's heiress and her humble companion halted for a final pause; for, although they repeatedly tarried, for the purpose of changing the relay of horses, the thick curtains drawn over the apertures, which usually served as windows in these primitive conveyances, precluded the possibility of an exterior view upon the objects they passed with amazing rapidity; consequently, the lady was left in total ignorance as to the route along which she had been conveyed, or as to her intended destination. Latterly, the motion of the wearied beasts attached to the carriage, (comparable to a more modern sedan chair), and the unsteady clang of their hoofs, breaking upon the uneven ground, convinced her that they had attained a mountainous district. During the entire journey, her escort maintained a monotonous silence, agreeable to that profundity of reflection in which she delighted; and when, perchance, directions were given to the conductors of the horses or porters of the litters, their orders were issued in a tone of voice inaudible to its occupants. Confident of the absence of personal danger, not only from the assurances of the Gitana, but from a reliance upon the frank demeanor and manly bearing of the soldier who appeared to control temporarily her destinies, Inez bore the fatigue and excitement of travel with an unshaken and stoical courage.

Resigned to her own meditations, during the passage of weary hours, the mind of the maiden speedily became pre-occupied by reflections upon the occurrences of the last few days—a chain of events opening a new and more

troublesome channel for her obtuse thoughts. The more deeply she cogitated, the more forcibly the treason of Pedro Arbues grew palpable to her hitherto unsuspecting reason. By a sudden singularity of argument, by a decision of her fluctuating will, she convinced herself that, standing upon the verge of a precipice, whence a false step would have plunged her into eternal ignominy, she had been miraculously rescued from destruction by some unknown and incomprehensible guardian. With these feelings occupying her mind, she mentally thanked Heaven that she had been saved from the snares of the Inquisitor and the smooth-tongued confessor, his insidious coadjutor. Still, a latent ardor for religious devotion—an enduring reminiscence of the stern and gloomy existence she had heretofore maintained, in blind imitation of a presumptively holy life, tinctured as it was by self-generated approbation, prompted a natural and Christian-like forgiveness for the crimes of those who would have trampled upon her honor and the purity of religion. Personally, she despised Pedro Arbues. Inoculated with a deep-set sentiment of reverence for his sacred profession, she remitted his individual transgressions, and fervently prayed that the saints, whose glory it was his solemn duty to imitate, would likewise pardon his moral treason.

The sudden stoppage of the vehicle, speedily followed by a prolonged blast upon a brazen trumpet, whose dull notes resounded amid the stillness of the early dawn, and were re-echoed from dell to dell, awoke her from the profound and unpleasant reverie into which she had fallen. The harsh challenge of the sentry, and its ready response, bespoke the arrival of the cortege at one of those semi-feudal castles which had survived the general wreck of the nobility and of the military orders, and still maintained a formal though ineffectual show of baronial dignity. As late as the middle days of Charles V., the hills of Andalusia and Castille were crested with numerous mouldering fortresses, the property of isolated knights, formerly members of the *Hermidad*, or National Guard of Free

Companions, whose duty was the conservation of public order and support of the laws of the realm. Tolerated by the magnanimity of a monarch who perceived in this ignoble militia an ever-ready check upon the military assumptions and predatory inclinations of more potent barons, the petty knights of low degree served the crown with alacrity and fidelity. Thus, as the beacon-light gleamed from hill to hill, in annunciation of the foray of an indomitable seigneur upon the lands of the inoffensive vassals of some baronial chieftain, against whom was waged a war of personal enmity, the warders of each successive fortress of the Hermandad summoned their mail-clad brethren to arms; and easily encircled their common enemy by a strong cordon of stalwart men-at-arms. Surviving the decadence of the feudal arrogance which erected each trivial manor into an independent sovereignty, a portion of the Free Companions, enjoying the indulgence of Imperial favor, by a conscientious administration of summary justice, and by a fervent adherence to the spirit of chivalric courtesy, were permitted to retain the appearance of their prior feudal state. Although these armed eyries had long ceased to be a source of annoyance to their noble neighbors, whose formidable castles, fallen under the royal displeasure, had been duly dismantled of their customary garrison, they served as a home of refuge to many oppressed and persecuted beings, who, harassed by debt, or the enmity of private officials, availed themselves of the protection of these semi-feudal justiciaries, martial owners of barren, craggy retreats. It was before one of these castellets of a brother of the Hermandad that the litter of the goldsmith's heiress with its retinue halted.

The warder's challenge and countersign having been exchanged, the heavy portcullis was hoisted by gradual pauses, as the creaking chains wound around massive windlasses, and the narrow drawbridge fell across the yawning moat with a dull and hollow sound. When Inez and her companion, Fretille, to whose society she had become attached by a sympathetic feeling, engendered from

common misfortune, descended from their rude vehicle, they discovered themselves in the centre of a paved courtyard, encircled by a crowd of menials, bearing torches of flaming timber. The attendants respectfully gave way to the right and left as the lady touched the earth, and from beneath a portal cut into the solid wall fronting the terrace, a grey-haired man, with long flowing beard, stepped forth to welcome the guests with the hospitality of the castle. He was habited in a coarse gown of common serge, trimmed with black taffeta, while around his neck was hung a massive chain of gold, pendant to which glistened the emblem of his position.

"Lady," said the seneschal, with an humble obeisance, "thou art right welcome to our poor sanctuary, whose portals are never closed against the poor and the needy, the sorrow-stricken and the afflicted."

"Where, then, am I?" inquired Inez, casting a look of distrust upon the crowd gathered around the way-worn and weary cavaliers of her cortege, whose faces, scarcely illuminated by the flickering glare of the murky links, gave ample evidence of a wearisome and forced journey. "Among whom have I been delivered?"

"Among friends," continued the aged seneschal, "therefore fear not for thy safety. In the name of hospitality, by the blessed salt of St. Michael, we extend thee welcome." Thus speaking, the official knelt to the goldsmith's heiress, and taking her fair hand in his, courteously and tenderly carried it to his lips, and impressed upon it a modest and respectful salutation. "My lady," he continued, motioning her to approach the threshold of the turret, "the chatelaine awaits thy coming, to bid thee partake of nourishment and rest."

Inez gracefully thanked the venerable man, and according to his request, hastened to the entrance-portal, where she encountered a young and plainly attired lady who embraced her heartily, according to the received formalities of dignified congratulation, and passing her arm through that of her guest, conducted her to the banqueting apartment.

Somewhat astonished at the reverential ease of her entertainers, as well as at the gloomy aspect of the apartment, where the coarse fare of a feudal repast was spread before her, Inez speedily dispatched the hardy meal, and retired with her attendant to a small, although comfortable apartment, where her exhausted nature soon compelled her to indulge in a prolonged, yet wearisome slumber.

The bright rays of the noonday sun were streaming through the narrow casement of the turret window, as the goldsmith's heiress awoke from her lethargic sleep, her weary frame much refreshed from the long and vexatious stupor which had fallen upon her. As she opened her eyes to the beams of light, a joyful cry greeted her from the Gitana, who had tranquilly watched the immovable features of the sleeping damsel, as the pulsations of the heart, beating feebly and irregularly, alone announced her living presence. A death-like pallor overspread her features; a dense perspiration overhung her placid brow, as, immovable and prostrate on the couch, her stiffened limbs relaxed before the softening influence of balmy slumber. Thus was it she rested in the frigidity of seeming death, in a placid sleep of the unconscious physical functions, while her ever-restless spirit wandered in the ærial regions of a disturbed fancy. In her dreams, the genius of the Future had portrayed the apparent destiny allotted to her upon this earth, and in a fearful panorama of conflicting spectacles, presented a harrowing picture of contending passions. The odious features of the Inquisitor appeared to her, as his tall, thick-set form, clothed in the full garments of the Holy Office, rudely threw open the gateway of the Inquisition, whence emerged the moans and groans of countless afflicted prisoners. His brawny arm, tearing aside the curtain veiling the innermost secrets of that charnel-house of the living, pointed to a hopeless crowd of cringing penitents, who clung around the knees of their persecutors, and, with plaintive wails, implored mercy at their hands. Beyond this heart-stricken group there stood the form of her father, Miguel, the gold-

smith, bound and pinioned like a vulgar malefactor, his either side guarded by the relentless minions of power. In a paroxysm of despair she was about to call upon her father, when the stern voice of Pedro Arbues silenced her supplication, and with a mandate, horribly grating upon her ear, pronounced solemn judgment upon the unhappy victim. Then ended the dream in the spasmodic convulsions of her brain, as with a sensation as if of cords, bound around her own person, she experienced the pains of a double torment. At that moment, the warm rays of a noontide sun burst upon her exhausted frame, and dispelled the gloomy spectres of her fancy through resuscitation of those dormant forces, compelling a circulation of her half-congealed blood.

"Lady, dear!" ejaculated the Gitana, as the opening eyes of the partly paralyzed Inez evinced her awakening senses, — "how happy am I indeed that thou hast dispelled those fearful dreams, which seem to have haunted thee. Much do I pity thee, for thy vexations are most bitter, and if the face be an index to the mind, thy heart is sorely troubled."

"Truly, Fretille," rejoined Inez, with a smile of complacency, "the visions of night are but the passing shadows of the day—the phantasies of a disturbed brain, coming and going as the guardian genius of the soul leaves the divine imprint of his visit. There is truly a mystery about my destiny that my feeble mind cannot unravel. I know not to-day what will be the ways of the morrow."

"Here, at least, thou art safe," said the Gitana, with an air of self-congratulation, "far, far away from the reach of the Inquisitor's wily snare. Oh, Madam, how deeply shouldst thou pray, in thankfulness, that a kind angel has saved thee from the hands of the scoundrel, Pedro Arbues."

"Scoundrel! Pedro Arbues?" inquired Inez, shocked at the honest application of a despicable term to the Dominican Prior; "thy fancy runs riot—knowest thou not thou speakest of one ruling the destinies of our Church?"

"Madam," rejoined the Gitana, drawing the maiden to the casement, whence could be viewed, afar and near, verdant plains and vine-clad fields, in the midst of which arose the craggy mountain, surmounted by the petty fortress, "seest thou those fragrant meadows and winding rivulets, which yield their perfume freely to the mountain air? I was born among plains still more rich and grateful than those; among them I learned a worship, a freedom of religious thought, which deserted me not when I forsook my native wilds. There, Madam, I learned to imitate the humble flowers, and freely to bestow upon the Deity, who created both them and me, the spontaneous offerings of a thankful spirit. Yes, I, more lowly than the lily of the valley, thought myself not too exalted to bow in meek humility to the shrine of God—that universal temple, wherein creation worships in heartfelt thanksgiving. But, I have altered since."

"Prythee, why?" quoth the fair Inez, whose attention was insensibly attracted by the strange observations of one, from whom she expected not such a tone of philosophic meditation; "thou art yet young, and therefore why shouldst thou have deserted thy natural mode of grateful worship?"

"Simply, lady," resumed Fretille, "I am changed, because my skin is not so pure as thine, and my God is not the God of thy country." Accompanying this observation the Gitana pointed to her olive-stained cheek, and gazed upon her mistress with tear-drops in her dark, quick-moving eyes. "Those of thy complexion and faith, adore not the God who is the father of the wandering children of the East."

"Nay, child," gently remonstrated Inez, endeavoring to comprehend the full meaning of the Gipsy woman's expression, "thy God and mine are the same, and by repentance thou shalt find grace. Enter into the bosom of the Church; watch and pray, that the beatitude of Heaven may rest upon thee."

"The Church!" vehemently exclaimed the Gitana, a

smile of partially concealed derision mantling her tawny cheeks; "thinkest thou that the wild children of the green fields can ever be taught to reverence the gloomy precepts of thy faith? Can the vagrant of the woods, who, with the rising lark, carols praises to the God on high at the first rays of the dawning morn—can she immure herself within the dismal walls of a convent prison, and therein fritter away the precious boon of life?"

"Fretille!" ejaculated the gentle Inez, with evident anguish, "art thou not a Christian? Tell me, I pray thee, dost thou renounce the Cross?"

"I am a Christian—a convert to the Cross," ironically responded the Gitana, in slow and expressive accents. "How came I converted? The scattered members of our tribe, descendants of those who once ruled in dignity and justice over these flowery lands, are driven to the portals of your cathedrals, like swine to the market-place; they, in agony of fear, have forsworn their simple religion. Did they but raise their voices to the skies in hosannas to their God—Him who protected them in the days of captivity and darkness—the heavy bars and bolts of the Inquisition closed upon them; and if again our anxious eyes rested upon their beloved frames, it was to see their bodies writhe in the lingering struggle of a horrible death. Thus came we to be Christians."

"Enough, enough," murmured Inez, fearing lest some more definite expression of sentiment might jeopardize the personal security of her companion. "The spies of the Inquisition may overhear thee; even walls have ears!"

"Nay, I fear naught when beneath the protection of the noble lady who rules this small domain," returned the Gitana, with a look of determination; "this sacred spot has as yet been untrodden by the hoofs of the destroying demon."

"What call you this fortress, then?" inquired the goldsmith's heiress, "for I am ignorant of the place, and know not the length of the journey we have taken."

"This, lady, was once the dwelling of a gallant knight, slain in honest battle," said the Gitana, "one of our race,

whose daughter (the chatelaine) lives, guided by the counsels of a venerable seneschal, and protected by the power of a most potent baron, whose fame is world-renowned. Her name is rarely mentioned save in tones of praise, and, from the miracles of kindness performed beneath her patronage, a grateful people have surnamed this pretty citadel 'The Castle of the Sorcerers.' "

"And, Fretille, is there no other reason," interposed the Maid of Seville, "why this pleasant house should be afflicted by so repulsive a designation?"

The Gitana hesitated, and appeared anxious to avoid a response to the question; then, persuaded by the solicitations of Inez, she faintly spoke:

"True, my lady, the common fame of vulgar minds has bestowed upon this sanctuary an odious appellation, for here, when the persecuted bands of Navarrese, driven from the confines of Castille and Arragon by the edicts of a bigoted king, who sinned only in a credulous adherence to the mandates of a superstition-loving Church, assembled to solemnize the rites of their primitive faith, the Pontifical Legate, by bell and book, excommunicated the gallant father of our hostess, and his worldly domain, accursing it with the full vengeance of the Holy Office."

"Am I indeed within the portals of those denounced by our blessed religion!" ejaculated the goldsmith's heiress. "Come, Fretille, let us fly hence, for our souls will be consumed in the fires of eternal torment, and our bodies infected by the pest of mortal sin. I have been deceived, and hence from the abode of demons let us take our flight. Come," she added, in anguish, "I entreat thee—come."

Inez had made several steps towards the door, as if to put her intention in execution, when she suddenly found herself intercepted by the youthful, though commanding figure of the chatelaine, who smiled upon her with a marvellous and confiding sweetness, and then addressed her in tones of melancholy import:

"Were I permitted, gentle maiden, I would bid thee return, with feelings of the greatest pleasure; but he, to

whom I owe the highest duty, save that to God, has ordained that thou shalt remain my guest until thy father's coming."

"My father?" anxiously inquired the goldsmith's heiress,—“will he rejoin his erring daughter, and forgive the transgressions of a repentant soul?"

"Yea, indeed he will," answered the chatelaine, her full, meek and expressive eyes beaming with redoubled gentleness. "The heart of a father is seldom closed against the prayers of a child, particularly when it is decreed by high Heaven, that thou shalt be the staff of his life—the comfort of his old age—the honor to his half-spun woof. Inez," continued the lady of the castle, "although thou hast seen me not before, I am no stranger to thee, for I have heard of thee through one who loves thee, and whose love is worth the wealth of the imperial crown—one thou hast never seen, and yet who has seen thee in thy most secret moments."

"One who loves me!" ejaculated the maiden, turning inquisitively to the lady addressing her; "nay, I have no courtiers—speak not in parables, I pray thee, but tell me outright, is he a noble of Seville?"

"Is there any in the gay capital worthy the dowry of thy confiding heart?" continued the chatelaine, with a smile of re-assurance to the damsel. "I will answer for thee, there is none. Still, thou hast a lover who has admired and watched over thee from thy earliest years. The mystery of the Sphinx has yet to be unravelled, and in the womb of time have been conceived wonders to be forthcoming."

Inez listened attentively to the words of the lady, falling upon her ear with the solemnity of a prophecy, as she gazed upon the young and noble chatelaine, whose plain robe and serene countenance conferred an expression of dignity on her words and looks, which extended a species of enchantment around her, and thus attracted the heart of the Sevillian maid to her by a bond of sympathetic union. Fair-haired and rosy-cheeked

by nature, her countenance had lost gradually its former bloom, and its place assumed a calm and pallid glow of heartfelt meditation. Her hair, unornamented by jewels, fell in golden tresses, from beneath her dainty capuchin of damask silk, to her slender waist, encircled by a rich velvet jacket. Her pure blue eyes, large and full, were suffused by peaceful animation, and added a mild and benevolent expression to the features of a prepossessing face, the type of a northern race, whose characteristics were sincerity and courage.

In the presence of this young and intelligent lady, who spoke in such courteous and assuring terms, Inez speedily recovered her ordinary composure ; then, piqued by curiosity, she ventured a surmise as to the probability of the case suggested by the chatelaine. After her slight conversation with the Gitana, and upon a review of the incidents which had afflicted her monotonous way of living, the spirit of Inez had undergone a serious change ; hence, casting aside the firm reliance she ever entertained in her religious devotions, the maiden mourned her dependent state, and in meditation sought to contrive some means whereby she might render herself impregnable to the attacks of the latent enemies who had thus encircled her path at the very entrance of her life-journey.

"Lady," quoth Inez to the chatelaine, "there is some one besides my worthy father who feels an interest in my unworthy self?"

"Yea, more than one," interrupted the hostess, with a gesture of earnestness ; "still, one among them, more devoted than the rest, has saved thee from ruin. When about to enter the Convent of the Carmelites, to what didst thou think to devote the passing hours of thy blissful youth?"

"In sincere repudiation of the vanities of the world, to a sinless communion with the blessed saints," modestly answered Inez, casting down her eyes, as if in anticipation of the fatal exposure she appeared conscious was to follow.

"And that communion of the saints," resumed the chatelaine, the warm blood rushing to her pallid cheeks, "was, to have been forced into the arms of thy betrayer, the brutal Petro Arbues, who, fired by an unholy passion, reviled the will of God, and set at defiance those stern rules of morality which teach man to honor the mandates of his Creator. There was one bold enough to evoke the wrath of the enraged Inquisitor, for the sole purpose of delivering thee from irremediable ruin."

"Mercy ! great God !" exclaimed the maiden. "Was such a piteous fate reserved for one who would desert a fond and doting father, a cheerful and luxurious home—thus allured onward to ignominy by the deceptive light of religious faith?"

"So was it, forsooth, my friend," calmly answered the chatelaine ; "and thou wert to be no solitary victim within the dreary dungeons of the Carmelites. Hadst thou once entered within the portals of that den of sin, thou wouldst have found companions in thy misery—pale, miserable wretches, sighing for the first draught of free air, yet fearing to stalk abroad in liberty, lest the blush of shame should mantle upon their brows, as their tainted breath assailed the virgin cheeks of those who were pure and sinless."

"Heaven be praised !" exclaimed Inez, "that I escaped such a dreadful fate."

"Listen to me, maiden," said the chatelaine, her voice faltering as she spoke. "My cheeks were once fair as thine, my heart more lightsome and more free, when accursed fate, and treachery of the blackest dye, enticed me within the circle of that infectious temple consecrated in the name of holy chastity. During long years of misery and of mental anguish, I have atoned my unwilling crime. At length, through the interposition of a sovereign's pleasure, wrung from a reluctant monarch by the unflinching entreaty of a potent friend, again am I released to breathe the pure air. Inez, listen to the warning of my experience, for I am not the victim of my own wickedness. I was

pure and guiltless as thou art ; I worshipped God with a devotion like unto thine ; but, in the name of that God whom we worship, I have been betrayed ; and hence I have tasted the bitter pangs of a sullied fame. Home, friends, companions, have I none ; solitary and alone I dwell in the castle of my father, despised by my sex, and dishonored in my name. Homeless and nameless, I eat the bread of misery, and drink the galling waters of ignominy. Inez, if thou hast a heart for pity, despise me not, but pray for me."

The voice of the chatelaine became inaudible through her broken sighs ; heavy tear-drops gushed from her eyes ; in anguish, within her hands she shielded her face from the astonished gaze of Inez, whose palpitating heart visibly announced the emotions passing within her brain.

"Sister," quoth the maiden, throwing her arms around the weeping chatelaine, as if in the hope of comforting and consoling her, "I'll pray for thee in the full sincerity of a lonely heart. I will not despise thee, for how can I ? I, like thee, might have suffered martyrdom, for I knew not the dangers besetting me. Arise, my friend, awake to regeneration, for the Lord of mercy will purify the heart which sinneth not, even though the flesh faileth."

"Inez," resumed the chatelaine, whose tears dissipated before the consolations of her sympathizing companion, "thou knowest not the agonies of the guilty ; thou hast never felt the burning brand which crime impresses upon the soul—a fiery stain which neither tears nor remorse can eradicate. To save thee from a lot like mine, my liberator, thy lover, has braved the thunders of the Church, the horrors of the Holy Office."

The Maid of Seville experienced a keen sensation of gratitude as she reflected upon the yawning gulf from the verge of which she had been delivered, and vehemently exclaimed :

"Tell me, dear madam, who is this unknown benefactor—this bold friend to my father, to me and my race ? Oh, tell me his name, that I may ever treasure it within the shrine of a most grateful heart."

"His name thou shalt learn from his own lips," answered the chatelaine. "Before many hours elapse, his steed will bear him to our castle gates, where we penitents daily resound his praises to the skies."

"And thou, dearest lady," tenderly inquired Inez, "by what familiar name art thou styled—by what endearing title can I address thee ?"

"Name, fair maiden," returned the chatelaine, "I have none. In the gloomy cells of the Carmelites I forfeited both honor and name. Here am I styled the chatelaine ; surnamed the Sorceress, —for a vulgar appreciation of my toils, in healing the sickened body, or in calming the troubled mind, have led my humble friends, the wandering tenants of adjacent fields, to bestow upon me that mystic title. Still, indeed, do the children of earth comprehend not the wondrous workings of an honest faith ; and if the the great Ruler above has opened my heart to the alleviation of mortal ills, and rendered me an instrument of good within His hands, should I not be truly thankful that His pleasure has been made manifest to so obscure and unworthy a being ?"

"But, wherefore art thou surnamed the Sorceress ?" inquired Inez.

"Simply for that I have denied priestcraft," answered the chatelaine, her words growing sublimely expressive, as her inspiration increased. "I have rejected the vain teachings of erring man, and seek salvation from a knowledge of God's holy works. Therefore am I, and the little flock congregating within our pastoral fold, denounced by an opprobrious name—a name to us significant of moral grandeur, but which, unto craven mortals, conveys fear and desolation to the inmost recesses of the soul."

The goldsmith's heiress, with whom the word sorceress, ungallantly applied at the instigation of monkish enemies to the chatelaine, bore a terrible and ominous signification, hesitated not long in discerning the technical meaning of the word, as applied by the followers of the early reformers, who clustered in unfrequented spots during the

unusual hours of the night, to worship according to the accepted ritual of the regenerated as well as primitive faith. In the dark and secluded glens of the Pyrennees, upon the lofty hill-tops of Navarre, and scattered among the plains of Andalusia, were congregated small communities of these dissenters from the Romanist creed, whose sole protection against the oppression of the Inquisition was the political patronage of some feudal barons, anxious to avail themselves of their determined valor in hours of need, when holding the keys to the neighboring principalities. To these people, thus isolated politically and socially, solely on account of their religious views, the vulgar populace, priest-led, and priest-ridden, applied the term of opprobrium, which shortly became their generic title.

The heavy bell, suspended over the chapel of the pretty fortress, rang forth a dull and doleful sound, which, carried upon the wings of the new-born evening breeze, reverberated through the valley, spread at the foot of the winding, tortuous causeway leading to the miniature castle. Its dying peal had scarcely ceased, when the chatelaine fondly addressed her guest, as she motioned her attention towards the setting sun.

"This, Inez," she said, "is the evening revel of the Sorcerers, the hour at which they daily bend their knees in humble thanksgiving to their Maker. Wilt thou join the chosen few who, beneath the frail roof of our sanctuary, in penitence send forth their heart-felt prayers to the Throne of Grace."

The Maid of Seville hesitated for a moment, as a reminiscence of her former religious devotion flashed across her memory. Intimidated by an innate dread of heretical connection, she trembled lest her soul might be endangered by an accursed communion; still the eyes of the chatelaine were bent upon her with a gaze of mild anxiety, which removed her slender doubts. Instantly her courage became aroused, and she resolved to share the proscription of one whose trials of the heart bore such singular similarity to her own. With a graceful motion she yielded acquiescence, and marching with a firm step, followed her conductress to

a narrow, ungarnished hall, wherein were collected the motley-clothed tenants of the sanctuary.

The venerable seneschal, he who had on the previous night welcomed her to the hospitality of the chatelet occupied an elevated position among the attentive throng, who earnestly drank in his words, as he read from a huge parchment folio, well worn, with curling-edged leaves. The tuneful accents of the old man rang harmoniously through the hall, as he perused, in reverential mood, a chapter from the Evangelists, selected for his illustrative comments. It was the first time that Inez had listened to words of Holy Writ rendered into her native tongue, and the full force of the inspired writing obtruded itself upon her reflective mind. The deep and earnest tones of the reader, divested of meretricious ornament of eloquence, impressed a deep conviction upon her mind, while the fluent comment, as if from inspiration, falling from his lips, explained the minute connection of social religion with the transactions of every-day life. Unlike the senseless formalities and meaningless genuflections, the external attributes of form, which her accepted mode of worship exacted from the body and not the mind, the calm and dispassionate flow of reasonable argument took a strong hold upon the naturally reflective humor of Inez, who devoutly listened to the orator's words, convincing her willing reason by their force and pertinence.

At length the reader closed his volume and ceased his comment, the very letters of his discourse sinking deeply on the memory of the Sevillian maiden, whose only regret seemed to be the passing brevity of the interesting theme. With an easy grace and reverential mien, the old man, with uplifted hands, bent his knees in solemn adoration to the invisible altar of the Almighty God. Instantly the heads of all his followers were bowed in mute humility, and again the deep, full tones of the pathetic voice of the seneschal invoked, in touching accents, a blessing upon the repentant souls voluntarily assuming his guardianship along the bleak and desolate pathway of mundane life.

Warmly as Inez had been interested in the discourse, the fervent words of the thanksgiving prayer sank still more deeply upon her enchanted soul—words of consolation, of emulation to her, as well as of gratitude to the benign Divinity, whose interposition had saved her from ignominy and disgrace. Mechanically she united with the speaker in the warmth of his feelings; and, carried away by the irresistible convictions of a joyfully penitential heart, Inez vowed an undeviating adherence to the pure reason, the calm mandates of the new faith.

At the conclusion of the simple service of the sorcerer's worship, the Maid of Seville threw herself into the arms of the chatelaine, and said:

"Sister, from this time forth thy God is my God! We have erred,—we have sinned; but we have been forgiven, not by word of man, but by the grace of Him who died for us all. Therefore let us be sisters perpetually—if not of kin, at least through faith. This day have I experienced a new life—one which teaches me my duty to God and to my Savior."

The chatelaine received the penitent to her bosom, and was about to reply to her remarks, when the rude notes of the brazen trumpet, hanging without the castle walls, summoned the scanty garrison to arms. In a moment all was confusion, as the hardy retainers briskly seized their formidable weapons. Amid perfect silence succeeding the commotion, the warder announced the glad news of the coming of their protecting champion. The heavy drawbridge speedily descended, and the iron-bound portcullis was drawn up, to allow a free entry to the incomers. The knightly cortege defiled through the narrow portals, and at its head rode a gallant cavalier, whose armor set off a noble and manly form. As he passed into the centre of the paved court-yard, wild acclamations of joyful welcome announced the irrepressible delight his humble retainers experienced at his return. With a most graceful ease and smiling countenance he acknowledged the ovation, and turned about his steed to suffer a companion to advance to

his side. Inez was not long in distinguishing the features, as, with a wild cry of joy, she recognized her father. Bursting through the thin crowd, encircling the interior portals, she advanced to the horse's head, and threw herself at his feet as he descended from the saddle.

"Father!—father!" she exclaimed, in violent anguish, "forgive the errors of thy wayward child! Forgive me, I implore thee! She would have deserted thee, but her heart is sincerely changed. Grant her thy forgiveness, she implores thee."

Before the confused artizan could respond, his eyes swimming with tears at the happy spectacle of his child's restoration, the knight alighted from his horse, and clasping the damsel gently within his arms, raised her from the ground by a dexterous exercise of tender force.

"Maiden," he said, "thy prayer is heard; thy boon is granted; thy faults, if faults they be, when prompted by the errors of zeal, are forgiven."

"Thou art saved, in truth!" responded the goldsmith; "and for this act of mercy, bless, in grateful benediction, that gallant cavalier," he continued, attracting her attention to the dismounted noble, standing uncovered at her side.

"Thank him, sayest thou, my father? My heart has done so already," said Inez, turning her full dark eyes upon the stalwart form of the knight. "And thou, sir knight, art—"

"Thy betrothed—the Infanzon of Estella," replied her father.

A mist floated before the maiden's eyes; an indescribable sensation of joy seized upon her frame, as she sank overpowered into the arms of her rejoicing father. The heart of the fair Inez was filled to overflowing.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE CAPTAIN OF THE GUARD.

THE morning, after the reception of Balthazar and his ward by the Infanzon of Estella, had scarcely been ushered in by the shrill clear notes of the rising lark, when the humble songstress, whose sleepless night had been exhausted in conjuring dreams for the future, placed herself in front of the shallow portico before the dismal porch of the apothecary's residence. Mechanically, she gave vent to one of those wild and melancholy ballads, whose cherished melody recalling the fugitive shades of the past glory of the Moorish race, evoked the dormant patriotism of the scattered descendants of a people who deeply sighed beneath the iron despotism of their Christian rulers. But one trace only of their ancient grandeur had been reserved to the unfortunate Moresco tribes, and that was their ancient melody, which, poured forth like oil upon the troubled waters, calmed and consoled the wearied heart of a forlorn people. Even this trivial consolation was abridged in its free exercise; for the words of the ancient ballads having been convicted of heresy by the Holy Office, their airs alone survived the rigorous rancor of persecution, and were transmitted as precious heirlooms from mother to daughter.

The melancholy notes of the doleful ballad of the Alhama, were carolled by the youthful Jongleuse with a natural sincerity of accent. They were a reminiscence of the times of her early youth, when the Gipsy mother nursed her child in the wild and unfettered revelry of the everglades. Thus they dropped musingly from her soul, and mingled with the noisy murmurs of the busy town.

"Fairest maiden, why singest thou that dismal ditty?"

jocosely interrupted a fine manly voice, breaking sharply upon the ear of the startled songstress.

Zelda turned her looks upon the intruder, and beheld the robust form of the King of the Revelers, habited in his gay attire as Captain of the Archers of the Guard, an honorary corps preserving the appellation and costume of a chivalric age then passed away. Still she responded not, but merely ceased her song, without quitting her seat upon the rude stone bench.

"Why not sing some pleasant roundelay?" continued Sanchez,—“some gay ditty—one of love and beauty?”

"Why of love and beauty?" modestly responded the damsel, with a grateful smile. "It ill becomes one like me, a poor Jongleuse."

"Still, thou hast a heart," resumed the gallant captain, "and shouldst have a swarm of lovers to bask in the light of thy full black eyes."

"Nay," musingly answered the Jongleuse, "none can love a wandering songstress, whose only beauty is the gift of nature."

"Nonsense," returned the soldier, his laugh ringing in honest derision as he drew his manly figure to its full height; "every dove must have its mate, and surely thou art a pretty and a gentle one. Come, sing me a gallant roundelay, that the morning air may learn the joys of valor and of love."

As he spoke, the archer seated himself respectfully by the side of the Jongleuse, and, with a playful gesture, ran his hand over the strings of the gittern.

Zelda smiled, but her heart palpitated violently. The object of her secret passion, of her untold story of affection—the solitary being upon whom she had bestowed the full power of her virgin love, was near her, and still it was forbidden her to pour into his unconscious ear the revelation of her agony. The poor Jongleuse experienced that anguish of soul which ever afflicts a heart loving in concealment, and which aspires too highly above the intermediate grade of society; for there are social barriers

which limit the expansion of the nobler sentiments within a contracted sphere. The gay cavalier, with his embroidered doublet and broad-spread acres, could speak in tones of undying love to the cotter's daughter, turning the water-wheel in coarsest woolen, but it was denied the gentle heart of a wandering minstrel to anticipate a sympathetic union with that of a gallant soldier. Zelda felt the keen force of these objections, as, seated by the archer, the personal realization of her many day-dreams, she nervously sought concealment of her passion. With a decided resolution, she turned and addressed Sanchez :

"Señor Captain," she said, "as thou art in a kindly humor, I will sing thee a merry tale of love, an old ballad, filled with the gems of fancy."

"And I will thank thee, modest maiden," returned the archer, "with a smile."

Zelda gazed upon the young soldier for a minute, and then, mastering her emotion, commenced her solicited ditty.

The Spanish ballads of mediæval composition—the rough and spontaneous outbursts of rude poetic feeling, generated by the subduing fervor of chivalry and a recollection of the gloomy scenes of the conquest, were simple and uneven descriptive pieces, unpolished by a superior musical culture, nor modified by the elastic flexibility of a vacillating language. They were rather the warm exhalations of patriotic ardor, whose words aroused the latent martial energy of the populace, and stimulated their courage by familiarity with the prowess of their ancestors. A few, indeed, of the romantic school had survived the repression of Moresco minstrelsy from the Provençal troubadours, whose metre and rhyme had been, in some degree, sacrificed to the cumbersome and elaborate measure of chronicle poetry.

The ballad, which Zelda executed with feeling and grace, was one which appeared peculiarly suited to the emergencies of her individual situation, and was therefore rendered with a superiority of tone and earnestness.

It briefly described the trials of a simple maiden, who loved a noble knight, and yet dared not reveal her love. In conscious neglect, the cavalier suffered his humble admirer to pine away, while, in the name of more noble and haughty dames, he traveled Christendom, winning chaplet after chaplet at each successive joust and tourney. Every verse was accompanied by a wild and impressive chorus, in which the clear notes of the Jongleuse, ringing with a musical sweetness scarce imaginable, mingled with the deep and manly accompaniment of the soldier, guiding his harmony by dainty reverberations from the stringed gittern. The songstress now reveled in the internal intoxication of mental bliss—the crowning hour of her destiny had arrived, and, with a heart of thanksgiving, she blessed a propitious Providence for having thus granted the simple boon of gratification her soul so long coveted.

"And what a burning shame," interrupted the Reveler, as the voice of Zelda depicted in moving tones the anguish of the maiden, at finding the knight insensible to her charms, "thus to despise a loving soul, when, even in Andalusia, a trace of pure love is seldom to be encountered ! But the day of chivalry has departed."

"Nay," resumed the Jongleuse, "thou comprehendest not the burden of the ditty ; the simple maiden dreaded to relate her love, and the gallant knew it not."

"So much the worse," answered the soldier ; "he must have been blind if he could not conceive the cause of her melancholy—an arrant knave at that."

"And couldst thou, Señor Captain," quoth the Jongleuse, "read the unfathomable mysteries of woman's heart ?"

"Of a certainty could I," gaily returned the captain ; "for we soldiers are apt scholars."

"Now, then, listen, and we shall see how the constancy of the maiden was rewarded," resumed the Jongleuse, taking up the thread of the ballad, which proceeded to describe the advent of a mighty magician, who revealed the secrets of the fair one's bosom to the unsuspecting

knight, and finally cemented their loving hearts in an everlasting union, by a nuptial consummated in the pomp of chivalry.

As the Jongleuse concluded her ballad, she brushed away a tear-drop which had involuntarily started into her eyes, and turned aside her head, fearing lest the youthful soldier might perceive and comment upon her trepidation. Still, her motions were not so rapid as to elude his vigilant eye.

"Methinks, fair maiden," said the gallant Sanchez, "thy ballad is not founded wholly upon fiction. In secrecy thou hast a lover, some noble cavalier, who is insensible to charms which should tempt an anchorite from celibacy."

"Nay, nay," responded the songstress; "the simple Jongleuse cannot lay pretensions to the love of those who are alone happy in the companionship of nobility."

"Prithee why, my timid Zelda?" said the Reveler; "thou art young and handsome, and I warrant the heart of many a Gitano yearns to possess the blooming pride of their race."

"No, Señor," answered the songstress, "although the child of Malchior, I am not of their race; and I can remember days long before I became a wanderer in the meadows and valleys with my Gipseys friends."

"And thou lovest none among them?" continued Sanchez, as if in meditation. "Assuredly thou art in love, for the blight of broken vows hangs on thy brow."

"He whom I would love in full sincerity," meekly returned the maiden, "knows not the full depth of my passion, for he is almost a stranger to me."

"Wonder upon wonder! the romance of thy ballad has been absorbed within thy brain," remarked the Reveler, with an earnest glance upon the maiden.

"It may be thus," continued Zelda, slowly murmuring her inward impressions.

"A truce to philosophy; but tell me now concerning thy unknown lover," said the soldier, whose anxious gaze betokened deep solicitude for the welfare of the youthful

songstress. "Is he a man of Seville, and of what quality?"

"He is born of Seville, and of thy profession—a soldier."

The Reveler paused in reflection: "Know I him as a comrade?"

"Most intimately, for whenever I saw him," answered Zelda, "thou wert in his company."

"This is strange," resumed the captain; "companions I have none, and least of all among the soldiery. Come, maiden, his name, that I may hie to him, and tell him of his sovereign good fortune, in having won the heart of the fairest damsel in Seville."

"Nay," responded the damsel, "he would spurn me, for he is too proud and haughty, too noble and high-bred, to dim his brilliant career by a connection with a poor, friendless, and dependent maiden, as I am."

"But trust me, Zelda," earnestly continued the soldier, "and I will urge thy suit as if thou wert my sister, and I warrant thee success."

"Aye," responded the Jongleuse; "but think of thy companion as of thyself? Wouldst thou be willing to sacrifice thy hopes and future grandeur to bear the burden of a wife of low degree?"

"Prithee and why not, my gentle Zelda?" resumed the soldier. "Why should I experience disgrace upon bearing the glory of a confiding heart? Am I not like other soldiers, a mere sport of circumstances, and a being dependent upon the pastimes of fickle fortune? Thinkest thou the livery of a Court can change a human heart? Beneath this gaudy trapping of power, I wear the soul of common mortals, and experience sensations similar to all adventurous beings. I have myself but one ambition, one rule of life—the service of the sword."

"And were a damsel to come to thee and proclaim her affections," modestly returned the Jongleuse, "one like me, poor and needy, wouldst thou not refuse her suit, and cast her from thee in disdain?"

The soldier gazed intently into the countenance of the songstress, whose full black eyes were illuminated by a ray of expectant hope, and scanned each lineament as the passing glow of enthusiasm wreathed her features with a cheerful air of contentment. Then drawing nearer to the hesitating maiden, he bent his eyes upon her own, so that their expressive glances harmonized in a concentrated unison, and mildly spoke:

"Zelda, I am the soldier honored by thy love! Deny it not, for thy blushes betray thee. On me, and on me alone, rests the foundation of your ambitious hopes. Speak to me honestly."

The maiden drooped her head; the secret of her soul had been discovered, and she possessed not courage to deny her unveiled passion.

"Truly, Sanchez, I dare not increase my misery by prevarication. Oft, when I gazed upon thy figure, I conjured up a dream of happiness, and, from the floating clouds of fancy, ventured to depict a future endearing to my existence. Repel me if thou wilt, for even that will not increase the unhappy state of my isolation—"

"Repel thee, wherefore? I accept thee as a spouse, for, in the golden regions of a newly-discovered world, I will brave my lot; and if thou wilt share the sadness of that wandering life, wherein the sword may cleave a road to wealth and honor, the dreary monotony of a soldier's toil will be dispelled by the courteous company of thy fair countenance."

"Wherever thou wanderest," joyfully exclaimed the Jongleuse, "there will my spirit find a resting-place. But"—and the maiden suddenly paused—"what will become of the venerable Balthazar—my only friend? We must not leave the good old man to die alone and neglected."

"Neither will ye!" interrupted the deep-toned voice of Manuel, who had approached the couple, unperceived by them, "for Spain is large enough for all to live in luxury

and glorious ease, without tempting the hazards of adventurous fortune. Sanchez," continued the Wanderer, in a voice of commanding dignity, "art thou willing, upon thy martial honor, to espouse this damsel? I demand of thee, as a friend of her father, the expression of thy determination."

The Jongleuse, at the voice of the Wanderer, started to her feet, and was about to address him, when, by a motion, he commanded her further silence.

"Assuredly will I espouse the maiden," answered the young soldier, "for I have longed to find a sympathetic heart, willing to share the precarious fortune of my soldier-life. Where could I find one better nurtured in the school of adversity than the wandering child of the Gitano's tutelage?"

"It is well," responded the Wanderer; "then demand her in matrimony of her noble guardian, the Infanzon of Estella."

"The Infanzon! Nay, my friend," continued the King of the Revelers, in undisguised amazement, "thou errest—of Balthazar, the apothecary."

"The child of Malchior claims the protection of her father's companion in arms," resumed the Wanderer. And, without paying further attention to the astonished looks of the loving couple, Manuel passed into the dwelling of the apothecary.

Balthazar was engaged in the composition of some of his celebrated medicaments, when the entrance of Manuel attracted his attention. Hastily leaving his alembic, the alchemist hurried to embrace his ancient pupil.

"News! Alphonso, news!" exclaimed the old man; "there is to be another victim to the vengeance of the Inquisition, but not by rapid disease upon the rack, the wheel, or by slow torture. The insatiate Pedro Arbues demands the immolation of another martyr, one beyond the pale of the Holy Office, through the instrumentality of Paduan poisons—a new means whereby the horrors of the sombre tribunal can be aggravated in relentless torture."

"And for whom doth the Inquisitor-General intend his solemn beverage?"

"For the person of none other than that of the Infanzon of Estella," continued the old man, as he gazed upon his pupil with an air of solicitude. "This evening he comes to claim the poison, paid for by a princely recompense."

The venerable alchemist produced the casket containing the rich necklace deposited with him by Pedro Arbues, and displayed the glittering gems before the eyes of his visitor, who examined it closely.

"Dost thou not recognize this?" inquired Balthazar, earnestly.

"The lost treasure found!" exclaimed the Infanzon, as he warmly seized the alchemist's hand. "Again has the princely jewel been wrested from the minions of oppression, to deck the lawful owner of this wretched toy. Oh! shade of innocence! why has this petty bauble deluged broad domains with floods of blood? Behold the familiar initials!—the heraldic device!"

"The necklace of the Princess of Viarna!" soliloquized the aged alchemist; "ever art thou to be bargained for in death and treason. But as for thyself, my brave Alphonso, hast thou no fears for thy safety, no trepidation lest in an incautious moment the hand of an invisible foe may smite thee to the earth?"

"I have none, friend Balthazar," replied Alphonso, "for the protection of a good Deity, and the consciousness of a charitable mission upon this earth, will nerve my arm to struggle against any contingency. Against the wiles of wicked men the power of self-reliance will ever avail as a weapon of strength and triumph."

"True," said the old man, "yet possess thou the invaluable elixir, a composition of my most occult science; and were the insidious dews of poisonous vapors infused into thy veins, one draught will purify thy body from all mortal taint."

As he addressed these words to his visitor, the apothecary proceeded to the more secluded section of his labora-

tory, whence he drew forth the earthen vase, which he ever husbanded with solicitous care; then removing its massive lid, disclosed phials of purest crystal, containing the rosy liquid, famed afar for its destructive properties. Holding up one to the light, dismal as it was, he bade his pupil remark the peculiar roseate hue of its contents.

"Mark well the singularity of this tinge, resembling no other color known to chemical lore. This is the dearly bought property of Pedro Arbues, the subtle poison, designed for thy veins. Once tasted, a warm, pernicious heat—a weak, but inevitable fever—seizes upon the stagnating blood, ensuring pestilential death; while vile blotches of discolored flesh burst forth upon the skin, until the body is the seat of a most horrible leprosy, whose smell nauseates, and whose touch is contagious. By these symptoms, visible to the eye, thou canst detect one by these means poisoned."

"But, good Balthazar," interrupted the Infanzon, "how could a man of thy humanity compound so treasonable and villainous a mixture?"

"My heart was steeled by the iron nerve of revenge," responded Balthazar; "years have rolled away since I first willed this regal beverage for the lips of Pedro Arbues—the very man who, by the temptation of the Viarnian bauble, has forced me to dispose of the means of my vengeance into the hands of mine enemy. But Heaven, in its wisdom, has bestowed an antidote for the most hideous ills. Before the product of my reflective skill, the power of this dreadful compound is utterly annihilated, and the full purity of the contaminated life-channels can be restored to healthy cheerfulness. Viewing the matter in such a light, and fearing, too truly, that the virulence of the Inquisitor's wrath should be directed against thy person, I did postpone the delivery of this drug until thou, in secrecy, shouldst possess its marvellous antidote."

The alchemist placed the phial of rosy liquid in a small coffer of wrought silver, and drawing forth another of rich mosaic work and gold, he exposed to the inspection of

his inquisitive visitor a crystalline powder of surpassingly marvellous whiteness, the product of his experiments in a search to attain the base of mundane matter.

"Alphonso," said the old man, with a melancholy dignity of expression, "I fear that the hand of death has almost outpoured the sands of my glass, for the fatal presentiment of approaching dissolution, antecedent ever to the passage of a purified soul to the realms of eternity, has fallen upon me. I have but one legacy to bequeath to thee, beyond my undying affection, and this is the product of my life of scientific toil—this elixir of human life; for, poor as I am, I am the richest of mortals in having attained the aim of my existence—the discovery of the long sought after philosopher's stone."

"And, therefore, why appliest thou not the remedy against decay," inquired the Infanzon, "in thine own case? Why wouldst thou die if thou canst live?"

"Of what use to age is the perpetuation of days," answered the alchemist, "whose hardships have produced premature decay—whose genius has been wasted amid the unappreciation of the times? Why should I live to buffet longer the sneers and contempt of an unbelieving race, to whom the mysteries of nature are forbidden to be fathomed? I have already lived too long among a tribe who regard the maxims of religious science merely subservient unto fanatical despotism. The objects of my mortality have been accomplished. I have learned too much for my individual welfare; and the seeds of discontent, sown within my breast, have spread into a harvest to be reaped by those around me."

"And Zelda," inquired the Imperialist, "what becomes of her, shouldst thou pass from this terrestrial sphere?"

"Is she not beneath the guardianship of the Infanzon of Estella?" responded the alchemist, "and hast thou, like me, not sworn to ever guard over her destinies, and always protect her, until beyond cruel persecutions inherited from unfortunate sires? What will an old man be save a hindrance to the development of thy charitable resolves,

and, beyond this, I would rather leave my dearest charge, ere a more passionate affection supplants the germ of gratitude within her fervent breast?"

"Fearest thou, then, the love of Zelda at this late hour?" inquired the Wanderer.

"The heart of woman vacillates, and well-founded hopes for the future oftentimes dissipate gratitude for the past; better is it to treasure a memory of existing affection, than to jeopardize an increase for the future."

"Thou hast reason," resumed the Infanzon; "filial affection, however fervent, yields to an acknowledgment of marital duty."

Tears rolled from the eyes of the old man, as he warmly shook the hand of his former pupil, and pressed his acceptance of the famous elixir.

"Accept," the alchemist implored, "this legacy, acquired by years of toil and thought, for it will be thy safeguard, when, actuated by the promptings of my spirit hovering around thee, thou shalt perceive the advent of subtle danger. As a talisman, and as an antidote, I pray thee accept it; if not for thine own sake, at least for that of Zelda."

"In her name, and for her sake, I accept thy gift," responded the Infanzon, "and not from lack of confidence in the protection of that benign Providence, who ever shields those who truly put their trust in his protecting Power."

"And more than that," resumed the alchemist, "assume guardianship of the Princess's once regal jewels; into thy hands I surrender them, with my blessing, in the expectation of their once more glittering upon a person of that unhappy lady's persecuted lineage. Now I charge thee, Infanzon of Estella, steadfast to keep thy plighted word—let the spirit of Balthazar guide thy active counsels."

"Fare thee well, Balthazar, and now, dispel thy gloomy anticipations for the future; for thus far have we worked towards the triumph of a just restoration; and let us toil on in the name of martyrs, until again the banner of Navarre sheds its protective shadow over a regenerated people."

The Infanzon assumed guardianship of the jewelled treasure, and placed the Moorish amulet, containing the mysterious alchemical product, within the lining of his doublet; then kneeling before his venerable preceptor, he invoked, and received his heart-inspired blessing.

As he passed through the porchway of the apothecary's domicile, the Wanderer noticed that the King of the Revellers still sat in close communion with the Jongleuse. Enwrought in the expression of a newly-pledged passion, engrossed by a day-dream of future happiness, to which the inexplicable connection of the Infanzon with the destinies of the former Jongleuse had administered a glow of radiance, the soldier, in his wildest flight of fancy, could never have anticipated,—the youthful couple had suffered monotonous hours to glide away upon angel wings. What to the ambitious lover are feeble sounds, when his fancied realization of the pleasures of a lifetime hovers in brilliant colors before his bewildered brain? What to the anxious beloved one is the flight of rapidly-gliding minutes, when, convinced of having entered within the portals of a terrestrial Eden, her spirit breathes the inspiring atmosphere of self-created joy. To the revellers in internal pleasure, the gloomy passage of events external is obscured by clouds of doubting hope.

Manuel calmly addressed the Archer-Captain :

"Thou art a soldier, willing to wear the golden spurs of knighthood; into thy custody is committed the heart of a confiding woman; guard it, lest, from thy ignominious laxity or casual treachery, the taint of dishonor rest upon her. Guard well the treasure a fortuitous circumstance has bestowed on thee."

"By the honor of a soldier do I swear it!" ejaculated the Archer.

"Nay, swear not to men, but let thy solemn vow be to Him on High!" continued the Infanzon. "On the morrow, conduct the learned Balthazar and thy betrothed to the mansion of Miguel, the goldsmith, where my chamberlain will provide for thee. I shall be absent upon a trivial journey;

and thou shalt govern in my absence, that I may learn to trust thee in future."

"I pledge my faith," responded the Archer, "that the wishes of the Infanzon of Estella shall be complied with in honest fidelity."

"Sanchez," quoth the Wanderer, in deep and impressive accents, "I knew thy sire—a noble cavalier, famed as the best lance of Navarre and the pride of Agramontese chivalry. Let the son emulate the glory of his father, and he will attain a higher pinnacle of fame than did his war-worn ancestors."

Without waiting to learn the effect of his mysterious prediction upon the youthful soldier, the Infanzon resumed his progress towards the suburbs of the Triana, marching at a rapid pace with a firm, martial tread.

The young couple gazed at each other with perplexity, as if endeavoring to comprehend the full extent and meaning of the Wanderer's prophetic allusion; then, yielding themselves to the natural impulse of piqued curiosity, they indulged in harmless speculations as to the result of his re-appearance in Seville.

At the appointed time, two hours after the rising of the moon, the Dominican, Father Ximenes, re-clothed in the assumptive garb of a Levantine voyager, presented himself before the laboratory of the apothecary, to demand the liquid so dearly purchased by Pedro Arbues. The alchemist, with many injunctions as to caution in its employment, remitted into his hand the crystal phial and its miniature coffer.

"I have labored to produce this deadly compound," said the apothecary, with an air of solemnity which strangely resembled a voice from the sepulchre, "simply to oblige a mortal princess, trusting it not to be employed, save against those of her kind; for, upon the heads of dealers in death shall rest the vengeance of death."

The deep and startling tones of Balthazar's voice grated harshly upon the ear of the Dominican, whose pallid visage gave evidence of the gravity of his internal re-

flections. The priest, by a vigorous movement, summoned courage, and responded :

"In the name of my employer, I thank thee. And now I have to ask a favor for myself, which I claim in behalf of my comrade's bounty. My life is threatened by unforgiving enemies, who fain would follow me to the grave. I desire a weapon to defend me—one stained with the envenomed juice of the Oriental tree of dismal repute."

"Art thou, too, doomed to the slavish trade of murder?" replied the worthy Balthazar, bending his keen glance upon the Dominican, who quailed beneath the stern scrutiny of the old man. A sudden and irresistible convulsion of his features portrayed the bitter pangs he inwardly experienced, as the dreaded word—the foul name of a sinful crime grated on his ear. An icy chill pervaded his entire frame, and his teeth chattered, as he hesitatingly muttered :

"Not murder, sir, but homicide in self-defence—that is no trade."

"Call it by any style thou wilt," responded the alchemist, "the slaying of thy brother is mortal sin, when performed by insidious and malicious means. However, I accede to thy wish; take this weapon, wrought in the Orient: its blade is steeped with the poison of the Upas, whose withering exhalations ensure certain death."

The alchemist drew from a repository of refuse articles a heavy dagger, whose tortuous blade was surmounted by a richly-carved hilt, bearing quaint and grotesque devices. Cautiously he withdrew it from the sheath, examined the tinted steel, and then passed it to the trembling hands of Father Ximenes.

"Strike but one blow," sharply continued the alchemist, "and the deed is complete. Not the skill of all the leeches of Spain would purify the life-blood from its venomous contagion."

The Dominican hurried from the presence of the apothecary, clasping to his bosom the precious elements of destruction, without tarrying to attend the final close of Bal-

thazar's laudation upon the efficacy of his murderous gift.

Walking through the winding streets, the conscience of Ximenes smote him heavily. The words of the good Balthazar shot like a winged arrow through him: "Upon the heads of the dealers in death shall rest the vengeance of death!" He cursed himself in anticipation of the crime his fervent imagination vividly depicted in most repulsive colors; he strode among the children of the earth, with the brand of Cain indelibly impressed upon his forehead, a burning symbol of popular infamy. From contact with the casual pedestrians he encountered, he turned in anguish and distrust, fearing lest their discerning eyes might, by hazard, detect the awful burden charged upon him. His heart sank within him, as the hideous phantasies of a passing vision haunted his brain; a grim phantasmagoria of disordered horrors floated before him, as the dim mist of evening moonlight cloaked his onward path. At every step an appalling spectre, stalking in the dim clouds of the future, stretched its shadowy arm, as if to guide his tottering footsteps more surely to perdition. Feeble, exhausted, and tremulous, the Dominican, dragging his length slowly along, passed within the Palace of the Inquisition.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE THIRST FOR BLOOD.

WHILE the Inquisitor-General awaited the return of the Dominican from his errand to the laboratory of the apothecary, he occupied himself in a long and serious meditation upon the sudden, and to him unaccountable, apparition of the Infanzon of Estella, at a time when least acceptable to him, whose warm blood in nowise brooked the zealous interference of a more favored rival. Informed of the route taken by the cavalcade which escorted the timid Inez, he was not long in surmising the locality of her retreat, and evinced no astonishment at discovering the maiden to be under the immediate protection of her betrothed. By the removal of the goldsmith's heiress from under the deleterious tutelage of Father Ximenes, the temptation of her humility, as well as her unshaken obedience to the inclinations of her confessor, was thoroughly dissipated; and, while immured within the stronghold of the heretics, whose stout arms and rugged weapons defied the cowardly minions of the Inquisitorial service, Inez was to be considered justly unattainable by the employment of armed force. An open rupture with her future husband, the powerful and popular Infanzon, would alone provoke the wrath of his courtly retainers, and perchance might awaken the resentment of the Imperial Court, which had already intimated its serious disapprobation at the numerous complaints urged against the abuse of power, vested in the Holy Office, by the groaning population of Seville. Viewing all these circumstances, a chain of occurrences conspiring to defeat the intent of his secret aspirations, by the scale of reflective judgment, Pedro Arbues sagely concluded that the person of the fair maiden was intact against the consummation of his villainies, as long as the

mantle of a husband's protection encircled her. He weighed the probabilities of the disaffection of the fair Inez towards matrimony, and feared that her resolution for the adoption of a life of perpetual chastity would be materially shaken in the absence of Ximenes, whose authority ceased palpably upon the entrance of Don Alphonso within the family councils. Neither was he blind enough not to perceive that the weak and vacillating heart of the heiress, unaccustomed, as she assuredly was, from her social relations, to the trials of a worldly existence, would not fail to be attracted by the fame and renown, by the noble bearing and chivalric demeanor, of her gallant suitor. But particularly did he bewail the fact of the goldsmith's child being under the protection of the mysterious chatelaine of the sorcerers, whose fervent advice, based upon the most stern experience, would certainly dis sever her from the fanatical enchantment into which she had been plunged by the teachings of the Dominican confessor. In this wise Pedro Arbues continued reasoning within himself, until, convinced of the futility of a further prosecution of the object of his amatory desires, he broke forth into a violent ejaculation of despair:

"Gone—gone—gone!" he soliloquized, as he paced the marble floor of the corridor leading to his private cabinet in the Inquisitorial Palace; "thus have I lost the only treasure upon which my heart doted with tenderness. Accursed be the name of the traitor Infanzon, who thus places himself between me and the object of my affections. But," continued the Inquisitor, his countenance illuminated by a malignant smile, as he rubbed his hands with frenzied glee, "I have a rich treat in store for the gallant bridegroom. Marry thy heiress, noble Infanzon, and ere the hour of the benediction, a subtle poison will have infused a cureless leprosy throughout thy frame."

Returning within his cabinet, the Inquisitor assumed his seat in the oaken arm-chair, and hastily summoned to his presence his reliable familiar, the soldier Estrada, charged with the command of the Inquisitorial Guard.

Upon the entry of that personage, Pedro Arbues controlled the expression of his features into a comparative serenity, and commenced the conversation with a painful nonchalance, as his mute attendant obsequiously paid attention to his words.

"Worthy Estrada," the Inquisitor carelessly commenced, "if I remember aright, thou hast vowed that, in grateful memory of thy miraculous conservation, thou wouldst honor the auto-da-fe next forthcoming with the spectacle of a penitential heretic, whose sincere contrition upon his entry unto eternal life may prove a pleasant offering to the Holy Office."

"So have I determined," responded the soldier; "and if the will of my virgin patroness would vouchsafe to direct my humble zeal upon some arrant enemy to our Church, right happy would I beseech his condemnation."

"My son," continued the Inquisitor, with monotonous earnestness of speech, "Heaven hath seconded thy earthly ardor. God hath denounced the apothecary, Balthazar, for heresy and malpractice against our religion."

At the mention of the name of the venerable sage, the features of Francisco assumed an air of extreme melancholy, which increased, as the unmoved Inquisitor continued:

"He has been discovered to be a disciple of the wizard, Cornelius Agrippa, and doth pervert the learning of the truth to sundry necromantic practices, and thus, in the service of Satan, toils to undermine our holy faith."

"Nay, Monsignor," tremulously interrupted Francisco Estrada, "he is reputed a man of honest worth, a leech of skill, whose fortunes are protected by the gallant Infanzon—"

"What matters that?" sternly continued the Inquisitor. "Is not that man a known enemy to our institution, and, in malice of heart, hath poisoned the mind of our Imperial sovereign against our zealous acts of faith? Besides, has not this Balthazar been duly charged of geomantic

studies, and the errors of astrological contumely? These things constitute heresy of a most aggravated nature, and render the sorcerer opprobrious to true religion."

"Be it thus," meekly returned the soldier, "for the mandates of God admit not of discussion, and I am unable to comprehend the distinctions of theology, which have bewildered the intellects of many learned divines."

"It is decreed," quoth the Inquisitor, "that he be duly summoned and examined before the Holy Tribunal, so that we attain a perfect knowledge of his transgression. In pursuance of this order, thou wilt arrest him at the earliest hours of the morning, in due formality, and bring him before us."

The Soldier of Christ bowed obsequiously, and crossed himself.

"By the way, Francisco," resumed the Inquisitor, "I have heard that the learned Balthazar is the sole support of a daughter. Is the maiden young?"

"Of tender years, Monsignor," answered the soldier, anxious to avoid further questioning upon that topic; "at least so she appeared to my humble vision."

"And beautiful?" continued Pedro Arbues, with a careless ease.

"Passably so," answered the familiar, unable to fathom his superior's meaning.

The Inquisitor arose, and paced the apartment hither and thither several times. He muttered to himself inaudibly, and, carefully scrutinizing the features of his attendant, fancied the detection of signs of perturbation. The fame of the Jongleuse for beauty and gracefulness had penetrated within the precincts of the Inquisitorial Palace, and, consequently, in the hesitation of Estrada and his awkward concealment of an admitted fact, Arbues, deluded by the extravagance of his own passion for Inez, imagined the germ of jealousy implanted within the breast of the soldier. A foul suspicion of his subaltern's fidelity, a presumption of his latent attachment towards the alchemist's daughter, pervaded the active mind of the

Inquisitor, and he was almost imperceptibly tempted to place some other test before the hitherto unscrupulous soldier.

"But, they tell me, she too is heretical," said Pedro Arbues, "and doth, as her father, require examination."

The familiar, before whose disordered brain passed a fleeting vision of his late hazardous adventure with the avenger of Malchior, dreaded a further resentment from the natural wrath of the wandering fraternity, already incensed against him from his accredited denunciation of their former chieftain, which would assuredly burst forth upon him with irresistible vengeance, were an Inquisitorial doom to be pronounced against the youthful Zelda. Consequently, after a few moments of unaffected nervous reflection, Francisco Estrada assured his superior that the Christian character of the apothecary's daughter could be substantiated by the highest ecclesiastical authority.

"It is well," resumed Pedro Arbues, "and yet it would be unchristian-like in us, should the unhappy heretic be condemned to expiate his errings, to leave an innocent child exposed to the corruptions of this wicked world. Therefore, upon reflection, we judge it better that she should assume the religious service of our blessed Lady of Mount Carmel, and hence I order thee to convey her consequently to our mutual friend, the Abbess of the Carmelites, who will know the purport of this silent message."

Francisco Estrada fully comprehended the object of the Inquisitor's charitable provision for the future of the Jongeuse. Callous-hearted and obsequious, as he had ever evinced himself in the execution of the mandates of the Holy Office, this wholesale desecration of a home, and one, whose inmates had received him with the life-blood oozing from his veins, and sent him forth a regenerated and rejuvenated man, weighed heavily upon his conscience, weak even as this had become, after a long and destructive contamination experienced within the halls of the Inquisition. Touched by a specious feeling of gratitude, scarce perceptible amid the varying commotions

of his breast, the doubtful zeal of Estrada grew enfeebled, as he coolly reflected upon the physical dangers which would assail him from the members of the Garduna, and from the implacable enmity of the followers of the Infanzon, construing the forcible abduction of Zelda into a grievous affront to the dignity of their martial commander. Beyond this, he distrusted the Abbess of the Carmelites, who, moved by a common sympathy, and allured to the accomplishment of her benevolent designs by the certain protection of the powers arrayed against his individual self, would not hesitate to frustrate the sinister designs of both master and minion. Still, with all these dismal forebodings vividly depicted before him, he experienced not an inclination towards rebellion; the weight of servile gratitude to his benefactor overbalanced the more generous tendencies of his nature, and he nerved himself to the accomplishment of his mission, with a blind recklessness as to the consequences, thus betokening a keen desire to stifle self-reliance beneath the burden of compulsory duty.

"Monsignor," said Estrada, receiving the black-sealed warrant authorizing the forcible appearance of Balthazar, "the will of God be done."

The entrance of the Dominican, Ximenes, relieved the soldier from a further world of reflections; and, availing himself of that incident to solicit an abrupt departure, he speedily found his way into the guard-house of the Palace, where, in wine-created oblivion, he drowned the struggling throes of conscience.

"Thou hast brought the poison?" the Inquisitor-General earnestly inquired of the Dominican, as the pale, quivering, and haggard form of the friar sank mechanically into a chair, near to that of his Prior—an icy-sweat standing upon his brow.

"They are here—this casket contains thy medicaments, and the blade of my dagger will suffice my needs," answered Ximenes, nervously extending the desired articles

"Now, then, Ximenes, prepare for the triumph of the

Church!" ejaculated the Inquisitor, "but, methinks thou art suffering; has the evening chill fallen upon thee, that thou dost quake and quiver, man?"

"'Tis not the chill of the night air," slowly responded the Dominican, "but the pallid breath of the grave which hangs upon me. This night hath near killed me."

"Speak, what meanest thou?" inquired the Prior, "what hath assailed thee?"

"The anticipations of a perjured soul; the pangs of an outraged conscience," returned the confessor. "I am not, like thee, an enthusiastic disciple of St. Dominic, whose zeal absorbs the natural tendencies of our hearts, and thus can view, with indifference, the pains, the sufferings, the misery, and the desolation of mankind. My bosom doth upbraid me."

"And to this end cometh thy devotion to Holy Church?" tauntingly rejoined Pedro Arbues, his countenance contracted by the play of a derisive smile; "For this purpose hast thou entered within our Order, founded in imitation of the self-denial of the holy Saint Dominic? Hast thou turned traitor? or has the spell of some enchanter bereft thee of courage—of holy devotion? Thou art changed miraculously."

"Pedro Arbues," continued the Dominican, "thou hast ever professed thyself, in full sincerity, my friendly guardian; beneath thy advice, I have assumed holy orders, actuated from thy inspirations, and by the earnest belief of aiding in the promulgation of a good, true, and Christian-like religion. In the further hope of attaining perfection in the practice of virtue, I have united myself to this fraternity, beneath your immediate guidance; I have served thee in thy meanest commands, until I have become a parcel of thyself—a mere machine, destitute of volition, of inclination—almost of thought."

"Aye," interrupted the Inquisitor, "thou hast ever performed thy duty."

"Intoxicated by a borrowed enthusiasm," resumed Ximenes, drawing a deep sigh, as he continued his narration;

"a mere reflex of another's thoughts—I have descended in the scale of humanity, until my waking soul contemns me as an inert lump of passionless clay."

"Thou art bidden, by the requirements of our Order," quoth Pedro Arbues, apparently unmoved at the warm self-denunciation of the Dominican, "to indulge in mortifications; to deny thyself the ordinary enjoyments of mortal men, that the perfection of thy virtues assimilate thee to the conduct of saints, and thereby facilitate thy translation to another sphere."

"I fear not the humiliations of the flesh," answered the Dominican, his customary meekness of demeanor rapidly giving place to an outburst of irrestrainable feeling; "neither do I fear the just wrath of an avenging Divinity, when I sin in ignorance; but I must abhor any form of religious obligation which commands a purblind neophyte to the commission of a heinous crime, even if it be sanctified by the mandates of one who ordains it as the representative of God."

"Dost thou deny the authority of the Church?" inquired the Inquisitor, bending his eyes upon the confessor, with a scorching glare of indignation. "How is it? Has heresy grown to such an extent, that the tendrils of the weed have penetrated within the precincts of the Temple?"

"Monsignor," meekly responded the Dominican, "I am tainted not with heresy; I love the Church sincerely; but my innermost soul rebels against the imputation of criminality. I fear the curse of Cain."

"Weak man," sternly resumed the Inquisitor, "thy fears shall be quieted; to a more resolute heart will be entrusted the task of avenging the Church against the machinations of the Infanzon. Thou art wearied and pallid; retire to rest, and drown thy timorous cares in a bumper of wine."

Nothing could be in better consonance with the perturbed feelings of the Dominican than this permission to withdraw, and, therefore, he availed himself readily of his ironical discharge, as the very sight of Pedro Arbues had

grown hideous to his eyes. With a profound salutation, and a simple conventional phrase, he covered his retreat from the cabinet, which he deemed, under existing circumstances, the very hot-bed of sinful machinations.

Father Ximenes had scarcely disappeared, ere the wrath of the Inquisitor, which had lingered, half-smothered in the calmness he had assumed to disguise the violence of the contending passions, during his conversation with his subordinates, boiled within him with increased violence. The evident anxiety of the soldier Estrada to escape observation, and the avowed declaration of the Dominican as to his compunctions of conscience, alarmed the perfidious Pedro Arbues, who at length gave vent to his pent-up passions :

"Curses upon these craven souls !" exclaimed the Inquisitor, his face growing comparatively blue, from the rush of blood through the veins beneath his fair, thin skin—"why am I hampered with these timid knaves? Their fate awaits them. If they cannot live subservient to Pedro Arbues, why need they live at all? They shall not longer taint the air with their mortal presence."

The atmosphere of his closed apartment grew too dense for the occupancy of Arbues; the perspiration rolled from off his heated brow in heavy drops, while his small eyes rolled beneath their massive lashes with the full frenzy of an excited tiger. Pushing aside every impediment in his progress, the Inquisitor forced his way, nervous, overheated, and palpitating, into the marble court-yard of the Inquisitorial building. Throwing himself upon a marble bench, near which a bubbling fountain cooled the floating air, as its tall, slender jet of water played in the azure rays of the bright moonlight, Pedro Arbues beat his forehead, as he gave utterance to his lamentations and imprecations, in shrill, bitter, and envenomed accents:

"And has it come to this," he muttered in anguish, "that I, Pedro Arbues, am solitary and alone amid this world of dastards? Yes, truly do I see the host of vampires, ever ready to lick the marrow from my prosperous

bones, desert me, vermin-like, at the first breath of a coming storm. Still I have a balm for every wound—a treasure of vengeance, from whose illimitable store I can extract the germs of enmity. Why have I labored in assiduity to obtain the pinnacle of blighting power? Why have I braved the curses of my race, the widow's moans, the orphan's sigh; to find my power sneered at, as if I were the veriest vagrant, disgracing the streets of Seville? Is this the just reward for years of self-denial?"

As the words fell from the tortured Inquisitor in a sharp guttural tone, his bosom heaved with violent agitation, his muscles contracted nervously, and his teeth closed with harsh grating sounds, as though his form were writhing in physical, as well as mental, agony. The keen sensibility of wounded pride, the bitter torment of insulted authority, the sharp rebuke of egotistical arrogance preyed alternately upon his prostrate soul, convincing him that the final hour of a sovereign reign in spiritual terrorism was fast approaching, when the sceptre must pass into the hands of some more implacable judge.

"One more day shall elapse," added the Inquisitor, the strong desire for revenge burning within his heart now surpassing control, "and my enemies will bite the dust. In the gloomy dungeon of the Inquisition, the apothecary will bury all consciousness of my crime, as the spirit flies from his mangled carcass. Let the Infanzon mourn over the fate of his ward; let the coward, Ximenes, counsel his conscience's rectitude,—ere long he'll have need of it; while, as to my gallant soldier, Estrada, he must bear them company to the other world. Thus, as by one fell spell of sudden necromancy, from life to death shall pass the enemies of Pedro Arbues, to trouble him no more."

Wearied and exhausted in frame, from the excitement and turmoil harassing his soul, during the few past days, the Inquisitor threw himself prostrate upon the marble bench, and wooed a broken slumber, as the only means to resuscitate his weakened bodily strength. Gradually the hand of sleep descended upon him, as the cooling influence

of the evening breeze soothed his overheated body, and the vaporous moisture of the fountain-jet fell in dewy haze upon his burning brow. Pedro Arbues slumbered, from the absolute exhaustion of a wearied body ; still his mind rested not in quietude, but continued in that vein of vexatious thought which already had sorely afflicted his troubled conscience. The sleep of the Inquisitor was but the momentary rest of the animal functions, a grateful relaxation of an over-wrought frame ; which, while it refreshed the mortal body, in no wise assuaged the burning fever with which his soul was being consumed, as with a glowing flame. On the contrary, the tortures of his brain augmented, as before his sleeping eyes floated the fleecy outlines of unearthly dreams.

CHAPTER XV.

THE GRATITUDE OF THE CHURCH.

WHILE the Inquisitor-General was being tortured in this wise, from ambitious aspirations, to preclude whose failure he discovered himself forced to the contemplation of barbarous iniquities, one of his intended victims, at least, was reveling in the plenitude of self-created pleasures, denied him who sought to govern her destiny.

Upon the departure of Manuel the Wanderer, both Zelda and her newly-betrothed spouse hurried to the presence of the apothecary, to communicate to him, as a matter of duty, the final commands of the mysterious Infanzon.

"Father, father !" joyfully exclaimed the Jongleuse, "wish us joy, for we are indeed happy ; not I alone, but this gallant cavalier."

"Aye, father Balthazar," interrupted the Captain of the Archers—"for ere many days I must hail, and respect thee, as a father—wish me also joy."

"The hearts of the young are ever longing after joy," said the venerable alchemist ; "but, prythee, youthful soldier, upon what ground art thou to claim my parental love ?"

"Simply, because fate has ordained my nuptial union with the fairest Zelda," responded Sanchez, kneeling with his companion at the feet of Balthazar ; "wilt thou deign to bestow thy benediction upon us, that thy blessing may rest upon the sacred union which a wise God hath instituted."

"It is written in the great book of life, that the benediction of marriage," solemnly observed the aged Balthazar, "shall be judged by the fruits of that holy sacrament. What matters the formal approbation of man, the mockery

of human formulas, if the Spirit of the Great Divinity be not diffused into the works we strive to erect by his command. Young soldier," he continued, turning his keen glance upon the ingenuous countenance of Sanchez, "dost thou sincerely love this virgin; wilt honor her, and nurture her, unto the last drop of thy blood?"

"Truly will I, by the vow of that knighthood I trust to attain," rejoined the Revel King; "none other will I love, and furthermore will I defend her fair fame against all hazards, and desert her never to ignominy or to scandal."

"And this youth," continued the alchemist, turning affectionately to his ward, "is chosen of thy heart, Zelda, to be the guardian of thy after destinies. Dost thou, my child, love him above all other gallants, and to him consecrate thy virgin heart?"

"That do I, father," responded the maiden, her cheeks bathed with tears, shed in excess of happiness; "him whom my heart searched after have I found."

"Then, willingly I bestow upon these children my benediction; and if the blessing of a weak old man can avert evils from the innocent, may the union be more propitious than that of thy unfortunate mother."

"My mother!" exclaimed the maiden, palpitating with anxiety, as the alchemist again alluded to the mystery enshrouding her childhood.

"Yea, Zelda, thy mother!" resumed the alchemist—"for the hour has come, when I must unveil mysterious secrets which I have long treasured within my breast; for the cold atmosphere of death encircles my aged limbs, and I know not the hour at which the grim king shall claim me as his lawful prize."

"Nay, speak not thus, venerable father," interrupted the archer; "thou hast strength enough to last many years; why givest thou thyself to despair?"

"The fickle mind of youth can illy comprehend the settled anticipations of age," continued the alchemist, "for the invisible arcana of Nature are sealed, save to those ab-

sorbed in its penetration. Now, since thou hast chosen thy mate, Zelda, one worthy of thy lineage, I will disclose the secret work which has persecuted thee and thine, from the hour of thy birth, with pernicious cruelty."

Both the young man and his bride stared in wild amazement at the speaker, and opened wide their ears to drink in the grateful intelligence he was about to impart to them.

"Zelda," resumed the apothecary, "the instinct of thy reason has suggested thee no passing untruth; thou art the child of no wandering Gitana—of no obscure gentleman; but of the daughter of kings!"

"Then I am not the child of Malchior?" exclaimed the damsel, as she clapped her hands in wildness of joy at the presumed realization of her day-dreams.

"Nay, exult not; for although thy mother was of exceeding nobleness of birth and demeanor," responded the aged Balthazar, in melancholy tones, "and thou art not the child of Malchior, it would have been far better for thee and her, who gave thee birth, had she espoused the faithful knight, who has watched over the daughter of his youthful love with more than parental affection."

Zelda felt the full strength of the rebuke, and repented fervently of the ill-timed ebullition of rejoicing escaping her; a second thought brought to her mind a reminiscence of the many happy hours she had expended beneath the endearing guardianship of the wandering Malchior. The old man heaved a sigh at witnessing the commotion of the maiden, and continued the story of her life:

"In the days of thy parents, the seeds of discord had been scattered among the nobles of the land of thy birth, who zealously combated in feudal warfare, beneath the banner of rival houses, aspirants to the Navarrese throne. In useless feuds they expended their own restless blood, and wasted the patrimony of their children; at one time conquerors of castles, at another, vagrant occupants of desolate forests, in measure as the turn of civil war depended upon the test of fratricidal carnage. Such was the fate

of the noble chief and men of arms, but unto the mighty scions of regal race, came disasters more puissant : fathers died empoisoned, while seated at their hearthsides ; mothers wailed their hardships within the walls of dismal convent-prisons, and deserted babes were suckled by the charity of low-bred women.

"I need not repeat, my Zelda, the sickening details of that awful day of combat between man and man, of that massacre of the innocent, for the recovery of a regal diadem, ensuring death to the victor wearing it. Those hours of disastrous sadness have passed, never, as I trust, to be revived ; for the curse of God upon friendless beings ever follows in the footsteps of ambitious men."

Balthazar paused. The memory of bygone scenes in his early youth were presented once more in ephemeral rugged brilliancy to his vision ; his thoughts coursed faster than did his speech, and he breathed deeply at the reminiscence of the gloomy days of the Agramontese war, which ravaged Navarre of its proudest ornaments.

"Thy mother, Zelda, grand-daughter to the unhappy Princess of Viarna, Donna Blanca, the betrayed and deceived, was ignorant of her regal lineage, and therefore dwelt in small repute, as the companion of a noble dame, whose parents, zealous in the fallen cause, were sorely troubled through fear lest the poisoned curse which had destroyed the Viarnian monarchs, might reach her honored person. Thus was it that she grew in solitude to womanhood, fair, skilled and virtuous ; oblivious as to the brilliant destiny which had been claimed in her title. At that forlorn period of life she found favor in the heart of a noble cavalier, who would have wooed and won her. But Malchior had ventured too late ; a false-tongued hypocrite, a wily knave, although of the best blood of Castile, ere this had stolen the treasure of her race, and ruined at one fell blow thy mother's honor and her cause."

The words of the alchemist sank heavily upon the despondent maiden, who witnessed the annihilation of her fancied greatness by the same breath proclaiming her regal

descent. Instinctively she gazed upon her betrothed, and attempted to read in his eyes a sentence, expressive of scorn, if not of indignation.

"Nay, Zelda," continued the apothecary, "blame not thy mother's fault, for 'tis hidden in the breast of thy protector. That gallant knight, to appease the enmity of scandalous tongues, of those to whom thy mother's casual misfortunes grew evident—this same Malchior, espoused the erring dame ; proclaimed thy nativity, and rallied from the gloom of obscurity the scattered cohorts of thy mother's friends."

"Noble Malchior !" exclaimed the Jongleuse, "thou hast been more than a father to me."

"Thy traitorous parent, the craven deceiver of thy unoffending mother, destroyed her budding triumph. Expelled, a houseless outlaw, he tore thee from a parent's arms, sold the secret of thy birth, and buried himself in mendacious seclusion within another kingdom. While absent in search of the stolen child, with trusty friends, who wrested thee from the clutches of a most ignoble father, the fatal tidings were brought unto the noble Malchior of thy mother's disappearance."

"Does she not live ?" nervously inquired the damsel.

"We know not," continued the alchemist ; "from that hour, the gallant Malchior, and his companions in arms, searching the length and breadth of Spain, heard nought of her."

"Then, indeed, she must be dead !" said the Jongleuse, affected deeply.

"By small degrees," continued Balthazar, "the bands of Malchior grew diminished, and expending his patrimonial estate, he was compelled, to save thee harmless from the spite of thy numerous enemies, to assume command over a wandering tribe of Gipsies, who, by his strong rule, wrought an honest living upon Andalusian soil."

"And my father ?" inquired Zelda, her utterance choked by sobs,— "does he still live ?"

"He does, but knows not his daughter," answered the

alchemist, with a sullen movement of the head ; "neither shall he learn the destiny of his child, for it ill becomes honest virtue to be contaminated by the grasp even of parental vice."

The eyes of Zelda turned their glance upon the Captain of the Guard in sadness ; but, immediately after, she addressed the alchemist, in words expressive of interest :

"The Infanzon of Estella ; pray tell me who is this gallant knight ?"

"The bravest partizan of thy mother," answered Balthazar, "a Navarrese companion in arms of Malchior, who, after battling like him in thy behalf, on Spanish earth, ventured abroad in prosecution of his search after the lady of his adoption, and has returned unto the once gay land of Andalusia, to watch over the destiny of her child."

The speech of the alchemist became broken, as he uttered these words of well-deserved praise with respect to the Knight of Estella, and it was many moments ere he broke the mournful silence, by a resumption of his discourse.

"Zelda," continued the old man, waxing more energetic as a new phase in his narrative suggested itself, "I have a strange presentiment of the approach of death, a forewarning of the terrible moment, when the emancipated soul noiselessly glides from its worthless tenement into the unknown realms of everlasting light, and therefore I will disclose to thee the innermost secrets of my heart."

The face of the Jongleuse became suffused with tears, unwillingly suffered to trickle from her surcharged eyes, as she contemplated the meek and determined resignation of her benefactor, and she would have broken upon the thread of his discourse, were it not that it was impossible to stifle, even for a second, the gnawing sensation of curiosity, to which she was compelled to sacrifice all minor passions. Leaning upon the arm of her gallant admirer, she wiped away the falling tear-drops, and listened breathlessly to Balthazar's words.

"I have evaded thy questions many awhile, fair girl," resumed the apothecary, "but now will I trust thee with

a knowledge of the truth, suppressed through cautious policy, to avoid the falling of danger upon the head of innocence. Thou hast been told that Malchior died within the dungeon of the Inquisition—that that good, brave, and chivalric hero suffered the martyrdom of those rebellious believers in the sublimity of a Divinity, whose worship is the salvation of us weak mortals. Yea, doth the soldier Estrada, minion of Arbues, who betrayed our worthy master into the jaws of death, believe that the victim of his treason perished ignobly, overpowered by the villainous tortures of the accursed Inquisition. Thou didst witness how, in the ethereal delineation of his suffering brain, as, wounded, he lay beneath our humble roof, his mind revealed the atrocity of a death he would have imposed upon his enemy. But, my child, Malchior still lives, and in his secret prayers implores the justice of an ever-living God."

"And where dwells he ?" timidly inquired the Jongleuse, fearing lest the old man failed, or his memory wandered ; "where can I find my friend—my father ? I will travel by day and by night to kneel to that noble being, and pour forth my grateful thanks for the salvation of my poor insignificant life. Oh ! that I were, in reality, a princess, that I might shower wealth, riches, honor on him who was ever so kind to me."

"Nay, Zelda," interrupted the alchemist, "Malchior desires not the honors and riches of mortal potentates ; he has laid up wealth inaccessible to the haughtiest of men, untravelled along the sacred road to perfection. Disgusted with the vanities of this sycophantic world, wearied with a fruitless struggle against the oppressors of his kind, when his solitary arm was paralyzed by the invincible force of numbers, he has withdrawn himself to erect the standard of God's mercy, in the solitary valleys and upon rugged mountain tops of this benighted land. A crusader of the true cross, encircled by a faithful band, whose hearts beat in devotional unison with his honest bosom, Malchior has grown, like unto me, prematurely old, and lives in seclusion,

the apostle of a faith teaching to man the practices of charity and of reason. Thou shalt see him, girl, when thou dost least expect his coming ; and then honor his gray hairs, bleached in thy service and that of thy Creator."

"Joy ! joy !" rapturously exclaimed the maiden ; "again can I nestle upon the bosom of my respected guardian, and drink in those words of comfort which his honest soul poured forth in my former days of tribulation. Oh ! father Balthazar, we shall even yet enjoy hours of happiness."

"There is no happiness for me, my child," responded the venerable sage—"not while the accursed blight of a fatal tribunal rests upon our soil. Sanchez, thou art a brave and generous youth, and, honored by the love of this cherished damsel, thou shalt be respected and esteemed by a noble company."

"Proudly, indeed, do I reverence the unexpected glory," answered the Archer Captain, "kind fortune hath bestowed upon me. On the morrow will I commence life anew, and learn to earn an honest support for the treasures propitious chance hath conferred upon me. No longer the vagrant King of the Revelers, a vagabond justiciary, I will doff the livery of my ignoble calling, and, emulous of the honors of new companions, endeavor zealously to win the spurs of knighthood. Thus will my love for Zelda impel my reformation."

With the expressive language of the eyes, the poor Jongleuse returned an acknowledgment of her love ; the heart of the maiden palpitated, as, with broken accents, she murmured forth :

"Dearest Sanchez, sacrifice no pleasures for my unworthy sake. In thy love is the anchor of my hope ; and desert not any path of glory which will tend to render thee great in the eyes of men. Still, let not thy pursuit of fame blind thine eyes to the cherishing of frail happiness. Sanchez, indeed would I be miserable, wert thou to discard unworthy me, as a stumbling-block to thine honest aspirations. I would be jealous, even of a shadow."

"Fear not, dear Zelda," responded the Archer, in affec-

tionate tones, to soothe the imaginary pains of the damsel ; "thou shalt be the idol of my heart ; thine image alone shall be enshrined therein, and I cannot prove so traitorous to my plighted faith, as to create other deities, reigning against thy sovereign right."

"Well spoken, young soldier," quoth the alchemist, "and see that thou keepest well thy promise, else the curse of a dying man rest upon thee. Honored by the love of a child of the Viarnian princely lineage, thou hast a tower of strength invincible to thine enemies ; desert her, and thou art but a reed to be bruised at the coming of the first wind."

In this wise did the family circle of the alchemist discourse upon the current topics of the eventful theme, until the gay archer, thrice happy at the prospect of a matrimonial alliance with the regal blood of Navarre, relinquished his betrothed and her aged protector to seek their accustomed refreshment in slumber.

The heavy peal of the Cathedral clock of Seville was tolling forth the second hour after midnight, when the sombre procession of Inquisitorial familiars, headed by the Soldier of Christ, halted before the porch of the apothecary, and demanded admission in the name of the Holy Office. At this dismal summons, the few neighbors of that section of the Triana closed their windows in mournful silence, and left the place a prey to sadness.

"Balthazar, the apothecary," said the soldier Estrada, "God summons thee to His Tribunal !"

"I am an old man," answered the alchemist, "grant me one embrace of my poor dear daughter, and I will be with thee."

"Nay," said Estrada in return, "she shall accompany thee. Here she is."

"Father !" exclaimed the Jongleuse, with a convulsive shriek, "whither goest thou ?"

"The Holy Office commands his attendance !" sharply responded Estrada, paying no regard to the damsel's forlorn entreaties.

"Separate us not!" screamed Zelda, attempting to fasten herself to the arm of the old man—"let us die together!" Then turning to Estrada, she addressed him:

"Art thou the fiend of this work? He gave thee life, and thou returnest him death!"

"Rebuke not thine enemies, my child; our avenger liveth!" quoth the old man, raising his arms, as if invoking a blessing upon the suppliant girl; "the wings of the proud hawk protect thee—fare thee well, for ever!"

A heart-rending shriek was uttered by the Jongleuse, as she witnessed the cool, unimpassioned actions of the alchemist, as he tottered between his guardians—then the sight of the vanishing figures grew dim before her eyes, as, with a sudden convulsive contraction, the fair form of the Gitana fell senseless upon the slimy pavement.

CHAPTER XVI.

A MARTYR TO SCIENCE.

NOT a word of complaint was uttered by the aged Balthazar, as he progressed slowly towards the dark, gloomy, and inauspicious buildings belonging to the Holy Office. Enlightened by the experience of many years, during which he had been assailed by the half-stifled moans of friends and neighbors, lamenting the sudden martyrdom of relations and parents, the alchemist was well aware that the doors of the Inquisitorial prison were about to close upon him, and for ever debar his return to a living world. With heroic fortitude he surrendered himself cheerfully to his approaching fate, and with a retrospective review of his past acts, committed his future to the will of that God he so zealously worshipped. The fatal presentiments of the few past days approximated towards realization, and, with a heroic decision, the old man steadfastly regarded the approach of his martyrdom without a single pang of regret at parting from the world of sighs. He was internally assured that his mission upon earth had been consummated; he had suffered injuries, and returned beneficence for the evils wrought upon him; he had nursed the child of his adoption in the way of righteousness, until she had grown into womanhood. Encircled by a protecting arm, Zelda was on the eve of regaining a position, forfeited by the error of her birth. Balthazar thanked Heaven that he had survived long enough to witness the partial accomplishment of his long-cherished anticipations; he rejoiced to be taken away at the moment of their fancied realization, for a failure in the disclosure of their development would have embittered his last moments upon earth.

In the tremulous beating of the Guadalquiver against

the rough stones of the quay, agitated as was the gentle stream by the fresh breath of the morning breeze, the alchemist listened to the dying cadence of an expiring nature. As the increasing din of the city, awakening to daily turmoil, broke upon his ears, it sounded a final farewell to the benevolent being about to depart for evermore from that scene of busy toil. Balthazar smiled; the opening gates of the celestial world invited his entrance.

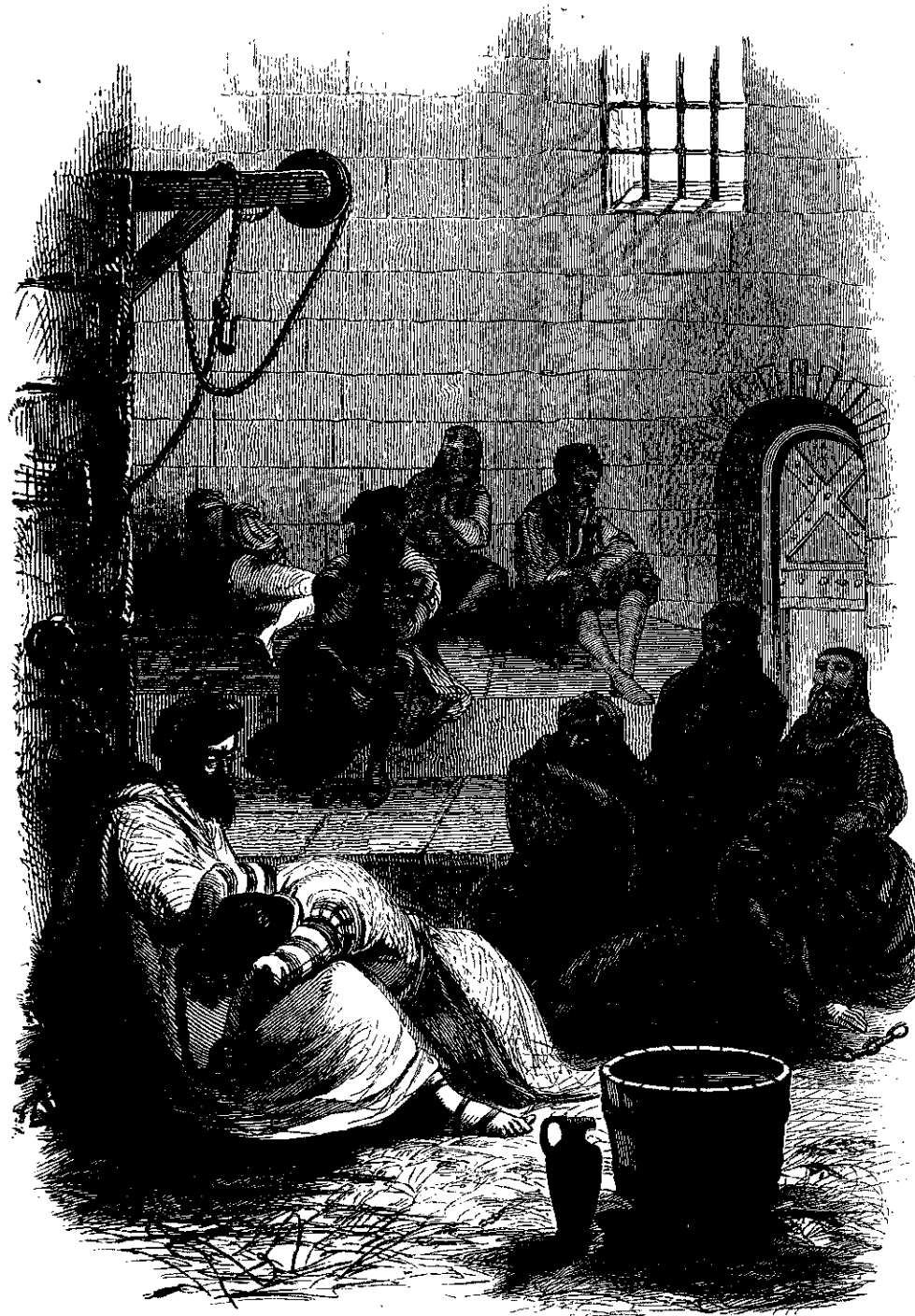
Before a huge iron-studded doorway, pierced into a lofty turret, washed by the waters of the river, reflecting its repulsive outline by a dark shadow upon its clear blue surface, the soldier Estrada halted his attendant familiars, and, as if stricken in conscience, approached Balthazar:

"Pardon me, worthy man," he whispered in low, cautious accents; "this work is none of my seeking, for I am too grateful for my salvation from death, to have denounced him who gave me renewed life."

"The breath of a dying man," calmly responded Balthazar, "one about to kneel shortly at the throne of mercy for the remission of thoughtless sins, should not be polluted by the expressions of worldly hatred. Estrada, I forgive thee for the wrongs done me, and would that my forgiveness might avail thee in the eyes of that just God in whose hallowed name thou and thy master have committed enormities against thy fellows."

"Peace be with thee, poor old man!" returned the familiar; "may thy candor succor thee, and save thee from the ignominious death too oft decreed those entering within those fatal portals."

One of the sbires, upon whom the alchemist rested for support, gave a peculiarly attuned knock upon the door, which slowly and noiselessly turned upon its hinges, and suffered to escape through the passage-way a damp and noisome vapor, such as emerges from a sepulchral vault. By the flickering light of a blazing link, whose lurid glare brought forth in strong relief the sharp contours of the projecting pedestals, and of the massive, stunted columns, lining either side, the Inquisitorial servants, conducting



INTERIOR OF THE INQUISITION.

their unresisting burden, whose limbs, chilled by the morning air, and stiffened by the dampening atmosphere of the vault, almost refused their office, proceeded until they reached a corridor lined with cells. Into one of these slimy, straw-strewn, and pestilential dungeons they silently motioned the venerable Balthazar to rest himself, and depositing his weakened body upon the dirt-covered pavement, closed and bolted the heavy door, with a hollow sound reverberating in dismal echoes along the vault.

As the noise of the closing portal ceased, and the apothecary in some degree recovered his wandering senses, a dismal moan, followed by a most piteous wail, assured him that he was not alone in this prison-house. Convinced by the movements of the familiars that another victim was added to their undiminishing number, the tenants of the dungeons gave vent to a sympathetic demonstration of despair; and in this wail of hopeless affliction joined the shrill cries of the aged, the lamentations of females, the half-stifled curses of manhood, and the piercing shriek of infants.

"And still another, the tenth since nightfall!" gloomily muttered a robust voice from the depth of the cell, in which the apothecary had been deposited; "will the work of the fiends never cease?"

The alchemist listened to the tones of a well-known voice. It was that of a hardy artizan, whom he little expected to have excited the ire of the Holy Officers.

"Antonne," stammered forth the apothecary, "how camest thou here—what degree in heresy hast thou attained?"

"Worthy Balthazar," returned the artizan, "have they neither respected thy learning, nor thy philanthropy?"

"Nay, I am a poor old man, ready for the sacrifice; but tell me, why art *thou* here in this pestilential charnel-house?"

"I did find a strange book and offered it for sale," responded the artizan. "Not knowing the art of reading, I tendered it to a learned priest, who, in foul frenzy, proclaimed it heretical, and that night I was torn from the

arms of my newly-married bride, and cast into this den of living torture."

"Balthazar," inquired a feeble voice, whose deep-drawn accents betokened excess of bodily pain, "if thou art the skilful leech, come to me, I pray thee, and tell me whether I live or die?"

Guided by the feeble light of the morning sun, whose rays penetrated with difficulty through a petty orifice perforated through the massive masonry, Balthazar's heart sunk within him, as these sounds of woe struck upon his ear; and creeping slowly towards the apparent outline of a human form, crouched in a corner of the sombre chamber, cautiously threading his way among the recumbent bodies of its wretched inmates, the apothecary reached the enervated frame of him who besought his aid—a person he at once recognized as having formerly been a grandee of the kingdom. There, in the furthest corner of this pestilential den, lay the shattered relics of an obdurate noble, whose hand had swayed the destinies of the State.

"Do I, indeed, perceive, in this wretched body," stammered the astounded alchemist, "the once powerful Count Cavallos?"

"Truly dost thou," responded the prostrate man, his words interspersed with deep drawn moans, penetrating to the very hearts of those who listened to his speech. "It is the tortured body of the once loved Cavallos, surnamed the People's Friend. Tell me, Balthazar, learned sir," he continued, as each motion of his body wrung from him exclamations of pain, "are my limbs broken beyond recovery? Can I again tread the earth?"

The apothecary carefully passed his hand over the suffering limbs of the unfortunate nobleman, and endeavored, by dint of gentle examination, to ascertain the extent of the physical injury he had sustained. At the almost imperceptible contact of the old man's hand, the countenance of Cavallos contorted, as the sharp pain, originating from the dislocated joints, spread itself over his

entire body, and half suppressed moans announced the bitter anguish of his heart.

"I fear," quoth the alchemist, in tenderness, "that thy frame is irremediably destroyed, for thy joints have been ruthlessly torn from their sockets; and although unbroken, it will be impossible that their functions be resumed unless treated by some surgeon of noted skill, and in some place elsewhere than this prison."

"Curses upon them," harshly muttered the Count, as his heart died within him, upon learning the extent of his bodily grievances; "why not slaughter outright, and leave a death of glory to their victim, in lieu of this treacherous mutilation of life?"

"Thou hast undergone, simply, probationary examination?" inquired the apothecary, despairing to alleviate the poor man's sorrows.

"Charging me with unheard of heresies," returned the noble, "which I dreamed not of, neither in practice nor in theory, to which I responded in sincerity of ignorance, they did proclaim me contumacious, and with the savage tortures of the pitiless rack, did rend my feeble limbs in twain." Thus speaking, the voice of Cavallos failed, and his senseless body exhibited a temporary suspension of enervating pains.

"Thus, in the bosom of mystery," soliloquized the venerable sage, "before the devastating breath of ecclesiastical tyranny, perishes the greatness of our land—the crafty artizan and the noble statesman, either of whose skill might develop the energies of our race! Can this be the worship of our Creator, save in the folly of ignorant blindness, when man contemns the cardinal maxims of his destiny, and wallows in the blood of his slaughtered brother?"

While these reflections occupied the mind of the worthy Balthazar, he was startled to a consciousness of his real position by the sudden opening of the door of the cell, beyond which the lurid glare of torches exposed the persons of numerous attendants upon the Holy Office. These

men were clad in loose garments of common serge, their heads covered with capuchins, drawn close down to the breast, perforated with holes, through which gleamed sharp, glistening eyes.

"Balthazar the apothecary, God summons thee to trial!" exclaimed a sbire, his voice resounding with solemn harshness through the cavernous vaults.

As these words re-echoed along the corridor, proclaiming to the tenants of the wretched cells the egress of another victim to the chamber of torture, an unearthly moan, or rather a shriek of sympathetic desperation, greeted the fearful announcement.

"I am ready to appear before the tribunal of my God," responded the alchemist, emerging from the cell, after casting a glance of pity upon the mangled body of the still unconscious Cavallos.

Not many minutes elapsed ere Balthazar was introduced to the Judgment Hall of the Holy Office—that terrible tribunal, whence rarely emerged a living prisoner from the multitude entering beneath its inauspicious porch.

The room was large, with high ceilings and ponderous portals, lighted by narrow windows, glazed with stained glass. The entire apartment was hung with black velvet and cloth, presenting an appallingly sinister aspect to the auditor. A table, likewise covered with the same sombre material, fashioned in the shape of a horse-shoe, ran almost around the chamber. At this table were seated the counsellors and directors, the clerical and ecclesiastical judges and lay advisers of the Holy Tribunal. About the middle of the table, within a species of alcove, elevated upon some half dozen steps of black marble, arose a stately chair or throne, in which was seated Pedro Arbues, the Inquisitor-General. A canopy of black velvet overhung this judicial throne, and added a sullen dignity to its occupant. In front of the Inquisitorial throne was placed an open copy of the Evangelists, upon which rested an ivory crucifix, adorned with an image of our suffering Saviour. Near this stood the seat for the occupancy of the prisoner,



TRIAL OF BALTHAZAR BEFORE THE INQUISITION

a simple combination of rude pieces of wood, in the form of the Cross of St. Andrew, on either side, with a centre brace to preserve their equidistance. Upon the uppermost interstices of these crosses rested a roughly cleft piece of rugged oak, upon which the presumptive criminal seated himself at intervals, when unoccupied in examination. /

As the venerable Balthazar tottered with trembling steps, not originating from mental fear but from physical weakness, he meekly saluted his judges, and reassumed his allotted position upon the precarious resting-place we have described.

Vindictive and cruel as Pedro Arbues generally exhibited himself in the conduct of Inquisitorial proceedings, his heart smote him with a passing sensation of remorse, as he viewed before him the weak and trembling frame of the poor old man, now bowed nearly double by weight of sorrows and of years. Unto this man, more than once, had he been indebted for the alleviation of mortal pain, and for the extinction of morbid suffering; still the memory of these fleeting benefits, momentarily softening the intense rigor of the Inquisitor's composition, was absorbed in the calm contemplation of the crime Arbues intended to perpetrate through the agency of the venerable scholar. Upon the Inquisitorial throne was seated, neither Arbues the Dominican, nor Arbues the Inquisitor, but Arbues the murderer, who, resolved to obliterate in the blood of Balthazar the surest witness of his criminality, sought to conjure up some palliating excuse for the exercise of his life-destroying authority.

"Thy name?" demanded Pedro Arbues, assuming that inflexibility of temper by which he was characterized.

"Balthazar is the name by which I am known among men at this present time," answered the alchemist, coolly and collectedly, his keen eyes intently fixed upon his questioner—"still there was a time when, as Count of Vargas, I held a rank as grandee of Spain—"

"Didst thou possess that infidelic title now," interrupted the Inquisitor—"were it even divested of its ac-

cursed Moresco taint, it would be thine no longer; for, weighed by the balance of our justice, no man can surpass the equality of a common level. Thou art charged with necromantic practices, an unholy communion with the departed spirits of heretical philosophers."

"'Tis false, that accusation!" warmly ejaculated the apothecary. "I did seek knowledge, it is true; I did drink at learning's ever-living spring; I did while away the lonely moments of my existence in searching after the unseen wealth stored in the experience of the mighty dead; but with necromancy I have had naught to do, despising such irrational pretences."

"Thou art charged with the propagation of geomancy," continued Arbues, "teaching that the power of the mind can control the force of matter, and mould our destinies as we, infatuated wretches, desire—a most foul and blasphemous heresy."

"Monsignor," firmly responded Balthazar, his accents growing clearer, as if the inspiration of sudden gift of speech had fallen upon him, "I swear to thee, I have ever denied the wretched superstitions of astrologic and geomantic professors, as unworthy the dignity of our race, and blasphemous to the nature of the Supreme Creator. I have despised the weakness and credulity of erring man, and strove to inoculate our fellows with an admiration for the wondrous works of our Heavenly Father, with which we are perpetually surrounded. Is that heresy, my lord?"

"It hath that complexion," replied the Inquisitor; "still, if we understand thy proposition aright, it shall be adjudged, by our learned councillors, versed in Scriptural lore, and upon their determination will we base our final judgment. Thou art, moreover, charged with preaching disobedience to the mandates of the Church, and with propagating a belief that all men, even infidels, worshipping according to their despicable rites, can be saved from doom of punishment, both in this world and hereafter; a doctrine justly proscribed by our most sacred religion."

At the mention of this bold declaration of opinion—a virtual negation of the principles upon whose admission the Holy Inquisition based its temporal jurisdiction, as antecedent to spiritual judgment hereafter—a cold shudder pervaded the crowd of sombre councillors, as they turned their eyes, aghast, from the propounder of such terrible and heretical blasphemies. Still the old man, whose courage appeared to augment as accusations against him multiplied, moved not a muscle, save to smile grimly at this too practical exposition of his theologic faith.

"Monsignor," continued Balthazar, "I am not learned in canon law, neither in the precepts of the Holy Fathers of the Church, and therefore I crave indulgence if I have framed not my belief to suit the humors of thy saintly preceptors. I, in common with other wanderers, erected my temple beneath the spotless vault of Heaven, whose light descends in a benificent flood upon all mankind with equal effulgence. Standing beneath the same sky, upon the same ground, gifted with the same attributes, I and my neighbor are equals before the shrine at which we worship the Supreme Being, Creator of us both. And if, perchance, guided by the speculative experience of the past, we read, with dissimilar import, the sealed pages of the future, it ill becomes me to assume the sceptre in my hands, and to proclaim judgment against my fellow-man, for difference in opinion upon that in which we both profess ignorance. Did he sin in actual crime, did he wrong his neighbor by a physical torturing, righteously could the transgressor be punished; but in the indefinite world of the future,—the undiscovered realm of eternity, there is but one God, whose justice surpasseth all mortal comprehension. Such is the belief I entertain—the universal religion of our common race."

At this plain and undeniable avowal of deism, although greatly modified from the current form in which it had been promulgated by the sparse descendants of the Orientals, treasuring the cardinal maxims of a creed, whose practice inculcated the exercise of paternal love, as well as

created a bond of unity among the persecuted of all nations, the countenances of the Inquisitorial councillors grew pallid, as much from pent-up anger, as from a consciousness that similar and equally obnoxious sentiments were entertained by a large mass of intelligent citizens, whose semi-devotional meetings, maintained beneath a mysterious secrecy, were incapable of being suppressed by the utmost penalties of the Holy Office.

With excited gestures and violent murmurs the passions of the minor justiciaries exhibited themselves, while Pedro Arbues, internally congratulating himself that a palpable excuse was afforded for the execution of the offending prisoner, preserved a mild and dignified demeanor, as he resumed his discourse to the undaunted alchemist.

"My son, thou hast spoken words of irreconcilable heresy; thou hast avowed thyself an enemy to the Church in the blackest form, and most particularly hast thou advanced doctrines of innate blasphemy, against which the protecting arm of the Church, by us wielded, is especially to be directed. But, as these hallucinations of a diseased brain may be but the defiant promptings of the Evil Fiend, we will pass over them until the exorcism of some blessed confessor shall expel the demon from possession of thy soul, then will we listen to thy recantation of this foul heresy, and forgive thy blind transgressions."

"It is beyond the power of man to forgive my sins," calmly responded the apothecary, "and I ask no priest to intercede for me at the throne of that just God, before whom I am willing and ready to appear."

"Silence, my son!" continued the Inquisitor. "Listen to the further charge preferred against thee; for this Holy Office honors thy well-known probity, and would, by the salvation of thy perverted soul, secure the treasure of thy learning to the Holy Church."

Balthazar smiled faintly as the hypocritical words of Arbues attempted to cover a premeditated assault upon his life.

"My son," resumed the Inquisitor, pointing to the pages

of a vellum volume lying upon the desk of the Inquisitorial notary, whose duty it was to reduce to writing the examination of the accused, "art thou the author of that written folio?"

The alchemist tottered nervously to the desk of the functionary, and, turning over the parchment pages, perused, with tear-bedimmed eyes, a few paragraphs. Then convulsively clutching the volume, he pressed it to his breast, and exclaimed in anguish, "Wouldst thou rob me of my only treasure? How camest thou by this precious legacy to humanity, which I had hoped would live long after I was dead?"

"Didst thou compose that heretical volume, when thou wert a professor at Salamanca?" calmly reiterated Arbues.

"Of a verity did I," anxiously replied Balthazar. "Pedro Arbues, I ask no mercy for myself; tear my aged body into myriads of pieces, condemn me to the slowest torture, but destroy not my labor of years—my only legacy to my countrymen: a knowledge of eternal truths, sought after, not to enrich me, but to add to the glory of fallen Spain."

The sullen features of Arbues relaxed naught from their forced serenity; he apparently heeded not the fervent appeal of the venerable philosopher; then turning to a page, carefully turned down, and conspicuously marked with red lines around objectionable sections, the Inquisitor continued his accusations in a monotonous tone of voice:

"It is herein written, in treating upon that portion of thy perverse astronomy, by thee blasphemously entitled the Solar System, 'that the sun is the centre of the whole, and immovable, with a local motion?' Dost thou maintain such proposition to be true?"

"To the conclusion of its veracity," replied Balthazar, his energy and courage reviving as a reminiscence of his scientific labors flashed upon him, "have I arrived, not only from the experience of personal observations, but from the light of reflection and of reason."

"And furthermore it is written," continued Arbues, "in

thy false book, that the earth is not the centre of the world, nor immovable, but that it hath a daily motion."

"Revolving upon its axis, thereby creating the changes of light and darkness," replied the alchemist, describing with his hand the motion of the heavenly bodies,—“the earth completes its yearly circuit around the sun, that luminary in turn revolving in a fixed orbit around some mightier body undiscoverable to our mortal eyes, as though existing in a remote region of the sphere of infinite space."

"Enough, my son," authoritatively interposed the Inquisitor. "It hath pleased us to proceed kindly with you, and it has been decreed by our Holy Office, that such propositions as thou hast written down, with the intent of being taught to others, are absurd, false in philosophy, and absolutely heretical, as being expressly contrary to the Holy Scriptures, and erroneous in point of faith. Therefore we command thee, Balthazar, to depart from thy false doctrines, and to recant the same, which, if thou refusest to do, thou shalt suffer the tortures of the Holy Inquisition. And, moreover, to the end of suppressing the promulgation of error, we do ordain thy heretical volume to be publicly burned at the approaching auto-da-fe! This is our solemn judgment."

The venerable Balthazar sank exhausted upon the rude bench placed near him; he placed his hand before his eyes, and wept burning tears of heart-wrung anguish. Then, as if reanimated by a revelation of the future, he shook off his despondency, and prophetically soliloquized:

"Spain, my native land, empress of the world! Oppressed by the destroying burden of a fanatical Church, the sceptre of thy power will imperceptibly pass into the hands of another people, who will triumph over the earth and the waters, through encouragement of that freedom denied unto thee, and who will rejoice in the light of those eternal truths, for whose discovery the children of Hispania are doomed to ignominy and death. Farewell, my unhappy country! when other nations shall revel in the full

glory of enlightened Christianity, thou wilt linger beneath the blighting shade of ignorance and of persecution."

"Balthazar!" harshly demanded the Inquisitor, "art thou prepared to depart from thy false doctrines?"

"Wouldst thou have me die," inquired the apothecary, in settled calmness, "with a lie upon my lips, by the proclamation of that denied by the immutable laws of Nature?"

"Then, God be with thee!" solemnly announced the Inquisitor, arising from the judicial throne,—“depart in peace!"

Balthazar was too well versed in the enigmatical language of the Holy Office to construe these words into their literal signification; hence he tranquilly arose, and waited the issue of his condemnation.

Seized by two sbires, the old man was quickly dragged by a labyrinthic passage into the lower vault, beneath the square tower of the Inquisitorial prison, more familiarly known as the Chamber of Torture. Unresistingly he suffered himself to be divested of his superfluous clothing, and gazed unconcernedly upon the preparations which were being made for his torture. In the centre of the dark and humid chamber, stood the heavy iron-bound bed of terror, and at its foot was placed a large brazier, filled with living coals, fanned into an overpowering heat by a constant blast from a gigantic bellows, steadily worked by a hooded attendant.

These preliminaries, suggestive of the intense physical sufferings of the prisoner, in nowise intimidated the aged apothecary, who, now that he was forewarned of the fate of his great work, in which he had hoped to live in the memory of his grateful countrymen, long after his body had turned to kindred dust, rather courted than dreaded his approaching decease. He had already dwelt among men long enough to grow weary of the prolongation of his years; hence he desired not to live longer after the secret motive for his existence had been annihilated. With a short internal prayer, commending his soul to the mercies

of his Redeemer, he divested his mind from the consideration of earthly matters, and resigned himself to his impending fate.

Balthazar, awaiting the application of the torture he well knew to be inevitable, was not long detained in his ghastly prison hole, ere there entered Pedro Arbues, in the full garb of a Dominican friar, followed by a confessor, the Commissary of the Holy Office, and the Inquisitorial notary. The Inquisitor glanced at the preparations for the "question," advanced in front of the apothecary, and knelt humbly before him.

"My son," commenced the official, after crossing himself, in a mild and seductive tone of voice, "regard thy painful situation, and let me pray of thee to unite with me in my supplications to the blessed Virgin, that the demon, ruling thee in error and malevolence, be cast from thy frame, and that thy heart be purified."

Balthazar gazed upon the hypocrite with a look of supreme contempt, and replied to his request by a shake of the head.

Pedro Arbues continued upon his knees for some moments, his lips moving as if in inward prayer; then, arising to his feet, he lifted his hands heavenward, and uttered aloud :—

"Our Father, thy will be done!"

Instantaneously the muffled attendants seized the paralyzed apothecary, and bearing his venerable form to the wooden bed, cast him prostrate upon the timbers. With rapid dexterity they encircled his limbs with stout cordage, so as to render his body motionless, and, by means of braces and screws, compressed the bandages to such a degree that the blood of the living body stagnated.

These preliminaries being quickly arranged, the lighted brazier was placed within a short distance of the recumbent prisoner, so that the full glow of its torrid flame could strike upon his naked feet. Anxiously did Arbues watch the expression of the apothecary's features, as the rabid flame almost licked his exposed extremities—not a

contortion, not a moan, followed this application of most hideous torture; the countenance of the venerable sage remained calm and tranquil, as unmoved as that of a child in peaceful slumber. Astonished at the miraculous phenomenon, Pedro Arbues bent eagerly over the face of the aged Balthazar—the spirit of the alchemist had silently and solemnly departed.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE LOST FOUND.

HEART-SAD, and sore afflicted, the unresisting Jongleuse wept bitterly, as she was led along by the grim familiars of the Inquisition, after tearing her abruptly from the embrace of her protector, with whom she would have entwined her feeble arms, until the last flow of life-inspiring blood had become frozen by the pall of death. As her bedimmed vision perceived his form slowly disappearing from view, she uttered convulsive shrieks, and, gathering the full strength of her slender frame, wrestled vehemently to cast off the trammels imposed upon her free movements. Failing to deliver herself from these incumbrances, her spirits became depressed, and, with a sinking heart and debilitated frame, she hung heavily, for support, upon the arms of her guards.

"Why carry me hence?" sobbed the sorrow-stricken girl. "Oh, let me die here in the full light of Heaven, aye, even in this damp and polluted atmosphere, rather than within the dismal vaults of the Inquisition. Release me, if ye are men!"

"Maiden," responded the presumptive leader of the escort, "we but obey the mandates of our superiors; we are but poor soldiers, serving God."

"Soldiers!" indignantly ejaculated the Jongleuse, "are ye not ashamed to blast a term of honor with so foul an indignity? Soldiers, indeed! to tear a poor weak girl from the arms of an aged, tottering man, the only staff of his passing years; to stifle the only voice cheering him on his weary journey to the tomb."

"Nay, maiden," remonstrated the elder of the guard,

"thou speakest ill of a profession, honored by the Church, for whose glory we do live—"

"Live!—to make yourselves the tools of the bloody-minded Inquisitor, whose only aim appears to be the destruction of all our kind," continued the Jongleuse, her voice sinking into a low tone of bitter irony. "Fine warriors, forsooth! who battle against the poor and the weak, the mother and her babe, the orphan and the homeless."

The features of a harsh-visaged familiar grew more concerned, as these words of merited rebuke fell upon his ear, and he answered:

"We must pardon the ravings of fear."

"If ye fear not the vengeance of God," continued the songstress, her eyes, though partially bedewed with tears, glittering with a brightness of desperate enthusiasm, "have ye no dread of the hand of man? Think ye—for that I am a poor despised wanderer, dependent upon the charity of the world, that I have no friends? Dread ye not the bright sword of the Infanzon?"

"Or the subtle blade of the Garduna?"

Upon hearing these fearful words pronounced in deep, guttural tones, by the voice of some person whose form was shrouded in the darkness of the morning obscurity, the leader of the Inquisitorial group turned nervously to his companions, equally alarmed at the sepulchral accent of the threat.

"Comrades," interrupted the sergeant, "prepare your weapons, for we are watched. The sound came from some dog of the Garduna, who will follow in our footsteps with the pertinacity of a famished wolf. Seize upon the girl and hurry her forward, ere the hounds close upon us."

As the familiars of the Inquisition were closing around their charge, and arraying themselves to prevent any suddenness of attack, dark shadowy forms of men, clad in uncouth costumes, emerged from among the murky portals and narrow court-yards of the Triana, and thence hovered in total silence around the outskirts of the quickly moving

group. Their picturesque mantles and pointed head-dresses, faintly discernible in the grayish gloom, waved in the doubtful light of the early morn, as they floated hither and thither in tumultuous commotion, following the Inquisitorial band at a regulated distance, as it progressed on towards the Convent of the Carmelites.

At the sight of this turbulent crowd, whom the keen eye of the Jongleuse detected, as being composed of the members of the Garduna, the spirits of Zelda arose with the confidence of an approaching rescue ; for, well acquainted with the stringent adherence evinced by that fraternity towards the fulfilment of their protective obligations, she reasonably anticipated an attempt at her release. Helpless and friendless, torn ruthlessly from beneath the guardianship of the learned Balthazar, for the first time in her existence did she experience the bitter pangs of absolute loneliness, aggravated by an imagined consciousness of the dreadful doom awaiting her in the dungeons of the Inquisition. Plaintively within her heart did she pray Heaven for aid to shake off the trammels imposed upon her freedom ; and then again all hope died within her, as a sober after-reflection convinced her of the inutility of resistance, although more than once she was sorely tempted to raise the shrill cry of distress, which should summon to her assistance the full power of the Garduna. Again, as if overpowered by the force of conflicting sentiments, her frame sunk listlessly, until, with a spasmodic shudder, her limbs refused performance of their offices, and the trembling girl fell in total unconsciousness into the brawny arms of her conductors.

"Heaven be praised !" ejaculated the sergeant of the file, as they attained the huge, massive, and stoutly-bolted portals of the convent,—“I am not a carter to bear such troublesome burdens. Ring ye at the bell.”

Zelda half opened her eyes. Her glances fell upon the stern, heavy-capped walls, whose dark shadows were thrown upon the rough moss-grown pavement encircling them. A

gleam of joy, a re-birth of hope animated her body ; new life was infused through her veins ; her strength was again re-developed,—for she saw before her not the dreaded Palace of the Inquisition, but the venerable convent, from whose opened gates she had witnessed emerging the long and imposing procession of brides of the Church, her youthful fancy had assimilated to the angels of heaven. This discovery was a balm to her sorrows, and, with renewed energy, she regained her desponding vigor, and marched boldly to the portals of the institution.

"Courage !" muttered a deep voice ; and near unto her she detected the herculean figure of the Master of the Garduna, who, muffled in his mantle, had penetrated to the side of the suffering damsel,—“have a care, and maintain thy fortitude, for thou shalt not be deserted in thine hour of trial.”

"Arrest this man !" shouted the sergeant of the familiars, "who dares intermeddle with the commands of the Holy Office. Seize him, I say !"

Long before the mandate of the soldier could be carried into execution, the stalwart form of Mandamiento had vanished among the intervening shadows of the building, now faintly illuminated by the flickering light of the early dawn. With the dexterity peculiar to his tribe, the Gitano had passed away with a noiseless speed, similar to that accompanying his entry among the startled crew.

"Harm him not, I entreat thee !" beseeched the Jongleuse, turning to the leader of the Inquisitorial file ; "for it is dangerous to lay hands upon the potent guardian of the Gipsej race. Avoid his wrath, it is deadly."

"Fair maiden," rejoined the familiar, "I well know the power of Mandamiento. He has vanished as the breath of passing air."

The creaking hinges of the massive portals, opening upon the desolate court-yard of the Carmelite Convent, announced their entry within the precincts of that holy ground. Slowly and solemnly to her ear the brazen doors closed upon the sombre crowd, bearing in their midst the

trembling Zelda, within whose heart now perished all hope of release. As the ponderous bars joined together, with a harsh, grating sound, the sorrow-stricken maiden grew convinced that she had involuntarily deserted the world for a life of perpetual seclusion. Still, Zelda bewailed not in desolation her sudden captivity. What to her were the joys of the world she was thus compelled to sacrifice, when deprived of the long-accustomed companionship of the apothecary, now for ever lost to her? In the fullness of her despair she contemplated the seclusion of a conventual life as a welcome means to increase the oblivion of her former pastimes—a mental grave for the burial of cherished pleasures.

Within the court-yard, overgrown with wild flowers and straggling herbs, the external picture of the desolation ruling within the monastic pile, halted the group, as a young Dominican friar, clad in the robes of his Order, advanced to meet them. On his approach, the soldiers of Christ retired noiselessly, leaving the songstress alone in the centre of the dismal court-yard, the ante-chamber to a living sepulchre.

"Maiden," quoth the priest, drawing near unto Zelda, riveted to the spot from indecision of purpose, "thou hast chosen this home for thy afflictions?"

"Nay," responded the Jongleuse, bending her glance upon the friar in meek humility, as if to crave pardon for her contradiction of his apparent welcome, "I am brought hither against my own free will."

"But, damsel," continued Ximenes—for the Dominican was no other than the ally of Pedro Arbues—"thy entry was recommended by the Holy Office, that thou shouldst forget the lessons of heresy inculcated in thy youth."

"Heresy! worthy father," exclaimed the Jongleuse, "what meanest thou?"

"Simply, my daughter," answered the friar, "that thou hast been taught to revere false gods—hast been inoculated with a desire to fathom the invisible secrets of the future, and, beneath the tutelage of one condemned, hast

struggled to render Christ and his holy religion subservient to thy vulgar curiosity."

"One condemned!" ejaculated Zelda; "tell me, I pray thee, of the fate of him I loved and honored so well—of my guardian, Balthazar?"

"I know not, maiden," calmly responded the priest; "he was unworthy of thy guardianship; thou art blessed by adoption within our Church."

"Is my dear benefactor dead?" earnestly inquired the timid girl, discarding the weak affability ever distinguishing her actions. "Has he, too, been murdered by the awful Inquisition? Has he died as did my father Malchior?"

The Dominican gazed sadly upon the inquiring maiden; her beautiful features and supplicating eyes turned towards him with an expressive look, full of internal emotion. Favorably as had the Dominican been previously impressed with the gracious looks of the wandering minstrel; enraptured as he ever had been with the honest simplicity of her mien, and the glowing intelligence of her face, Ximenes experienced a feeling of rapturous adoration as he cast a furtive glance upon the sorrow-wreathed, yet radiant, expression of her anxious countenance. A monk, still undeadened to the last appeal of sympathy—a man unchilled at heart by intercourse with callous myrmidons of priestly power—the confessor, his natural kindness overpowering the forced austerity of his profession, inwardly sighed as he muttered an answer forth.

"He has not died; didst thou love him?"

"Love him?" repeated the maiden; "dost thou think me a figure of bronze, a mere creature of contempt, a form of black ingratitude, that I love not the poor helpless benefactor of my youthful hours? Yea, I worship him who hath bestowed life upon the unworthiest of your myrmidons—even upon the accursed children of the Inquisition."

"Zelda!" responded the Dominican, discarding the deep and repulsive harshness of accent with which he usually

cloaked his words, "I admire thee for thy gratefulness ; I honor thee for thy inherent affection ; I sorrow with thee for thy afflictions, and would save thee, were it in my power, for thy native modesty ; but, alas ! repentance is too late."

"Repentance?" inquired the Jongleuse, earnestly, "of what hast thou to repent?"

"Of many things," replied the confessor, "for I am not what I seem—like the apples of Gomorrah, fair to the eye, pernicious at the core. Maiden, pardon me, I beseech thee, for I have conspired against thy peace."

"Against me!" ejaculated the Jongleuse ; "what harm could a poor wandering mendicant, the unfortunate child of Gitanos, have done against one of thy estate? Why shouldst thou bear malice against so lowly a creature?"

"Zelda!" slowly spoke the Dominican, "I have wronged thee, not upon my own account. Thy beauty, thy gracious mien, hath inflamed, with an unholy passion, one, my superior, by whose mandates I have been governed. He hath coveted thy charms and would possess thee."

"And, holy father," slowly and sadly continued the Jongleuse, "thou hast discarded the golden maxim of thy profession, and would lend thy aid to rob the mendicant of the sole treasure she possesses. Oh ! father, wouldst thou scheme thus unmanly against thy own blood?"

"Were I but nerved by rectitude," responded Ximenes, "I could have faced the temptations of official honor, the allurements of priestly power, and freed my conscience from a burden which converts this mortal sphere into a living hell. Alas ! alas ! how deeply have I fallen!"

The austere features of the Dominican relaxed ; scalding tear-drops, the outpouring of internal anguish, trickled down his care-worn cheeks, as he turned his head aside, that the young girl should not perceive the depth of his mental bitterness. The heart of stone shed tears of blood.

"Tell me, father," continued the Jongleuse, her voice assuming a tone of mournful melody, ringing like a

barbed arrow through the very soul of the repentant friar,—"hast thou no sister dear to thee?"

"Oh ! once I had indeed ! but, like all other treasures of this world," responded the Dominican, sadly, "I forfeited her love, when I assumed the repulsive vows of an outrageous religion, deadening my soul to the appreciation of the noblest, kindest, and most tender sentiments of our nature. Still her spirit hovers o'er me in my dreams, and, guided by the light of her benign countenance, I struggle onwards towards redemption."

"By the love thou hast borne her," exclaimed the maiden, "I pray thee deliver me from this place. Couldst thou meet her in that sphere of everlasting happiness, were thy soul tainted by corruption of worldly sin?"

"It is past my power to deliver thee, poor girl," responded the Dominican, deeply moved by the appeal of the Jongleuse ; "thou art consigned hither by order of the Inquisitor-General—the dreaded Pedro Arbues, whose will is law, and must be obeyed."

"Pedro Arbues!" exclaimed the terrified girl, "then am I lost, indeed ! for the heart of that man is immovable to the cries of pity, or the supplications of mercy. Is there no hope, no way to escape?"

"Maiden, I fear there is none ; for the ecclesiastical authority is beyond the control of human institutions," answered the friar ; "and even an edict from the crown will not stay the execution of Inquisitorial judgments."

"But, stay," replied Zelda, her features lighted up at the gleam of a passing thought, "if thou wouldst befriend me, thou hast it within thy power. Oh ! say thou wilt not desert me."

"Maiden, thy torments shall be healed," answered the Dominican, "for thy tears of pity have melted my conscience. If thy escape be within my power, command my humble services, poor child, for it will be the primary sign of a sincere and permanent repentance."

"Then hasten, I beg of thee, to the King of the Revelers !" exclaimed the damsel, with evidence of the sincerest

gratitude,—“to the Captain Sanchez, and tell him, in the name of his betrothed, that she is imprisoned within these gloomy walls, a sacrifice to the vile machinations of Pedro Arbues. Bid him, moreover, hasten to the Infanzon of Estella, that he also may learn my peril. For the love of God, charge him good speed; let not the grass grow beneath his horse's feet; and upon thee, oh, holy father! may the prayers of an orphan child invoke a blessing from the Creator.”

“Willingly I accept thy bidding; still I fear that the arising of thy friends will be useless,” responded the friar, “for few will brave the terrors of the Church—excommunication by book and bell—before whose dread ban the bravest of the brave have quailed in blank despair.”

“Oh! speak not thus—dispel not the cherished anticipations of liberty,” imploringly exclaimed the damsel, wringing her hands in anguish. “They will not suffer the child of Malchior to pine away in the solitude of this dreary prison.”

“Courage, then, my child!” resumed the Dominican; “put thy trust in God, and out of thy trials wilt thou come forth unscathed from the flames. Now enter within the ante-chamber, that thou shalt be duly received by the Abbess, and thence I will go forth to do thy bidding. Thus I vow unto thee.”

The Dominican conducted the Jongleuse, still weeping at the reminiscence of her sudden transition from a joyous, happy state, to the occupancy of a dark and melancholy abode, shut off from the communion of those she was wont to converse with in her daily wanderings, into a spacious chamber, opening upon the court-yard. The heavily constructed ceiling and walls were painted black, while around the room were arranged stout oaken benches, well worn by the resting of many visitors, who here were accustomed to wait, in silence, the summons of the female warder to conduct them to the open grating, constructed within the heavy door placed at the end of the chamber, whose only ornament was a huge white crucifix, with its

image of a suffering Saviour strongly depicted upon the wall opposite the entrance.

At the voice of Ximenes, behind the bars appeared the black capuchin, and blanched visage of the portress, who turned the massive key and opened the ponderous door, whose formidable leaves closed the egress to the world against those unfortunates, who had been deluded within the conventual halls. Advancing to the centre of the apartment, the prematurely aged and withered female made an ecclesiastical obeisance to the Dominican and his companion.

“Welcome, father, to our humble abode,” said the warder. “Desireth this daughter admission within our blessed home?”

“Sister, she doth,” answered the friar, “and is she welcome unto admission?”

“She is,” returned the portress, “for we have expected her coming.”

With this response the attendant seized the hand of the involuntary novice, and conducted her in silence to the interior of the Convent, closing carefully behind her the huge portals, debarring a return to the external world. Zelda hesitated as she passed the rubicon—the fatal passage into a gloomy scene of perpetual solitude; then, turning her face towards the grating, she paused for a moment and saluted the Dominican with a parting smile of intelligence, her beaming countenance illuminated with a soft and gentle inspiration of radiant hope.

Penetrating along the corridor of the convent, Zelda followed her conductress with a nervous, hesitating step, as the damp and unhealthy atmosphere of the closed building fell heavily upon her tender limbs, accustomed as they were to the warm rays of the morning sun, and the unfettered breezes of the balmy clime. With downcast eyes the Jongleuse passed along until she reached a narrow, confined cell, into which the light of day was admitted through a small square aperture in the outer wall. The aged conductress pointed to the entrance:

“This, sister, is thy temporary chamber; rest here until

there will come to thee our blessed mother, the Abbess, who is now engaged in her morning devotions."

With these words the porteress motioned to a small oaken couch, the sole household commodity within the precincts of the chamber, which served not only as a place of rest at night, but likewise a sitting-place by day, and, closing the door in silence, walked tremulously along the corridor, whence her receding footsteps died away into the sombre obscurity of death-like sounds.

The Jongleuse waited many hours in perturbation and despair; the minutes dragged their slow length along in painful monotony, and the wings of time hung heavily in their flight, as the expectant damsel watched each passing moment to greet the coming of the superior, into whose charge had been committed the safety of her person.

Painful indeed were the reflections of the unhappy girl, who grew more depressed in soul and spirit, as the hours wore along without bringing an alleviation of her sorrows and misgivings. As the brightness of the day gradually illuminated the little chamber in which she sat in deep meditation, reminiscences of the blooming hours of her childhood, of the gay scenes of her early womanhood, flew past her in her day-dream, calling forth a strong and spontaneous ebullition of despondency.

Truly was she a bird of nature encaged within the trammels of relentless captors. The rays of the bright sun no longer greeted her to a revelry and a pastime on the green sward, nor a ramble among the vine-clad hills of Andalusia; here, in obscurity, in silent penury of mind, must she perish, surely, and by degrees, while the robust trees, the tender vines, and flowering herbs, companions of her free solitude, grew in the luxuriance of untrammelled nature.

At length, as these vivid recollections crowded upon her brain, until wearied by the rapidity of their transactions, and exhausted by the intensity of her reflections, her disconsolate mind imperceptibly sought relief in a deep, profound slumber.

The sleep of the Jongleuse was heavy—so heavy, in-

deed, that she remained undisturbed, as the noise created by the entrance of the Abbess of the Carmelites, who, remembering the mandates of the soldier, delivered on behalf of the imperious Inquisitor, had determined to visit the novice, and to attempt the administration of consolation to her upon her sudden deprivation of liberty.

Ignorant of matters transpiring without the walls of her ecclesiastical prison, the Abbess, upon the communication of Arbues' wishes, merely conceived that the treacherous friar, although temporarily disappointed in obtaining mastery over the goldsmith's heiress, had finally found means to compass his infamous machinations against Inez's peace and honor, with a sorrowing heart, prepared to obey the harrowing mandates she dared not contemn, with that deadly rancor their iniquitous conception deserved. Agatha, care-worn and heart-sore, momentarily dispelling the misanthropic delusions obtruding on her better nature, and shaking off the morbid sentiment of jealous revenge, actuating her to assistance in the degradation of fellow-victims to a fallen condition, similar to her own, now entertained a sovereign contempt for the endurance of life. As each successive novice had been added to her flock, and made to serve the licentious pleasures of her pitiless master, her insatiable thirst for companionship in dissolute misery had become gradually eradicated; and now, that the wildness of a revengeful fury had been extinguished, her heart, saddened at the spectacle of compulsory degradation, in which she had been a comparatively unwilling participant, grew sickened at the augmentation of unbridled license. Her conscience smote her as she viewed the hopeless agony of those forlorn wretches, and experienced a remorseful pang at reiterated complaints of ruined virtue. More than once, tempted to rebellion, the Abbess resolved to repudiate the authority of the monkish dictator; still a consciousness of her individual inability to resist the Inquisition, whose tortures constantly menaced its slaves, forced her to hesitate in putting forth her efforts at emancipation.

In desperate frenzy, she even contemplated self-destruction, as the sole means of escape from the blighting thralldom in which she was enchained ; yet, again, she dreaded to appear before her Maker, with all her manifold transgressions, with the further stain of blood upon her penitent soul. In her present forced compliance with the will of Arbues, Agatha hesitated long ere she entered upon her co-operation in blasphemous villainy, and it was only when she was convinced that resistance would be unavailing, that she resolved to mollify the mental anguish of the unfortunate maiden, whom she, with a show of justice, considered to be inevitably doomed to a career of compulsory debauchery.

Zelda was still sleeping when the Abbess entered the cell ; her form lay extended in graceful ease, while heavy drops of perspiration stood upon her marble brow, as tumultuous thoughts, tempering her vivid dream, oppressed her wearied brain.

The Abbess was startled at not beholding the person of the anticipated Inez, but in her stead, that of the fair Jongleuse. As she gazed upon Zelda's beautiful and expressive features, a sudden panic seized upon Agatha, to whom the voice of Nature prompted a startling revelation. During the lapse of many minutes she cautiously examined the countenance of the sleeper, and internally reasoned upon the possibility of a suggestion, emanating from revived maternal solicitude.

"This," she slowly soliloquized, "is indeed my child, my poor dear, long lost child, her whom I have mourned in the darkest hours of my solitude. Again do I behold her, but in the meshes of the devouring lion. Sadness, ever lowering sadness—is this the sole companion of my never varying lot?"

In an ecstasy of passion, the Abbess threw herself upon the form of her sleeping child, and pressed her to her bosom with the full warmth of maternal affection.

This movement on the part of the Abbess awoke the sleeping Zelda from her sound slumber. The maiden started, and listlessly opened her eyelids ; her glances fell upon the half-

prostrate form of the weeping Abbess, and she nervously moved from her couch, at witnessing the strange spectacle of mercy, where she expected naught save dishonor.

"Silence, my child !" entreated the Abbess, again pressing the Jongleuse to her palpitating breast—"speak not ; let me devour thee with mine eyes. Oh, Blanca ! my child, my child ! canst thou venerate thy unfortunate mother, a mother who deserted thee unwillingly, and who has found thee by chance ? We meet, but it is to part, my Blanca."

"Mother ?" exclaimed the Jongleuse, incredulously, rubbing her eyes, as if bewildered by the continuance of her day-dream,—“art thou indeed, my mother, my long lost, my long sought-after mother?"

"Truly, Zelda, I am," replied the Abbess. "I am, forsooth, thy poor, miserable, depraved parent ! But thou must assuredly leave this abode of lust and lawlessness ; it is no place for virtue such as thine. Leave me, Blanca, for we must part, even at this early hour of meeting."

"Leave thee, mother ?" exclaimed the Jongleuse, "no, never !"

"Nay, to tarry here is death," ejaculated the Abbess. "One last embrace, and then for some way to free thee, my child ; and when once more at liberty thou wilt soon learn to forget thy miserable mother."

Thus speaking, the Abbess seized Zelda firmly by the arm, and dragged her by sheer force to the door of the apartment. At the entrance of the cell she suddenly was stopped in her exit by the figure of a strong, stout man, habited in the dark garments of the Inquisition.

"Estrada ! thou here ?" she tremblingly uttered, as she knelt at his feet ; "truly hast thou sold our child into eternal bondage."

With a rapid movement Estrada disengaged himself from the supplicatory embrace of the Abbess, and, with violence, hurled her upon the marble pavement of the corridor. Then spurning the prostrate body, by a blow of his foot, the Soldier turned abruptly, and closed the cell door ere the timid captive could recover perfect consciousness.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE HAWK SPREADS HIS WINGS.

SHORTLY after their noontide meal, a group of persons were assembled, engaged in conversation upon the exposed parapet of the Castle of the Sorcerers. Prominent among the company stood the fine and manly form of the Infanzon, in his suit of Mantuan velvet, leaning listlessly by the side of the fair Sevillian maiden, to whom he was describing the varied spectacles contained within the rugged landscape, which lay stretched out at the foot of the petty castle, a wide-spread panorama of mountainous scenery. The fair Inez, recovered from the troubles of her journey, relieved from the terrible anxieties consequent upon her attempted seduction into the power of Pedro Arbues, enlightened by the companionship of the matronly chatelaine, and caressed, as had been her usual wont, by the affectionate smile of her parent, now bloomed in the radiant glory of youthful beauty.

As the finger of Don Alphonso pointed out each successive spot, upon which his eyes rested, in the fervent expression of re-awakened memory, the countenance of the maiden grew illuminated with traces of evident curiosity, and she turned the warm glance of her full black eyes upon the narrator of scenes, to her of more than ordinary interest. The presence of the Infanzon, whom she had dreaded hitherto to encounter in social converse, bore with it a strange infatuation; for, Midas-like, each subject touched upon, in his soft, melodious discourse, assumed a golden aspect, throwing forth the brighter shades of animated life.

His speech modulated as the complexion of his reminiscences varied from the common-place memory of humble incidents, to a vivid and exciting description of stern

realities—the theatre of hazardous encounters, of struggles against accidents, of the fierce onslaught of men in arms, fell upon a listening ear, willing to drink in the charms of such rare adventures. Indeed, this animated conversation had, almost imperceptibly, grown to her a necessity of existence; and, far from shunning pleasing converse with her gallant admirer, she clung to him with the strong devotion of the dainty tendril of the vine to the rugged trunk of a mountain oak.

Without his companionship, the heart of Inez grew sad and weary; a melancholic blank filled the hours of her seclusion, and she then experienced the painful monotony of her solitude, as a new and apparently unaccountable passion seized upon her soul, craving satisfaction for an inward want it was beyond her control to repress.

“Wouldst thou desert these fair fields?” inquired the Infanzon, casting a look of earnest solicitude to his fair companion,—“this bright blue sky, these rolling meadows, and running rills? Yea, wouldst thou not do thyself a grievous wrong to immure thyself within gloomy walls, when the wide free world is stretched before thee, gladly inviting thee to partake of that liberty, so thankfully enjoyed by the birds of the air?”

This allusion to her former inclination to a convent life, awoke the maiden to a tender consciousness of her altered position. The strong contrast between the acute and exciting delineations of the Infanzon’s chequered career, and the dull, detestable revelations of the chatelaine, had impressed upon the sensitive mind of Inez a decided aversion to the gloomy monotony of a professedly religious life. Hence, within the lapse of a few days, moulded by the agreeable associations encircling her, the pure spirit of the goldsmith’s heiress reverted to its primitive simplicity, as the treacherous teachings of the Dominican confessor disappeared before the practical example of the so-styled sorcerers. Inez, at present, viewed the constitution of social existence in a light entirely novel, from the opaque

mirror, the creation of speculative theology, in which her reflections had heretofore been presented for her realization. She comprehended the full extent of the duties imposed upon her and every other human being, by the prime fact of her existence, and, in lieu of esteeming her personal isolation from the mass of her fellow-creatures to be an act of Christian devotion, from the bottom of her heart she denounced monastic seclusion, the entombment of intellect, feelings and energies, as being the hypocritical abomination of selfish men, who, traitors to humanity, sin in the name of religion, and perpetuate sensual immorality beneath the guise of sanctity.

"Aye, would I, indeed!" responded the Sevillian maiden, shuddering as the passing thought of her evasion from her father's household obscured the serenity of her meditations, "for I view nature more truthfully than was my wont, thanks to the gracious courtesy of the worthy chatelaine, who has instructed my inquiring soul in the only sure and praiseworthy path to celestial happiness. I have learned from her lips the religion of pure worship, inculcating veneration for our Heavenly Father, by an appreciative employment of the bounties bestowed upon us.

The naturally bright eye of the Infanzon became as brilliant as the diamond; he turned, nervously, to the fair speaker, and bent upon her a glance of earnest speculation, as if to doubt the evidence of his senses, or to question the correctness of his hearing.

"Truly, lovely maiden," he uttered, somewhat tremulously, "if such are the veritable words of thy heart, the wanderings of the Infanzon are at an end. Willingly will I resign the high repute of arms, the nobility of fame, the pride of chivalry, now that I have found a resting-place, a post of delicate honor, whereon I can repose the laurels won by my adventurous sword. Farewell, then, if I interpret aright the phrases of thy confiding heart, to the pomp and vanities of insatiable ambition, to the empty glories and

distinctions for which men contend; within the inner world of thy sympathetic spirit I will lead an existence of ever increasing joy."

"Why, noble sir," resumed the maiden, a blush of pride suffusing her countenance, upon hearing this fervent declaration of her suitor, "though we unite our destinies by a common bond, should the objects of laudable ambition be sacrificed—the cherished remnants of a career, in worthy emulation with thy race? Why not preserve the leaves of glory, ere they fall, withering, to the ground?"

"To the tread of the Wanderer rest is unknown," firmly responded the Infanzon, "and at each step of his progress, in ascending towards the ever-vanishing summit of his aspirations, the spirit of misanthropy, generated within him from stress of circumstances, breathes distrust and suspicion upon the hollow products of his toil. Change of scene alters not the complexion of the internal man, while the wings of time deposit upon his care-worn brow evidences of nature's transmutations. In the heart alone the homeless find an abiding-place, a sanctuary against the inroads of care."

"Willingly, Don Alphonso, do I accept thee," answered the fair Inez, "as a spouse; not for thy reputed wealth, neither for the meretricious ornaments of knighthood, nor for the dazzling splendor of thy name—trifles, captivating the phantasies of low-born dames, seeking to enshroud themselves in the borrowed raiment of their mates. As Manuel the Wanderer, the man, the soldier, the philanthropist, thou hast wooed and won my virgin heart, impregnable to the vaunted praises of the Infanzon of Estella, a paragon of popular admiration. Within my young bosom let the Wanderer enshrine his devotion."

"So be it, lovely Inez," answered Alphonso; "here, then, terminates the life-pilgrimage of Manuel. Within thy heart the Wanderer enters upon another life; with the rest of mankind he has past into oblivion—the haven

of his tempestuous voyage has been reached—now will he rest in peace!"

The Infanzon advanced close unto the fragile form of the maiden, upon whose dimpled cheeks hung the animation of modest satisfaction; passing his stalwart arm around her slender waist, he carefully brushed aside the massive ringlets, encroaching upon her forehead, and implanted an inoffensive kiss upon her brow. It was the sincere expression of an inspiring love, the ratification of the mutual contract, proclaiming the indissoluble union of hearts cemented by sympathetic harmony.

The Infanzon directed his steps towards the group assembled upon the moss-covered parapet, leading the blushing maiden to the very foot of the stone bench, whereupon was seated Miguel the goldsmith, and upon either side, the venerable seneschal and noble chatelaine. With a ceremonious obeisance he knelt at the feet of the artizan, and motioned Inez to imitate his humble posture, as he bowed his head meekly in token of reverence.

"Behold at thy feet the Lord and Lady of Estella," he spoke in full-toned accents, "who beseech the benediction of a common parent."

"Arise, my children," murmured forth the goldsmith, tears of joy suffusing his eyes at thus finally beholding the palpable realization of his most ambitious prospects, "the cup of happiness for Miguel is filled to repletion; he hath seen the brilliant vision of his days of toil crowned by the blessing of time; the ignoble name of the artizan hath merged into the honored title of the bravest knight of Castille. The joy of this moment hath obliterated the years of secluded labor through which he has passed."

"Speak not thus, dearest father," interposed Inez, with an air of kind remonstrance, "for I honor and esteem thy cunning art, and never can I lose memory of thy charitable acts—a test of more than imperial dignity."

"True, I was but a man of handicraft," returned Miguel, "although honored by the confidence of my sovereign, and

the greatness of my rise is equally illustrious to my humble calling. From my heart I bless thee."

"Assuredly has thy judgment erred," said the Infanzon, gently raising his supplicating bride to her feet, "for I wooed thy daughter by gentle acts of kindness, such as man performs for the welfare of his fellows. Unto those who have elucidated the weakness of her errors, and consummated the moral triumph I, in obscurity, commenced, let the maiden return benedictions."

"From the innermost depths of a repentant heart, do I," answered Inez, bending gracefully to the chatelaine and teneschal, "and bless the hour that heaven brought me their benignant influence."

"Nay, maiden," interrupted the venerable seneschal, "thank us not, for we did but discharge a tithe of our duty to our suffering race. The wisdom of the truly wise exhibits itself, not in empty words, but in deeds of striking moment; thus, if the example of a few returning sheep hath induced others to return to the fold, let us be thankful, and praise our Creator for the mercy of an enlightened reason."

The chatelaine was mute, while the deep tones of the aged seneschal sank impressively upon the minds of his auditors. Scarcely had he finished speaking, ere the keen eye of the Infanzon, who had silently turned his glance over the verdant plains he had previously described to his fair companion, detected a dense cloud of dust gathering upon the causeway leading to the portals of the castle. He shrewdly scanned its approaching velocity, and, drawing the seneschal to his side, whispered unto him:

"There is news from Seville! Behold how vigorously speeds that wearied steed to our door,—with what fearful concern his rider forces him onward, as the rowels plunge deeply in his lacerated flanks."

"My lord, I do observe a rider reckless of his safety," answered the seneschal, protecting his eyes by placing his hand upon his brow to shield them from the strong rays of the noonday sun. "This way he wends his path."

"Then, let's to the barrier gate!" exclaimed the Infanzon. "Bid the warder sound the alarm; lower the portcullis and the bridge, that free ingress be given to this messenger, be his tidings of weal or of woe!"

Within the lapse of a few minutes the authoritative mandates of the Infanzon were obeyed, and the little garrison of the tower, augmented by the well-equipped retinue of the Lord of Estella, were duly marshalled in the inner court, adequately to receive the swift-riding cavalier, who now appeared urging his beast with superhuman exertion along the steep acclivity leading to the castle gate.

Suddenly the horseman, clothed in the uniform of the guards, coated with dust and mire, emerged beneath the entrance portals, his clothes saturated with clotted foam, his wan countenance almost irrecoznizable, from perspiration and the fatigues of a forced journey. His trembling steed, an Arragonean charger, foot-sore, lame, and reeking with sweat, quivered beneath him, deadly oppressed with extreme fatigue, as its daring rider, by a concentration of muscular power, leaped, actively, from the tottering beast, and landed, securely, upon the paved court.

"What news, Captain Sanchez?" hastily inquired the Infanzon, as the King of the Revelers descended to the earth. "Why ridest thou with such unearthly haste?"

"Balthazar and his ward—" ejaculated Sanchez, as soon as he could obtain breath for the delivery of the sentence, "are seized by the minions of the Inquisition."

"How camest thou by these tidings?" inquired Alphonso, aghast at the revelation. "How knowest thou the truth?"

"Both from the Master of the Garduna," responded Sanchez, "and also from a Dominican confessor, who came to me in the name of my betrothed, and charged me to ride, night and day, and bid thee rescue her from the Convent of the Carmelites, where now she lies incarcerated."

"And the learned alchemist?" inquired the Infanzon.

"He lingers within the dungeons of the Inquisition," sorrowfully returned the Reveler.

"Then do I greatly fear he is for ever lost!" ejaculated the Knight of Estella.

"In sadness think I likewise," rejoined the Captain of the Guard, as, completely exhausted by the length and hardship of his rapid journey, his physical frame, no longer supported by the enthusiasm of his errand, refused aid to his wearied limbs, and he fell fainting at their feet.

"Bear our worthy guest hence," said the Infanzon, "and let him be attended by the care of your gracious mistress, to be revived and cared for."

Then turning sharply to his retainers, who eagerly gathered around him, the Lord of Estella issued his commands in a loud tone of voice: "To horse, all of ye! Choose your fastest steeds and trustiest weapons, for it will be no child's play to beard the tiger of the Inquisition. And thou, my worthy seneschal, if thy ancient war-blood boils within thy veins, follow me upon the road to vengeance."

"I have still a sword to serve God and my benefactor," warmly responded the old man, whose activity betrayed a revival of youthful alertness, when summoned to a participation in the martial scenes of his manhood.

"Pedro Arbues," muttered the Infanzon to himself, in irascible meditation, "thou hast enjoyed the full career of unimpeded criminality; still, it is not reserved for me to wreak vengeance upon thy unworthy head. I am but a man, and thou hast insulted the majesty of thy Creator. False priest, false judge, and false friend, the catalogue of thy enormities defies human scrutiny!"

The clear, shrill notes of a hunting-bugle, suspended from the baldric of the seneschal, sounded the signal to horse, and with hearts of tempered steel, the faithful retainers of the noble cavalier sprang into their saddles, as the favored man-at-arms unfurled to the embrace of the mountain breeze the flowing pennon, emblazoned with the Wild Hawk of their much-beloved chief. The Infanzon

tarried but a moment in imitating their example—dashed the rowels into his high-mettled steed, and emerged through the narrow draw-bridge at the head of his well-tried band.

As the knight passed beneath the parapet, whereon were congregated the little group, composed of those few persons identified with his future destiny, a 'kerchief, emblazoned with the fanciful device of the goldsmith's heiress, alighted upon his saddle-bow. With an enthusiastic motion he pressed the embroidered memento to his breast, and turned his ardent glance to catch a passing glimpse of its considerate donor. Even in the indistinctness of the distance, the Infanzon conceived that he perceived a smile to illuminate the features of his betrothed—an omen prognosticating certainty of success.

While the knightly cortege of the Infanzon was rapidly approaching the city of Seville, the Inquisitor-General paced his private cabinet in nervous agitation, a prey to the most terrible and conflicting sentiments. The result of his machinations against the peace and welfare of the unhappy Balthazar and his orphan ward recurred to his mind in dreadful accuracy, although somewhat exaggerated by the reports brought unto him, by his Inquisitorial myrmidons, tending rather to increase his alarm than to soothe the agony pervading his breast. Although gratified at the decease of the alchemist, as removing a prominent witness against him, should he succeed in the consummation of his contemplated crime against the person of the Infanzon, the rumored presence of the Master of the Garduna at the period of the incarceration of Zelda, and the well-known implacability of Mandamiento's character, awakened a strong feeling of suspicion as to his own personal security. Beyond this, the evident connection of his satellite Estrada with the fortunes of the Jongleuse, and above all, the defiant and repentant attitude of the Dominican friar, suggested some bitter themes for cogitation. Pedro Arbues freely tasted vexatious anticipations, resulting from his

precipitate rashness. Accustomed to the trade of slaughter, he had neglected to discriminate between the persons of his victims, and in the summary annihilation of the apothecary's family circle, he grew conscious of having awakened a spirit of vengeance in the breasts of undying enemies. This one case foreboded unto him a fearful retribution for the many outrages perpetrated during his long career of unrestrained cruelty.

How to extricate himself from the manifold difficulties encircling him, the features of which presented themselves with a terrible denunciation of his virulent faith, was beyond the comprehension of the Inquisitor. Deceived, betrayed, and deserted, he was left alone to battle against the tempest his prophetic vision portrayed as forthcoming in devastating might. A temporary courage, a spasmodic effort of the depraved moral sense, urged him to the adoption of the only resolution known to his decrepit mind, a line of policy which could alone ensure death to all of those, mistrusted by his credulous disposition. At once he resolved upon procuring the immediate destruction of the repentant Ximenes, the Soldier Estrada, and the Abbess of the Carmelites. The taste of blood hanging upon his palate, aught other means of salvation were rejected by the Inquisitorial fiend, whose only thought for safety consisted in the utter annihilation of all who threatened his miserable existence. His thirst was for blood, and it grew proportionately as danger threatened him.

Pedro Arbues was seated in his private cabinet, when the Dominican friar entered in haste and unannounced. His countenance was pale; he trembled, and his tongue clove apparently to the roof of his mouth.

"Monsignor," he exclaimed, "I have fearful tidings to narrate. The Infanzon of Estella has entered our city at the head of a chosen band of cavaliers, the flower of Arragones chivalry. At the barriers he has been joined by the rabble-multitude of the Garduna, whose noted chief has harangued the townsmen to unite in a common onslaught

upon the palace of your Reverence. Such is the fearful news I bear, as becomes my duty."

"What demands this enemy of Christ?" nervously inquired the Inquisitor, his features plainly exhibiting the concern the presence of the unwelcome noble caused him. "Why intermeddles he in the affairs of the Holy Office?"

"Already has he ridden to the palace of the Imperial Justiciary," continued the Dominican, "and there demanded audience, that a due complaint shall be entered before the Chamber of Justice, that cause be shown wherefore the person of Zelda, the songstress, is detained from the custody of her legal guardian, while a violent rabble of infuriated Gitanos, the very dregs of the Triana, clamor for vengeance upon the murderer of Balthazar, at the very portals of thy palace."

"These things portend disasters to our Holy Institution," remarked Pedro Arbues, with a glance upon Ximenes, expressive of his suspicions as to the disinterested course of the friar's conduct, "and we must meet the emergency with courage and determination. Where is our comrade, the Soldier Estrada?"

"Monsignor," answered the Dominican, "he is besieged within the Convent of the Carmelites, and dares not venture his valuable person without its doors, fearing the descending dagger of the revengeful Gardunan rabble."

Upon the receipt of this intelligence the visage of Pedro Arbues became overcast, as he grew convinced that his presence without the Inquisitorial Palace would jeopardize his life. Still he dissembled his concern, and continued:

"We must meet this hateful Infanzon and conciliate the rage of the populace, ere the brewing storm break upon our Holy Office. Visit him thyself, Ximenes, and if he declare his desire to treat upon the subject, bid him, in our name, a welcome to our palace, that we may fraternally arrange the mooted point as befits Christians and children of the Church."

"But if he doth refuse, unless accompanied by his men at arms?"

"Bid him come in the name of peace," answered the Inquisitor, "and in such a way as befits his estate. We are defenceless, should we attempt force against this excited rabble; moreover, we are in ill odor with the Imperial Court, and must ward off the threatening danger, by a judicious employment of diplomacy, worthy our rivals of the Society of Jesus."

The Dominican bowed acquiescence, and departed upon his mission with most grateful feelings, and in strict accordance with the duty he had imposed upon himself for the sake of liberating the unhappy songstress, whose bitter fate and down-trodden condition impressed him with a most strenuous and revengeful antipathy against Pedro Arbues, whom he justly regarded as a prime cause for his involvement in moral ruin. To do justice to the penetration of Father Ximenes, it must be admitted that he was fully aware of the dangers attending the straightforward and repentant course he had assumed, for he well knew, that, even in the event of the prostration of the tyrannies of the master he so subserviently obeyed, popular indignation would descend, although in a mitigated degree, upon him as an instrument in the execution of his obnoxious mandates; therefore the friar honorably determined to brave the wrath of the populace, in preference to an open betrayal of his dreaded superior. At the same time a policy of wisdom dictated to him the propriety of a conciliatory arrangement between the antagonistic parties: pity for the forlorn hopes of the songstress prompted him to bear her message to the King of the Revelers; dread of the commission of deadly sin instigated his repudiation of personal participation in the assassination of the Infanzon, and now an indescribable sympathy for Pedro Arbues, a species of affinity engendered by constant association with a man, once honored with his most fanatical veneration, induced his hearty acceptance of the quality of a mediator between the proud noble and the unscrupulous Inquisitor.

As Father Ximenes progressed along the streets to the Palace of the Justiciary, he observed that his attire at-

tracted the attention of numerous knots of town's-people, congregated in animated groups along the thoroughfares, as they discovered the startling rumors, flying from one end of the city to the other, in connection with the Inquisitorial outrage.

At the first glance he could detect the deep-seated animosity burning within the common breast, not only against the Inquisitor-General, but every one connected with the Holy Office. Long ere he reached the scene of his destination, and discovered the ample square crowded to repletion, by a mass of insignificant citizens and gossiping crones, he overheard sufficient of their conversation to indicate the revolutionary sentiment pervading all classes of the excited population. Never before had he noted the palpable disrespect evinced towards his ecclesiastical state as upon this occasion, and it was only through the good graces of some Gitanos, evidently instructed by the Master of the Garduna, that he was enabled to work his pathway to the portals of the Legal Palace. In agony, Ximenes shed tears of bitterness at the degradation of his sacred profession.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE DELIVERANCE OF THE DOVE.

MANDAMIENTO was hastily informed of the outrage perpetrated upon the person of the venerable apothecary, whose skill he had more than once invoked to stanch the blood flowing from his wounds, as, in midnight rambles or in solitary foray, he chanced to encounter the keen steel of many a tough-hearted yeoman, inflexible to the inordinate demands of the robber chieftain. The Master of the Garduna reflected seriously upon the line of conduct he should adopt, to effect, if possible, the release of the old man from the clutches of the Inquisitor, but at all events to compass the delivery of the fair Jongleuse—who might have been familiarly styled the child of the Garduna, so affectionately was she regarded by the members of that mysterious confraternity—who, in her person, united a warm reverence for her superior attainments and natural beauty, with a deep-seated gratitude for the protection afforded the society by Malchior, her reputed father, when possessed of wealth and of influence. Aided by his two lieutenants, whose quickness of thought in nowise resembled the activity of their persons, the Master opened a council of war, wherein those devisers performed a perfectly ornamental part, approving or disapproving each and every measure momentarily flitting through the brain of their commander; thus dependent had they grown upon the sovereignty of their leader, that the expression of an inclination scarce shook the sluggish mire curdling around their obtuse souls. In like manner, ever is iniquity identified with the sovereignty of one, be it person or an idea; for the tyranny of absolutism, social or moral, cannot brook the reflective suggestions of a multiplicity, as regards humanity.

Regarding the fate of Balthazar as beyond any amelioration at his hands, Mandamiento sullenly brooded over the treacherous conduct of the Inquisitor-General, in having discarded all memory of previous services rendered by the outlaw company, in his behalf, upon occasions when the power of the Holy Office for injury succumbed to the covert intrigues of the Garduna. Convinced by his personal observation that the songstress had been involuntarily arrested and incarcerated within the Convent of the Carmelites, he resolved at all hazards to attempt her delivery from that gloomy domain. The numerical force of the Garduna, the reckless disposition of the members, were all sufficient for the accomplishment of such a design; still, a lingering tinge of that superstition, often overpowering the courage of an uneducated, although desperate man—a subtle form of religious fanaticism—deterred him from an open commission of the crime of sacrilege. The Master in nowise dreaded the punishment inflicted by the State upon violators of the public peace, neither feared he the terrors of the Holy Office; still he was awed into submissive reverence for the retreat of the so-called brides of Christ, by the simple presence of a golden cross, emblem of a religious worship he at heart neither experienced nor comprehended. In his eyes the cross presented a magic influence of safeguard, not from any impulse of inward sentiment, but simply on account of the habitual reverence paid by people of his class, to the outward expression of immaterial sanctity. Torment of this world he feared not; contempt for death had particularly marked his entire career, the horrors of the life of punishment to come, he treated as the idle reveries of monastic maniacs: still, notwithstanding this admitted recklessness of disposition on things temporal and spiritual, the robber chief was deterred from the fulfillment of the mission of humanity he contemplated, by the mere apparition of the symbol of a faith, to him incomprehensible.

While cogitating upon some means to circumvent this impediment to the accomplishment of his design, Manda-

miento casually encountered the priest Ximenes and the Captain Sanchez of the Archer Guard, the latter of whom was arranging for his immediate departure in search of the Infanzon of Estella. Assured of the whereabouts of his betrothed, Sanchez hesitated not a moment to depart upon his errand, to the end that the effectual aid of that potent noble, as well as his advice and direction would be employed in the dismemberment of this entangled affair, which undeniably surpassed his ordinary comprehension. Beneath the protection of one so well known to reputation and credit, the Master of the Garduna entertained no fears as to the result of their combined intelligence; for, the superior sagacity of the noble, his admitted probity and chivalric honor, would not fail to guide them in a path of rectitude, unimpeachable to the cause of religion and of humanity.

Actuated by this motive, the chief of the confraternity issued mandates for the general arising of his clan, and their congregating at the barriers of the city-gates, the place of ordinary recreation and festivity with the commoner population of the Triana. Under plea of a dancing entertainment in the suburbs, his messengers were instructed to cause the assemblage of the affiliated, masculine, feminine, and infantile, in such a mode of disguise as to elude all suspicions and distrust from the ecclesiastical police, who, in the name of the Holy Office, had assumed guardianship over the public morality of Seville. Straightway the shrill whistle, vocal token of alarm, resounded through the more densely populated streets; mysterious symbols, executed in chalk, appeared upon the wall-sides and sign-boards; rough hewn emblems, appertaining to the craft, were hawked about in public places, so that the eyes of the initiated could be attracted to the sign, without disclosing its secret significance to those beyond the pale. Within an hour after the first summons, a dense crowd of the Gitana population assembled around the barriers in the full paraphernalia of holiday costume.

Mandamiento surveyed his motley crowd of retainers with inward satisfaction, as, habited in the picturesque costume of holiday attire, they crowded around the cabarets and hostelryes, encircling the public square at the termination of the orange avenue of the regal route to Madrid. The information requisite to enlighten them with respect to the cause of their sudden convention, was speedily diffused throughout the dense mass of loungers, who, even upon this exciting occasion, appeared unable to divest themselves of that habitual laziness, which particularly characterized the vagrant race from which the brotherhood drew their newer and more prominent recruits. While the masculine portion of the assembly either lolled in weary supineness upon the tavern benches, or basked in the full glow of the afternoon sun, as stretched upon the green sward they quaffed the deleterious, bile-creating wine of the country, light-footed serenatas, paragons of Gipsy beauty, provoked their male companions to participation in the pleasures of the fascinating dance. Suddenly inspired by the bright eyes and fair forms of the enchantresses, enraptured by the joyous notes of the gittern, a bevy of half dormant idlers threw off their apparent indolence, and dashed off into a wild joviality of action and grace, gradually augmenting in intensity, until, from sheer exhaustion, they were compelled to throw themselves, for rest, upon the nearest tufts of dust-covered grass. Again did these excited revelers slowly relapse into sensual indifference and dreaming-like repose, so that their warm blood should be cooled by the soft breezy atmosphere which played through the sweet-scented orange groves.

Several hours had, in this wise, elapsed, when a dense cloud of dust, rising from the avenue of the royal route, and the ringing clang of swift-driven steeds, attracted the attention of the Gardunas. In an instant the noise of revelry, the sounds of music, ceased, as the anxious inquirers deserted their pastimes and resting-places to catch a glimpse of the near approaching cortege, and with a wild shout of welcome, ringing with the two-fold enthusi-

asm of gladness and of gratitude, they greeted the apparition of the knightly band, in whose midst streamed an azure pennon, emblazoned with the silver hawk. As the company halted, a crowd of delighted Gitanos pressed around their smoking steeds, respectfully offering their assistance to the jaded cavaliers. Quick as thought, bright-eyed serenatas, with that seductive complacency of grace, ever remarkable among the women of the East, tendered the weary horsemen bowls of Xerean wine, while officious boys, striplings of a rugged race, seized upon the bridle-reins to assist the worthy men-at-arms in their descent to the earth.

Then stepped forth Mandamiento and addressed the noble leader of the gallant troop in the sincere words of an honest greeting, as he held the stirrup for the Knight of Estella:

"Noble Infanzon," said he, frankly and warmly, "we hail thy coming as that of an angel; a sore affront has been placed upon the Garduna; a gross indignity has been perpetrated upon a poor child,—one we all love for the good done us by her father."

"One, too," replied the Infanzon, as, upon descending, he grasped the horn-like hand of Mandamiento, and pressed it heartily, "whom I love, honor and esteem—for whom I am in duty bound to peril life and limb. Humble as the maiden may appear in thy eyes, in mine she seemeth a treasure of surpassing worth. In addition to such considerations, worthy master, am I not a brother of the Garduna; and can I be false to my plighted faith, especially when the master exerted his arm to save me from the clutches of the Inquisitor?"

The Infanzon smiled as he called to the mind of Mandamiento his midnight interview with the soldier Estrada, at the gate of the goldsmith's mansion.

"Nay, at that time, noble sir," returned the master, "we were unaware of thy dignity; we knew thee solely as an honest soldier, a friend to our lost patron, Malchior."

"And, in this instance," warmly ejaculated the Infan-

zon, "shall we not re-unite as brothers for the performance of a more noble duty—the deliverance of his daughter, the light of his soul?"

"Be it so," returned Mandamiento, "for thy coming has infused new courage through my blood; not that I lacked heart to venture on the task, for I have a right good will and sturdy arm, when the groan of the orphan invokes my aid; still there lacks me a mental power, a sort of judgment, whereby, in religious matters, I can discriminate my work."

"I do admit thy honesty," resumed the Infanzon; "there is a course for all things the reflective mind can suggest. I apprehend that thou wouldst sack the wretched convent walls, throw open the hideous prison doors, and, unto liberty and new life, restore those wretched maidens, whose only sin is their love of God."

"Aye, would I, forsooth," slowly responded the master, "and my dinted dagger would cleave its path to the heart of any man so reckless as to deny the justice of our work."

"True, Mandamiento," returned Alphonzo; "still, there are ways left unto us to compass our just ends, which savor not of the barbarity of the sword, which would necessarily tinge our actions with the contaminating stain of sacrilege, and leave exposed unto the recrimination of our race the reputation of the merciful enterprise humanity summons us to undertake."

"I am a man of crime," sadly answered the master, "lost to the world, save in physical being; my name is branded with the enormities of vice, and my heart is callous to the stings of conscience, for I am a wanderer upon the face of the earth—homeless, motherless, wifeless, a thing for men to jeer at. There is but one refuge left me, and that one is behind the dark uncertainties of the future—a refuge, not of this earth, but of eternity; and why, therefore, should I jeopardize that last refuge by some deed of sinful moment?"

"Truly, my Master," replied the Infanzon, "thou hast repute for many deeds of ill, when well I know that the tender mercies of thy heart forbid their consummation. Let now thy career of violent empire cease, and in repentance efface the memory of crimes, which outlast the world's pilgrimage; for where thou hast sinned, it hath been through force of unscrupulous misery, and not from a perverted moral sense. But of this, anon. Now to our task of humanity; by a master-stroke of decision, we must liberate our charge from the ruthless fangs of Pedro Arbues, whose touch is moral leprosy."

"Aye, curses on his craven soul!" warmly responded the Garduna; "would that we could meet in the agonizing struggle for life, then would the sweetest moment of revenge arrive, and I would stifle, in his dying moans, all reminiscences of the numerous ills he hath bestowed upon us. His hour will come, for there is a God above us whose will must, some day or other, mete out judgment to the destroyer of his kind."

"Leave him to his destiny, for his fate is as sure as the rising of the morrow's sun," responded the Infanzon, with a movement of impatience. "While the cavaliers, attending me by grace of kindness, await the refreshment of our way-worn beasts, we will on to the palace of the Imperial Justiciary, and there demand justice in the name of his majesty, our Sovereign; but, in the meanwhile, spread a guard around the Convent of the Carmelites, lest the accursed soldiers of the Inquisition attempt to transfer their involuntary prisoner to some more secure nest of infamy, and above all, lest the arch tyrant of the fiends attain a secret ingress ere the ears of justice be forewarned. Charge thyself with these preliminaries, while I converse with our seneschal."

"In faith will I—nay, thus have I done in anticipation already," replied the Master. "We have fastened the blood-seeking soldier, Estrada, securely within the convent, and I warrant the old vampire will not emerge from

his retreat while the sigh of the Garduna is still arising to mourn the floweret he has torn from us."

The robber-chieftain stalked haughtily towards the cabaret, near which had retired the prominent leaders of his gang ; for, honored by the personal recognition of the noble Infanzon, and internally convinced of the rectitude of the task wherein he was now engaged, his spirit of self-reliance swelled within him until he assumed the station of a giant among the pigmies of his tribe. Mandaminto was no longer a mere robber-king; he esteemed himself a doughty esquire to a knight of chivalry.

Immediately upon the departure of the Master, Don Alphonso called unto him the venerable seneschal, whose war-worn, sun-burnt countenance exhibited symptoms of a vivid anxiety, which he attempted to disguise by a constrained dissimulation. When he had approached near to his leader, the Infanzon addressed him in a low tone :

"It is now the trying season of thy destiny, my dearly beloved companion ; upon thy discretion depends not only the reward of filial affection, but the doom of a traitor."

"Certainly," answered the aged warrior, "I have confidence in the mandates of a just God, who speaks unto us mortals, through the medium of our hearts, and touches the sacred vein, inspiring a rugged frame with the strong glow of superhuman enthusiasm. His divine will has been communicated to me in the shadowy language of a dream, such as floated before the eyes of Joseph on the eve of his flight from the massacre ; and in compliance, have I, armed again as a warrior, re-entered the city, a stranger in the land of my habitation. I am here again at the bidding of the Lord, the fragment of a passing generation, solitary, alone, and sore afflicted, with but one object of endearment, and she a captive, whose chains shall drop at the feet of a supplicating exile."

"Therefore tarry thou with the chosen of our band," resumed the Infanzon ; "as fall the shades of night, lead them with the rabble of the Garduna to the gates of the

convent, and there await the coming of the Imperial Justiciary, whose kindly office I will solicit to aid us in our holy mission to liberate the dove from her ill-omened cot."

The seneschal bowed in meekness of spirit ; the consolatory words of the Knight of Estella entered his soul as a balm, calming the emotions of his breast ; modestly he withdrew to the main body of the armed retinue, while the Infanzon, attended by two youthful cavaliers, mounted his steed and slowly progressed on his way towards the palace of Justice, followed by a scattering crowd attracted by curiosity, not as much by the novelty of the spectacle as to learn the ultimate result of the commotion which by this time pervaded the streets of Seville.

As the Infanzon rode along the streets and thoroughfares, his champing steed, to a marvellous degree recovered from the distress of his forced journey by the attentive care of his rider, pacing in instinctive majesty—as if, conscious of the worth of the burden imposed upon him, he could not avoid noticing the unaccustomed interest his presence inspired among the loitering citizens. As he passed each successive group of burghers, discarding the duties of afternoon labor, the eyes of all were bent upon him ; men praised his gallant bearing, and compared his unostentatious pride to the gracious mien of the Cid, who in the days of yore had liberated his native land from Visigothic thralldom ; women, with sympathetic smiles, admired his stalwart form and martial demeanor, and envied the proud and happy destiny of the fair maiden upon whom had been bestowed the unbought affections of so chivalric and renowned a cavalier ; while lisping urchins, scarce emerged from swaddling clothes, ejaculated snatches of songs, wherein the virtues of the gallant knight formed the theme of the poet's popular verses.

By these tokens, the Infanzon to a surety discovered that the plaudits of the population evinced something more than a passing admiration of his individual person, and that, in fact, he had been identified by the citizens as the ex-

ponent of a cause, enlisting popular favor. Certain it was that the good people of Seville, for years reduced to anguish and sorrow by the constant exactions of the Holy Office, whose compulsory sacrifices of the harmless fold encircling its gloomy palace had heretofore rendered desolate the hearth-side of both the opulent and the poor, sought to avail themselves of the existing opportunity to wreak a long-harbored revenge upon the tyrants of the Inquisition. It was not the Infanzon solely they admired and honored; in his person was embodied the bitter opposition to the occult tribunal, enjoyed by each humble citizen in his individual sphere, but whose exhibition of feeling had been curbed by an innate sense of apprehension. The Infanzon was the hero of the hour, the Inquisition the cause of his heroism; the man and the motive became moulded into a common object for approbation.

Profiting by the revolutionary spirit of the citizens, who only awaited a leader and an outbreak, to develop the irresistible bitterness of their vengeance, the Knight of Estella graciously acknowledged the compliments of the excited multitude, and in sullen silence reigned his steed before the Palace of High Justice.

Spurning the formalities ordinarily imposed upon suitors for justice, the Infanzon entered within the marble portals of the palace, and demanded an interview with the Imperial Justiciary, who, sorely perplexed at the receipt of tidings respecting the unwonted insubordination of the Sevillian populace, welcomed the arrival of the Infanzon as a happy means of determining the unfortunate occurrences, which, in his opinion, threatened an annihilation of the public peace. Consequently, assuming his station upon his curile seat—a species of throne of judgment preserved from the usage of Roman jurisprudence—he prepared to give audience to the famous knight, in himself the exponent of popular will, and of Imperial favor.

“I have come,” modestly said the Infanzon, doffing his plumed casquette to the legal functionary, “to pray of thine

Excellence, liberty for one of our sovereign lord's subjects, one incarcerated against her will, within the gloomy confines of the Carmelite Convent. In the name of the unfortunate prisoner, I invoke thy earnest attention to her wrongs, and crave thy influence to free her from injustice.”

“And by what right, honorable cavalier,” responded the Justiciary, arranging his flowing robe, to give additional dignity to his mantled figure, “would you invoke our intercession, overstepping the discretion of our powers, and intruding upon the offices of ecclesiastical dignitaries? The law of God, is it not superior to that of man?”

“Justice is of God, thine Excellence, and any edict of the Church which interprets the mercy of the Divinity otherwise, is no rule for guidance,” returned the cavalier. “I am Don Alphonso, Infanzon of Estella, the acknowledged guardian of Zelda, surnamed the Jongleuse, and in her behalf I claim Imperial protection against the wicked wiles of the Inquisitor-General, Pedro Arbues, who, after the false accusation of heresy, hath consigned her to a doom of misery.”

“Noble Infanzon,” answered the Justiciary, his brow deepening as he spoke, “this is a most serious charge against Monsignor, the Inquisitor, and I should have time to consider it.”

“Time! time! procrastinate and it will be too late!” urged the Infanzon, his melodious voice assuming a tone of supernatural vigor; “yes, too late to restore her to that sacred purity of person, in which this morning sun hath found her—too late to repair the ravages a fiendish arm may inflict upon a weak, unprotected maiden. Already the shades of night threaten to fall upon her devoted head; already the pent up vengeance of a maltreated populace, alarmed for their own safety by this daring outrage upon human right, dreading that their wives and daughters may be taken from them, has broken forth in wild clamors for justice. Gaze abroad, your Excellence, and note the uneasiness brooding among the people, and meditate that thou, who governest in the name of our royal master,

can curb this glowing ire before it breaks forth into a wild tornado of popular fury, sweeping before it the very foundations of our civil power. Too late, indeed ! why tarriest thou now ?”

“What proof have I that the maiden be taken against her will ?” inquired the Justiciary.

“The honor and the word of an Infanzon,” replied the knight ; “wouldst thou have more ?”

“Nay, that would suffice,” responded the Justiciary, his look of bewilderment giving ample evidence of his concern at this summary endorsement of the complaint ; “still, were the justice of my decision questioned, what guarantee have I of legal proof ?”

“This,” answered the Infanzon, throwing his embroidered glove upon the pavement before the chair of justice, “this, the ancient guerdon of my knighthood and rank. Tell all who dare accuse the Infanzon of Estella of false testimony, that here is his gage of battle ; let it be placed in the market-place, in the plaza, thronged by the busy crowd, and if there be any among the Inquisitorial horde, one kind friend of Pedro Arbues, who dares assail its purity, I will meet him in honest combat. Thus, thine Excellence, as is my feudal right, I do proclaim the truth of my testimony, and will verify the accusation I have preferred, at the throne of my sovereign lord and master. Breathes there a man to uplift my gage of battle ?”

The Infanzon paused, and cast his eyes around upon the assembly, which, by impulse of curiosity, had pressed their way into the Chamber of Justice.

“None, none,” resumed Don Alphonso. “Then do I claim the deliverance of my ward !”

“Thus saith the law, and I am its minister,” replied the Imperial Justiciary, turning eagerly to the right and the left as if to discover some person willing to accept the Infanzon’s judicial challenge ; “then must I decree the maiden’s deliverance.”

The order of the Justiciary was entered upon the records

of his tribunal ; the obsequious Greffier transcribed the *process verbal*, and attached to it a huge mass of wax, impressed with the arms of the Imperial Court, while the chief of the alguazils, marshalling his deputies in solemn rank, prepared to execute the judicial mandate, thus pronounced in form.

It was at this moment that the Dominican Ximenes, emerging with difficulty through the excited auditory, thronging not only the Council-chamber, but all the avenues leading to the central apartment, presented himself before the Infanzon.

“I address the Knight of Estella, do I not ?” inquired the friar, gazing intently upon the cavalier, as if to be assured of his accuracy of suspicion.

“I am he, worthy father,” replied Alphonso ; “if thou hast aught with me, speak, for I cannot long tarry here. If thou desirest alms or friendly countenance, come on the morrow.”

“I am bidden,” resumed Ximenes, with evident hesitation, “to appear here upon a mission of peace, to invite thee to an audience with my superior, Monsignor Pedro Arbues.”

“Pedro Arbues !” ejaculated the Infanzon, staring vacantly into the face of the Dominican, as if incredulous as to the proper interpretation of his words. “What wants he of me ?”

“He hath heard that thou hast charged him with the foul abduction of thy ward,” meekly observed the Dominican, “and in a private conference desires to disabuse thy mind of such sinister impressions, and now awaits thy coming in amity and peace.”

The Infanzon hesitated a moment, during which he paced the gallery of the palace, moodily :

“And will he guarantee my safe return, unharmed ? for he may not be aware, that were one hair of the Infanzon’s head harmed, the massive walls of his murder-stained palace would be rent asunder by the irresistible thunder of popular will, despite the charms of thy fanatical preaching.”

"He hath pledged his priestly word no harm shall attend thee," responded the friar.

"It is well; and in that faith I will accompany thee, for never shall it be said that the Infanzon feared to meet an enemy, be his retreat where it may, and"—continued Don Alphonso, "art not thou the Dominican Confessor, whom I encountered at the gate of the goldsmith's mansion, upon the evening of the attempted abduction of his daughter, the pride of his soul?"

"The very same," returned the Dominican, "and right sincerely do I repent of my participation in that most iniquitous scheme; it was the first step of crime—"

"Wert thou likewise," interrupted the Infanzon, "the priest who didst convey tidings of the maiden's unjust detention, to her betrothed, the Captain Sanchez?"

"I did," returned the Dominican, "as a sign of my sincere contrition."

"Then let us to the palace of the Inquisitor, and listen to the outpourings of his traitorous words," quoth the Knight of Estella, who turned to one of his equeries and whispered a few words to regulate the conduct of his company, and then precipitately departed with the ecclesiastical guardian to wait upon the Inquisitor-General.

Penials of the household, particularly of that of Justice, are remarkably slow-motoned; and it was after a long and tedious pause, that the functionary, charged with the execution of the decree, announced in the name of his Majesty Charles V., and surrounded by his group of alguazils, armed with batons of office, deemed it his duty to progress, with measured steps, towards the scene of the maiden's illegal incarceration.

Arrived before the Convent of the Carmelites, the Greffier found the main streets and thoroughfares of the Triana crowded with a dense mass of human beings, who swayed hither and thither like the waves of the ocean, encircling every available entrance to the sacred edifice. In the midst of Gardunans, Gitanos, burgesses, and cavaliers, he advanced to the stout portals of the convent, and taking a rod from the hands of an attendant, knocked heavily upon

the door, while a more venturesome Gitano seized the pendant rope of the turret bell, and rang forth a strenuous alarm. The iron-grated wicket, cut into the massive portal, turned on its hinges, and exposed the calm and modest visage of an elderly Dominican friar, who crossed himself, respectfully, and spoke to the official.

"My son, why troublest thou the solemn rest of this abode of heavenly love?"

"I am come in the name of the sovereign lord, our King," pompously replied the Imperial Greffier, "to demand the body of a maiden, called the Jongleuse."

"What wouldst thou of her?" sullenly inquired the priest, with affected humility.

"We demand her release from confinement," answered the Greffier, "upon the oath of the illustrious Infanzon of Estella, and decreed by the Imperial Justiciary."

"Knowest thou not, my son," remarked the friar, "this abode belongeth not to a king of the earth, but to One on high; why, therefore, should we obey two masters?"

"In the name of his most Catholic Majesty," firmly responded the Greffier, who, fired by the pride of office, was willing to cultivate favor with the excited multitude, now pressing about him, "I demand the gates to be opened!"

"To the honor and glory of the Blessed Mary of Carmel, they have been closed against all, save the accepted of our Lord," responded the Dominican, assuming a firm and dignified authority against the Imperial Officer; "therefore I pray of thee and thy sacrilegious attendants to go hence, and no longer disturb the pious meditations of the blessed handmaids of Mary."

The wicket closed as the Dominican finished his speech, and the Greffier and his attendants turned to leave unperformed the task allotted to him, while the assembled multitude, in a paroxysm of rage, gave vent to an unearthly yell.

"Stay, most learned sir," said an interlocutor, stepping up to the Greffier, who was about to retire from the scene, "wilt thou call upon the populace to sustain thee in thy

legal rights, as representative of our beloved master, the King; for we Sevillians are not mere tools, to be wheedled into subjection by the soft words of a ductile priest."

The Imperial functionary gazed upon the multitude, who applauded the proposition of the stranger with a warm outburst of enthusiasm.

"Of a verity do I," at length responded the Greffier, honored by his public approval.

"Open to the Minister of Justice, in the name of the King!" shouted, in stentorian voice, the tall, stalwart stranger, whose gray hairs and modest attire caused him to be recognized as the Seneschal of the Sorcerers, as with a mighty blow, a heavy battle-axe, plied with the dexterity of a veteran cavalier, descended upon the formidable door, with a resounding clang, as every timber quivered beneath the herculean stroke.

The stranger paused; the wicket opened; behind the grating appeared the pale and affrighted countenance of Francisco Estrada.

"Citizens, know ye not the peril of your souls?" said the trembling Soldier of Christ.

"Francisco Estrada, we know naught save the authority of our King," rejoined the stranger, unawed by the Inquisitorial apparition; "open unto us in his name!"

"Never, while the warm blood flows in our veins!" responded the Soldier.

The wicket closed; the undaunted assailant renewed his vigorous onslaught, as stroke after stroke of his massive axe tore the gate into splintering fragments; finally wielding one powerful blow, he forced the portals open wide, and regardless of the scattered band of Inquisitorial myrmidons, dashed through the entrance made by his own right arm. In a second the Gardunan rabble, headed by their doughty chief, followed his intrepid example, as the tottering doors fell to the earth. The hearty cheers of the populace greeted this profanement of holy ground by the polluted feet of daring mortals, as the triumph of legal sovereignty; and, following the tread of the Imperial Com-

missioner, the people soon filled the ample court-yard with their rude presence. The timorous band of Inquisitorial familiars, with their craven chief, retreated abruptly before the determined crowd; and, finding resistance insufficient, fled into the interior of the convent. Then the solemn chorus of a holy air, coming from the chapel of the edifice, diffused sweet notes above the noise of struggle and of turmoil; the tones affected the devotional spirit of the mass; slowly one after the other they knelt, and silently listened to the softening accents of the evening hymn.

CHAPTER XX.

RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD.

IGNORANT of the events transpiring at the Convent of the Carmelites, and completely isolated from communication with his fellow-conspirator by the infuriated crowd, who encircled the Inquisitorial Palace, venting curses and imprecations upon all attached to the Holy Office, the Inquisitor-General endeavored to compose himself to a state of quietude, so that his internal agitation might be imperceptible to the Infanzon, whose natural shrewdness and rapidity of discernment failed not to be a source of annoyance to his expectant opponent. Pedro Arbues attempted, by the concentration of his mental energies, to master the involuntary action of his feelings, so plainly visible upon his ever-changing countenance, contracting or expanding in nervous commotion, as the shadows flitting before his reflective sense assumed traces of approaching fear, or of delusive hope. The Inquisitor was fully convinced of the severity of the test his moral courage must undergo in the presence of his implacable enemy ; he dreaded the coming crisis, upon which turned the key-point of his destiny, and therefore resolved that, beneath the fraudulent mask of subservient dissimulation, he would venture upon the last and most desperate stroke of murderous policy. The Infanzon of Estella ! these very words, whose utterance entranced the hearts of honest Andalusians with a strange admixture of grateful wonderment, deluged the frame of Arbues with a flood of irresistible terror. Could he, even in penitence and self-sacrifice, exist while this potent noble swayed the inclinations of the revengeful crowd, surrounding him ? Was he aware of the day, and the hour, at which the tempest of popular fury might not be evoked to

crumble his aspirations into the lowest dust of degradation ? For a moment might he succeed in subduing the fearful turmoil, incessantly boiling around him ; but as each successive flask of oil appeased the troubled waters, beneath their placid surface was fomented a more powerful and disastrous commotion. To live in this bitter state of unrest, to drag out an existence of ruinous misery, in a condition of shattered frame and of disorganized intellect ; to breathe ever in timorous dread of the apparition of the avengers of the thousands indirectly slaughtered to maintain his questionable authority, could this life be little better than death ? Thus reflected Pedro Arbues, determined steadfastly to carry out his final resolve to rid himself of those who held the threatening sword above his head.

Calming his perturbed feelings, as well as he was able, the Inquisitor-General arranged the apartment and placed his few chairs, hewn of rugged oak, around the iron table, upon which was placed his writing materials. Opening a cupboard of inlaid cedar-wood, he took thence three massive goblets of solid silver, delicately chased with the arms of the Holy Office, and a golden ewer of rare Moresco fabric, disposing them carefully upon the table. Into the ewer he carefully poured a skin of delicate wine, cautiously preventing the sediment of the sack from tainting the richly flavored liquid. This performed, he paced the apartment nervously, ever and anon turning his eyes to the ill-contrived horologue, whose cumbrous weights and metal pendulum swung in monotonous cadence within a capacious niche at the lower end of the chamber.

Suddenly, the Inquisitorial functionary halted in his walk, and drew from his bosom a crystal phial, filled with a dense rose-colored vaporous liquid ; then, cautiously removing its golden sealed stopper, he slowly suffered to fall, drop by drop, a portion of its contents into two of the goblets placed opposite to his own. Replacing the phial within the folds of his doublet, he rubbed his hands in unconcealed enjoyment, the sharp outlines of his repulsive features distorted by a smile of sardonic merriment.

"Here's to thee, most courtly knight of chivalry," he said to himself, as he paced the room with rapid strides, pausing between his words to give vent to an intonation of ironical raillery; "and to thee, most conscientious friar; herein wilt thou taste the waters of life distilled by the venerable Balthazar, and learn the mysteries of that undiscovered world where thy malice and cowardice shall return upon thy perjured soul. Taste, my friends, of death—not the death of the soldier, nor of the priest, neither in glory nor in peace, but the death of the forsaken vagrant, of the roadside beggar, despised, shunned and loathed by living creatures. And when the clotted blood curdles in your putrid, ulcerated bodies, ye will pray the mercy of Pedro Arbues; still his mercy will not descend upon the rotten carcasses of those who would conspire to wrest from him an earthly dominion, won by the sacrifice of both his conscience and his soul! Then will prayers fall unheeded upon callous ears; yes, noble Infanzon, even the seraphic beauty of thy bride, turning in disgust from the soft flesh of her gallant betrothed, as festering blotches exhale a putrid atmosphere to her dainty breath, will fail to stay the decomposition of thy poisoned flesh, but, shuddering, leave thy bones to rot in some obscure and filthy grave. And as for thee, thou craven cur of a Dominican, cursed by thy Order; cast like a leper upon the highways of the town, thou shalt drag thy traitorous limbs along in pain and anguish, and, on thy rotten marrow-bones beseech a cup of water to cool thy unextinguishable thirst, from each pitying mendicant, who will spurn thee as if thou wert a dog, to pollute his presence with thy plague-bearing frame. Such fates, gallant foeman, hath the revenge of Pedro Arbues secured for thy villainies!"

The Inquisitor-General burst forth in a wild, maniacal exultation, and stalked the room with violent evidence of unconcealed enjoyment. A grim and ghastly smile seized upon his countenance, and hovered around his palpitating lips, in the fixed glare of contemptuous revenge; gradually it settled down, as the intensity of his passion grew within

him until a fixed expression of his face became the exponent of deadly hatred.

The precautionary arrangement of the Inquisitor had not been completed many minutes, before the heavy tread of a domestic announced the approach of his expected visitor.

"Monsignor," said the attendant, opening the door, and holding the portal widely apart—"the illustrious Infanzon of Estella."

"Bid my friend a welcome," tranquilly responded Pedro Arbues, assuming his seat in his huge arm-chair, with a habitual ease and graceful courtesy, as with consummate skill he mastered the sinister expression of his countenance.

"Pedro Arbues," said the Infanzon, following sharply upon the heels of the domestic, and entering the room with a martial contempt for ceremonious etiquette, "why speakest thou thus falsely? I am no friend of thine, as thy heart well tells thee. I am present at thy request, conveyed to me by this worthy priest; if thou hast aught to treat with me concerning business, I await your service to listen, and, prithee, haste thee, for I have pressing matters elsewhere."

The Inquisitor smiled gravely at the cavalier's impetuosity.

"I pray thee be seated, noble Infanzon, and thou likewise, worthy father Ximenes, for I would confer with thee."

The Knight of Estella threw himself moodily into the nearest chair, and made a motion of impatience, while the Dominican obsequiously imitated his example.

"Noble Infanzon," commenced Arbues, after a moment's hesitation, during which he scanned, with internal bitterness, the latent emotions of his guests, as a few passing evidences of their expression flitted across their brows, and moulding his features into a complacent smile. "I am surprised at thy Grace's coming; hast thou no fear of penetrating within the entrails of that dread monster which thy eloquence hath so often denounced?"

"Fear!" ejaculated Don Alphonso, with a deep-drawn

intonation, causing his auditors convulsively to shudder ; "thou hast but a poor opinion of a layman's courage. Why should I fear the power of brute force, when around this judgment-seat are a myriad of famished beings, athirst for the blood of the destroyer of their species ? Now, to the substance of our conference ; for time weighs heavily in unsocial companionship."

"I have learned that thou hast charged me," spoke forth the Inquisitor, "with the commission of many enormities, notably the apprehension of Balthazar and of his ward. Thou hast denounced me before the high tribunal of the civil law."

"Why callest thou me here to bandy idle words ?" exclaimed the Infanzon, with energetic ardor. "Defame thee, Pedro Arbues ! it were a matter of mock impossibility ; as well wouldst thou attempt to purify the Asphaltine Lake, as to cleanse the ill repute of thy ignoble character. Soulless, devoid of charity, of the commonest attributes of humanity, thou hast sunk lower and lower into the depths of degradation, until all traces of thy prior condition have been lost in the slough of ignominy."

"Knowest thou not that thou dost blaspheme ?" rejoined the Inquisitor ; "it is punishable, thus to speak of him who represents God in his Holy Tribunal. Why harborst thou eternal enmity against those who have it in their power to destroy thee and thine ?"

"To destroy ! Pedro Arbues," responded the Infanzon ; "thy career of destruction hath ceased, and the first-drawn breath of the new-born shall lisp curses upon thy fearful name ? Balthazar I ask not for ; his fate is discernible in the awful precedent of those who have entered before him, within the precincts of this gloomy charnel-house. Tell me not where the child Zelda is, for I know her to be incarcerated in the Convent of the Carmelites."

"How hearest thou this, noble sir ?" inquired Arbues, with feigned astonishment.

"Thinkest thou a deed of evil can be consummated in Seville," warmly retorted the Infanzon, "without some

messenger to spread the sad intelligence far and wide ? I therefore demand her release, formally executed in the name of the Holy Office ; her absolution from all charge of heresy, that she may go forth untainted and unfettered into the smiling world, whence she has been snatched by the brutal arms of thy myrmidons."

"I deny all knowledge of the maiden," meekly responded the Inquisitor, turning a scrutinizing glance upon the trembling Ximenes, whose courage deserted him proportionably as the conversation waxed more violent. "Thou must have been misinformed ; for the Holy House of Mount Carmel receives none within its sacred precincts unless duly prepared to serve the blessed Mother of our Saviour."

"Pedro Arbues !" violently ejaculated the Knight of Estella, his eyes glistening with the wild fire of desperate energy, "thou hast known me too long to attempt dissimulation. Well knowest thou the incarceration of the maiden, and the ends thou wouldst compass by so vile a deed. I am not, in reality, that which I once was ; on the yesterday I was poor, penniless, a mere adventurer on the face of the earth—a foot-ball for specious destiny ; to-day I am rich, noble and powerful, honored and esteemed,—a strong contrast with my former condition, when, by the working of thy envious spite, I was expelled from the companionship of my brethren. Then, I was impotent to stem the ebullition of thy wrath ; now, I can hurl defiance against thy empty threats,—for what care I for ecclesiastical authority ?"

"My son," remonstrated the Inquisitor, "thy affection for the maiden has estranged thy better judgment, and thou placest too strong reliance upon the favor of princes."

"Princes, forsooth !" resumed the Infanzon, "they are but idols created by mortal men. I have triumphed over adversity, by an unbending service to God on High, whose livery thou wearest, and whose trust thou dost abuse. Now, Pedro Arbues," he continued bitterly and determinedly, "when wilt thou release the songstress ?"

"Her destiny is not within my hands," answered the

Inquisitor ; " and were I so disposed, as honestly I am, I could not unloose the vows she hath assumed."

" Pedro Arbues," returned Don Alphonso, " thou art a priest ; I am but a simple soldier. Wert thou one of my calling, I would brand thee as a liar, and force thy words within thy deceitful throat at the point of my sword ; but, being as it is, I leave thy punishment to One, who will adjudge upon thy crimes and mine. At thy bidding I have come to thy chamber ; conference is useless, so I will hence depart."

" I perceive," modestly interrupted the Prior, " in thy present state of mind argument would fall unheeded upon thine ears ; on the morrow, we will meet again, and ere we separate—as friends, I trust—permit me to pledge our amity in a goblet."

" Nay, Pedro Arbues," said the Infanzon, " I taste not from the wine-cup of mine enemies, for the subtle spirit of revenge may taint the offering of peace."

" Infanzon," resumed the Inquisitor, " thou wilt not withdraw from beneath the shadow of my roof, neglecting the usages of chivalric courtesy. If our conference ends in naught, it is my privilege to invite thee to a renewal, and in the meanwhile, lest the dormant spark of malicious enmity diffuse its destructive poison through our veins, we will drown it in a hearty draught of friendly wine. Noble Infanzon, worthy confessor, I pledge thee ; success to the journey thou wouldst travel upon—depart in peace."

As Pedro Arbues was speaking, he poured forth from the golden ewer the limpid wine into the goblet, whose richly chased rim was speedily encrusted with sparkling dew-drops of the grateful Xeres ; then, poising his own drinking vessel in his hand, he motioned his guests to imitate him in libation : " Drink, friends, drink ! a truce to earthly enmity."

" Pardon me," responded the Infanzon, cautiously following, with his scrutinizing glance, each motion of his entertainer, " if a black suspicion prevents my appreciation of thy generous offering. I have been a wanderer, and

heard many tales of deleterious compounds, of destructive concoctions, delicately commingled in the cup of pleasure, so that I guard against each beverage tendered by questionable hands. Thus will I test the purity of thy vintage."

The Infanzon drew from his vest the omnipotent antidote, the wondrous elixir, the dying legacy of the venerable alchemist, and poured a few drops of the marvellously pure and colorless liquid into his overflowing goblet. The Inquisitor smiled grimly at this act of precaution, as, confident in the surpassing skill of Balthazar, he believed that the dearly purchased medicament, the world-renowned Paduan water, would pass the ordinary trial of detective chemical art. Within a second after the commingling of the antagonistic liquids, the wine within the Infanzon's goblet boiled with a harsh bubbling, then effervesced into a steamy vapor, changing its hues with the rapidity of the chameleon's skin, until it finally exploded with a loud and prolonged detonation. The Inquisitor watched the progress of the experiment with marks of interest, as the color of the vapor either changed or increased in density ; and when finally it broke forth in a loud explosion, expelling the boiling, bubbling liquid with terrible violence in devastating streams over the table, the face of Pedro Arbues turned deadly pale, and a cold sweat stood upon his brow. The timorous Ximenes trembled from head to foot at this unlooked-for phenomenon attending the commingling of the waters within the goblet, and he turned his eyes upon the Infanzon as if to implore an explanation of the untoward occurrence. The knight mutely watched the chemical changes, wrought by the power of Balthazar's alchemical compound, until the moment of the final detonation, when, mustering his courage for an ebullition of long pent-up anger, he addressed the quaking Inquisitor in words of thunder :

" Pedro Arbues, for the last time hast thou attempted to heap indignity upon my soul ! Snake-like, thou hast enticed me within thy snare, and in fullness of violated hos-

pitality, thou hast endeavored to wrest from me, and this unoffending friar, our boon of life. Traitor to humanity! were it not for thy holy calling, I would smite thee to the earth, as if thou wert a sacrilegious dog; but I leave thee to the forthcoming justice of an Omnipotent God, which steals upon criminality with the crafty precaution of a thief in the night. Pedro Arbues! I am ever doomed to thwart thy villainous purposes. I am an humble instrument in the hands of a benign Divinity, to aid the slow march of Christian punishment."

The Infanzon advanced violently towards Pedro Arbues, who, trembling at every joint, nervously sank into his chair, and buried his livid countenance within his hands, as he leaned his face upon the table, covered by the still smoking vapor of the effervescing wine. The heart of the craven died within him at the detection of his murderous treachery; he feared to raise his eyes, lest the keen glance of the Knight of Estella might bear their barbed fire upon his fear-stricken visage. Inwardly he groaned, as the full burden of his contemplated iniquities weighed upon him, and his breast heaved tumultuously as he drank the dregs of remorse.

"Worthy father," said the Infanzon, after bestowing a parting look of intense enmity upon the despondent Inquisitor, "luckily have we escaped the chances of a violent death; if the deed be incomplete, the intent is manifest, and let us return our sincere thanks to the goodness of a just God, who has rescued us from the jaws of impending destruction. Let this occurrence serve as a warning to guide thee in thy after life. Place not thy trust in the obligations of thy Order, neither in the promises, nor in the professions of ecclesiastical leaders, who, while they press thee to their bosoms, would infuse a deadly poison throughout thy veins. From this hour desert this sacrilegious assumption of powers divine; discard the livery of imposture, and seek thy happiness through this world in some more congenial calling, where the natural honesty of thy race can soar beyond the restraints imposed upon thy actions by a servitude to wickedness."

The Dominican, who had been astonished by the chemical developments of the alchemist's test, experienced a glow of renewed energy as these consolatory words fell upon his ear; he turned his gaze upon the prostrated Inquisitor, and mentally sighed at the deep depression his abject condition evinced. Ximenes meekly acknowledged the good advice of the Infanzon, and inwardly resolved to follow the timely suggestion of his newly formed friend, whose earnest deportment, and manly demeanor, bearing the impress of sagacious honesty, determined him to avail himself of the tendered protection and comfort. The golden hour for the Dominican's regeneration appeared at hand; snatched from the slippery crag, overpending the gulf of certain destruction, the friar, moved to pity by the welcome support of one in whose confidence he could securely rest, gratefully clung to his newly found protector.

"Fare thee well, child of sin!" exclaimed the Infanzon, throwing open the portals of the chamber, "we meet again on the morrow!" and with these words he stalked moodily along the corridor, followed by his companion.

The Knight of Estella progressed rapidly to the Convent of the Carmelites, and the gloomy turrets of the Inquisitorial Palace soon disappeared behind him in the thickening shades of nightfall. The Dominican kept close at his side, unconscious as to the direction his trembling footsteps were prosecuting,—so completely was his mind enwrapped in the mysterious reflections presented to him by the untoward occurrences of the day. The dawn of a new life had broken upon him; in the strange bewilderment of a new epoch, wherein confusion predominated over the pre-concerted regularity of a monotonous principle, he experienced the fresh breath of free air, and its heartiness charmed an intellect, callous from disciplinarian force.

The appearance of the Infanzon within the court-yard of the convent was the signal for the renewal of the violent commotion and angry demonstrations in which the venge-

ful populace indulged before the soothing strains and gentle voices of the evening hymn, penetrating from behind the massive walls of the monastic dwelling, influenced their passions towards a complete cessation of indignant purposes. Like every other movement in which the ebullition of popular fury is hushed to insignificance by a plaintive appeal to honored and cherished prejudices, the dormant spark of honest ire, smouldered but for an instant beneath the tranquillizing sway of the devotional minstrelsy, burst forth with renewed violence at the re-appearance of some prominent cause for re-kindling the latent excitement. Thus was it that the coming of the Infanzon added new fuel to the smouldering flame, and as the dying strains of the choir lost their harmony upon unwilling ears, the elements of frenzy broke forth in an irresistible clamor with a crash of thunder, increased in volume from pent-up calmness, as the re-animated rabble cast off their devotional fervor, and dashed headlong towards the surfeit of vengeance. From their stupor arose the medley population, cavaliers, Gitanos, townspeople, and mendicants, and turning their inquisitive glances upon the incoming Infanzon, raised their voices in an orison for destruction.

"Bring forth the girl!" exclaimed the venerable townsman, whose gray and straggling locks bespoke the father of a family, probably fallen beneath the ban of the Holy Office, "or shall we, people of Seville, teach monks obedience to the law?"

The Imperial Greffier, alarmed at the commotion created by his acquiescence in the popular will, nestled close under the seneschal, whose proud and manly form, disheveled gray hairs, and unostentatious attire, marked him a prominent object, as he leaned upon his formidable axe against the inner gate of the building. To him the greffier spoke in low and faltering accents:

"Pardon me, brave sir, let me now retire; I fear we have committed sacrilege. Let us hence."

"Hence!" exclaimed the seneschal, decisively seizing his weapon with a firmer grasp, "not a step hence until

the charnel-house vomit forth the object of our search. Say ye not so, ye honest men of Seville? Are my words those of truth?"

A unanimous burst of approbation resounded, like the roar of an angry lion, throughout the court-yard, an outburst of sentiment materially heightened by the opportune appearance of the Knight of Estella, who now advanced to the very door of the convent, and addressed the greffier in emphatic tones:

"I absolve thee, friend, from the penalties of my own deeds. In my own name will I summon the maiden forth; therefore, fear thee not to discharge the duties of thine office."

The Infanzon stepped boldly to the iron-bound wicket, and dealing a powerful blow with his clenched fist upon it, shouted in a stentorian tone: "The Infanzon of Estella requires the person of his ward, and throws his gauntlet in challenge to any who dare to proclaim his unworthiness to make good his demand, be they neither maids nor monks, nor men in their dotage! A response from within, I say!"

The full deep tones of the cavalier were heard above the din of the conflicting mass; his voice re-echoing from point to point of the projecting edifice, being thrown back in the clear accent of a reverberating war-cry, such as he had often given upon the plains of the New World, when threatened with annihilation, the Knight collected his errant followers to join him in the thickest of some unequal fight. Neither was the sound of this terrible summons limited to without the convent gate; its volume penetrated amid the corridors and cells of the darksome mansion, and ere it died in the distance a responsive shriek, an exclamation of agonizing despair, replied most aptly to the thunder of the cavalier's voice. It was the wail of the female captive.

"That voice!" exclaimed the seneschal, gently thrusting aside the Infanzon,— "it is the cry of Zelda. Most worthy commander, reserve the barrier for my arm."

Without awaiting a response, the veteran raised his axe, and upon its descending blow, the massive wicket trembled as a reed in the storm, as its bar and bolts rattled in strange concert with the creaking and quivering timbers of its frame.

Before the stout arm of the seneschal could wield his heavy weapon a second time, the bolts were withdrawn, the doors opened, and in the dark passage-way appeared the Soldier of Christ and his myrmidons, who, convinced that there was no longer a place of retreat, now advanced boldly to the entrance of the main edifice.

"By what authority demandest thou the maiden?" inquired Estrada.

"Francisco Estrada!" muttered the seneschal, his words pouring forth in warm impetuosity, so as almost to stifle his speech, "hast thou ever seen this face before? knowest thou not the countenance of one, before whose sword thou hast quailed in anguish, and prayed for thy craven life. Look well! for perchance thy keen eyes may detect some features the passing notice of the common world might overlook. Hast thou never seen this care-worn face before? Speak, I pray of thee, speak!"

The heavy frame of the seneschal quivered from the action of concealed emotions; his eyeballs glared with pent-up frenzy, and his eyes contracted in a convulsive struggle against natural force.

The Soldier of Christ started back with a rapid movement as he caught a fair view of the seneschal's unwelcome visage; his heart sank within him at the deep-toned sounds of his voice, booming upon his senses as the sepulchral accents of one from beyond the grave. Earnestly he stretched his hands before him, as if to ward off an expected blow, and with a tremulous tongue murmured forth a few disconnected sentences of surprise:

"Art thou returned to haunt me?" he inquired. "Art thou a ghost, or a physical reality—a thing of the imagination, or of bodily flesh, that thou shouldst follow me

hither upon sacred ground, thus with thy bloodhounds tracking upon my hopeless retreat? Avaunt, I bid thee!"

"Estrada," replied the seneschal, "I am a reality of life, a thing of flesh and bones, as thou art, furrowed by age, tormented by anguish; yet still a living creature. Thou hast not suffered all reminiscence of me to escape, even if thy intellect be beclouded by chilling fear, or thy memory infected by phantasms of the past. Here am I, worthy soldier," he continued, in words of irony, "still the same guardian over her whom thou hast betrayed. Francisco Estrada, needest thou a voice from the grave to remind thee, that thou hast a living wife—a living child? Nay, start not, it is I who speak!"

The countenance of Estrada lowered gloomily upon hearing these observations; he would have retreated precipitately, were it not that a strong fascination withheld his removal from the presence of his strange opponent, and riveted him to the spot.

"Estrada!" continued the seneschal, his voice falling into a low tone of decision, "by this last act of thine thou hast forfeited all claims to the title of humanity; thou hast stolen away a virtuous maiden for purposes too hideous to think of; thou wouldst have annihilated the cherished hopes of a princely house; thou hast degraded the fair fame of a noble lady. Already hast thou driven into exile a fast and tried friend to thee and thine; remember, one who knows these things stands before thee, and demands the release of thy captive daughter."

"What if I should refuse to yield her up?"

"I would breathe into the ears of these worthy people an inkling of thy depravity," calmly resumed the veteran. "I would hint to them that thou hast sold thy own flesh and blood into the bondage of lust, and destroyed the nuptial couch of worth and valor; I would unbosom to them the hidden mysteries of thy ignoble career of sensual crime. What thinkest thou would be thy fate in the hands of an infuriated mob, athirst for thy blood?"

"Pardon, pardon," tremblingly entreated the Inquisitorial familiar, his visage blanched to a supernatural whiteness, "thine enemy, when prostrate at thy feet. Have mercy on me!"

"Then bring forth the maiden!" imperatively demanded the seneschal, "and be certain that thou leadest her forth in person, for unto thee there is no escape; the walls are beleagured; the torch of the incendiary is prepared; destruction to thee is assuredly at hand, and if thou wouldst buffet the fury of the tempest, come forth boldly to face the withering blast."

"Bravely spoken, worthy seneschal!" exclaimed the Infanzon, as the Soldier of Christ submissively withdrew into the interior of the building with a hesitating, reluctant pace.

Many minutes did not elapse before Francisco re-appeared, leading by the hand the subject of the legal investigation. The shades of night had commenced to fall heavily, still there was sufficient light to distinguish the pale face of the Jongleuse, whose blood-shot eyes, and palpitating bosom, testified to the heavy burden of her griefs. Overpowered by the wildness of her joy, she mechanically followed the soldier along the pathway to liberty. As she stood upon the threshold of the gloomy convent, her vision failed her; her eyes, suffused with tear-drops, faltered in their perception of individuals among the crowd thronging the portal; as she attempted to vent her thanks for deliverance her speech was suffocated from intensity of emotion, and her words grew inaudible from deep-drawn sighs. There stood she, a living statue of gratitude.

"See ye not that I have redeemed my promise?" stammered Estrada to the seneschal.

"True is it," responded the veteran; "again it is permitted me to gaze upon the well-beloved features of one whose image I adore. Zelda," continued the venerable veteran, "canst thou not recognize the voice of one who hath attended upon thee in sorrow and in gladness?"

The maiden started with amazement, as the half-forgot-

ten tones of a familiar voice dispelled the dreamy meditation in which her melancholy had enwrapt her; her eyes wandered vacantly around upon the group encircling her; for a moment her attention dwelt smilingly upon the Infanzon; then, after bestowing upon him a glance beaming with gratitude, she fixed her firmer gaze upon the person of the seneschal, who stood transfixed and spell-bound from intensity of curiosity.

"Methinks I hear the dying cadence of a voice dear to memory," murmured the Jongleuse, as if endeavoring to summon reminiscences of bygone hours; "it is a voice of one who walks not upon earth, but who floats among the shadows of a world in death."

"Nay, Zelda," returned the seneschal, tears hanging in diamond clusters upon the gray lashes, shielding his sharp, penetrating eyes,— "I walk among the paths of earth."

Again the maiden started from her reverie, as, with a maniacal expression of joy, she darted forth and threw herself into the arms of the war-worn veteran.

"'Tis he—restored to life!" she exclaimed frantically; "again thou livest, Malchior, my father!"

"Malchior am I, child," responded the seneschal, tenderly embracing the girl within his arms, and covering her with kisses, whose impress infused renewed vitality through her sunken frame, while the delighted auditory gazed upon the scene in transports of pleasure—"the ways of the Lord are mysterious. When thou conceived thyself lost, persecuted and friendless, our Father, who is in Heaven, commanded the presence of thy protector; by his mandates have I emerged from oblivion, and tread again in freedom the streets of a city, whence I was driven, like a hound, by the storms of bigoted tyranny. Malchior lives again to be thy father."

"Maiden," interposed the Infanzon, "the darkness of the night draws apace; let us hence, that the commotion around this holy house may be stilled. Thanks, friends, for your kindly services," he added, to the populace; "our

mission is complete, and let us now depart in peace. Malchior, bear thy daughter to the house of Miguel."

The venerable seneschal, tenderly folding the trembling maiden in his brawny arms, bore her burden easily through the retiring crowd, greeted on every side by the hearty congratulations of the dense throng, who detected in the triumph of the Infanzon and his brave companions the formal recognition of the superior power of the State over Church matters—the germ of a revolutionary movement, that might ultimately overwhelm the tyrannic power of the Holy Office, which had so long held unlimited sway over the populace of Seville. Truly, therefore, was this deliverance of Zelda not a mere action of humanity, but a re-enfranchisement of the populace, who rejoiced that the temple of Baal tottered on its foundations, and bid fair to be cast down even amid the plenitude of its empire.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE PRINCESS OF VIARNA.

NOT many hours after her forcible delivery from the convent, the Jongleuse discovered herself in the arras-lined chamber of the goldsmith's mansion, the same in which the aged Balthazar, guided by her attentive care, had been received by the Knight of Estella. Faintly illuminated by a few tapers, whose light scarcely rendered visible the grotesque figures and picturesque landscapes, so inimitably delineated upon the damask tapestry, the apartment bore an air of desolation, strikingly in accordance with the Jongleuse, to whose memory the presence of the arm-chair, in which had rested the apothecary, recalled a painful reminiscence of circumstances attending their visit to the Infanzon. Even amid the joy of re-discovering the long-lost Malchior—he, who had exhibited for her an excessive parental affection—Zelda could not smother a sentiment of deep melancholy at perceiving herself thus suddenly deprived of the companionship of her learned master, especially as over his fate hung a veil of unfathomable obscurity. Solitary and disconsolate within this sombre chamber, the mind of the Jongleuse, ill at ease from the rapid succession of conflicting occurrences, was alternately swayed by violent emotions. At one moment in the agony of despair at her deprivation, she vented deep reproaches upon the implacable Pedro Arbues, author of her tribulations, while a few seconds subsequently, a hymn of thanksgiving rested upon her lips to honor the recovery of the mysterious guardian of her ignoble youth. Weary and saddened by these complications of thought, the Jongleuse turned to the arras-tapestry to seek some means whereby she could resume ordinary serenity of meditation, and endeavor to

extract from the many outlines of the needle-wrought figures, some combination suggestive of historical legends, with which her memory had been well stored. As she carefully examined the time-worn portraiture of Moresco chronicle, scenes of mirth and merriment, of sorrow and affliction, she detected many romantic passages, reminiscences of fanciful stories, long dormant within her mind, now flashing upon her with the vividness of new-born light. There were plainly visible the marvellous works of necromancers, of charmers, of dragons and destroyers of maiden princesses, of doughty knights and of valorous esquires, of liberated sleepers and disenchanted virgins, enigmatical pictures of that traditional period, when the Caliphs of Grenada ruled a mythical kingdom. The longer Zelda gazed upon these tapestried sketches, the more thoroughly she became convinced of having anteriorly visited this grotesque apartment, but at what period of her earlier youth it was impossible to determine. Lost in an imperfect attempt at tracing the connection of these varied tapestries with some epoch in her prior existence, the Jongleuse threw herself moodily into a cushioned chair, and in comparative trepidation, awaited the approach of some occurrence, tending to resolve her perplexities.

Dreamily she dozed in semi-consciousness ; before her appeared the figure of the alchemist, habited in the coarse garments of his every-day life, who, with uplifted hand, passionately exhorted her to grieve no longer at his loss. Around his trembling limbs hovered fleecy clouds, augmenting in density until the dim outlines of his person became obscured in the opaque mass of brilliant vapor, which almost imperceptibly concealed it, and then vanished from her view. The vision ceased ; still the words of the spectre rang through her ears—was it a voice from the world beyond the tomb ?

“ Spirit of Balthazar ! ” exclaimed Zelda, re-awakening to positive sensibility—“ shade of my father, thou shalt be obeyed ! Loath as I am to lose thy physical companionship, convinced am I that thy spirit will ever hover around

me to avert the darts of envious evil. Oh ! if thy long tortured soul has been released from its earthly tenement, shall it not be permitted to guard, in mournful silence, the mortal frame of her, by thee best beloved, so that ills befall not the idol of thy earthly affections ? ”

“ Zelda ! ” broke in upon her reverie a full toned voice, “ thou art right ; the spirit of thy guileless protector will never desert thee. Now let me ask thee, dost thou remember this sombre apartment ? ”

The Jongleuse turned her head, and beheld the stalwart form of Malchior, no longer clad in the humble habiliments in which he bore her lifelessly from the court-yard of the convent, but clothed in a rich garb, more befitting his re-assumption of knightly dignity. Still the gray hairs and flowing white beard of the former gipsy chief, falling from his wide expansive forehead, were sufficiently distinctive to portray his lineaments, which could be readily recognized.

“ Ah ! Malchior,” responded the maiden, her melancholy dissipating upon the arrival of the seneschal, “ more than once have my straggling thoughts sought to convince me, that in the happy days of my early youth mine eyes feasted upon these works of ancient handicraft. I do well remember the stories, upon their face depicted ; yet the hour of their acquisition hath escaped me in the dreaminess of the past.”

“ Daughter,” quoth Malchior, drawing near his charge, “ this mansion was once the abode of Malchior, ere the bitter frowns of fortune, and the still more bitter persecutions of my fellow-men, drove me an outcast from its portals. This palace, for in days long past the viceroy of Grenada’s monarchy held his court within its walls, was the chosen house of my fathers ; still, before the destroying hand of the regenerated Goth has it fallen piece-meal into decay. This chamber alone of its hundred halls maintains a painful reminiscence of our departed glory, and here was it that in the arms of a faithful nurse thy tongue was taught to prattle forth the history of the fallen Moresco race.”

"Now, now!" joyfully exclaimed the Jongleuse, "I do remember how the good woman sang me lamentable ditties, as her finger traced these pictures of changing episodes, tales of motley passions, the eventful career of Grenada's princes. 'Twas a long past chronicle of mingled glory and of chivalric revelry."

"Yes, Zelda," continued Malchior, "from this arabesque chamber didst thou pass to the more varied scenery of reality; and I, at last, have returned to replace the orphan, even more fatherless, within the very walls where commenced her pilgrimage of life. Gaze well upon these mouldy relics of departed greatness; feast thine eyes upon their instructive legends; then look upon them for the last time, for we have but as yet entered upon the journey before us."

"How mysterious is my life, Malchior?" earnestly inquired the songstress. "Art thou compelled to leave us? Am I again to lose my father?"

"Nay, Zelda," resumed the venerable warrior, "and for the last time too will I style thee by that beloved though modest name. I am still to remain by thee; as long as a kind Providence permits my sojourn upon this sphere am I devoted to thy service; yet there is no rest for my weary footsteps. Ere the light of many suns ushers in the morning sky, we will be far from hence, and so a last adieu to inhospitable Seville."

"Yes, ever on the wing; thus is it written for the hawk of Estella!" interrupted the Infanzon, who had noiselessly entered the chamber; "and now that he hath plucked the dove from the meshes of the fowler, it behooves him to persevere in his ceaseless flight."

"And thou too, most noble sir," anxiously interposed the songstress, "art thou to forsake a poor maiden, and leave her a prey for the wiles of pitiless enemies? Must thou also desert me?"

"Fair maiden," resumed the Infanzon, "it is on thy account, and on thine simply, that we are compelled to depart from Seville; for were thy presence known, dark

clouds of pent-up anger would break upon thy devoted head. Thinkest thou Pedro Arbues, or the Inquisition, will long remain inert after the tempest we have conjured up around the Convent gates? Thinkest thou that those murderous knaves will not employ some hidden means to stifle the honest sentiments of popular independence? We cannot ever battle against a myriad of unseen foes, and therefore we will depart to some realm beyond their destroying sovereignty."

"Oh, noble sir!" exclaimed the Jongleuse, in abject desperation, tears streaming from her full black eyes—"miserable being that I am, to have been the involuntary cause of thy personal suffering. Pardon me, gentle sir, I beseech of thee."

"Donna Blanca of Navarre," responded the Infanzon reverentially, while Malchior made a low and formal obeisance, "for I now address thee, fair and respected maiden, by thy proper and noble title; we would have been ingrates to thy princely progenitors, yea, even unworthy the honor of our own names, had we, in any wise, suffered thee to be afflicted by the assaults of thy hereditary enemies. Maiden, from this time forth command us, for we are but the servants of the Princess of Viarna!"

"Am I indeed the Princess of Viarna?" exclaimed the astounded Zelda, utterly unable to restrain the expression of her joy at thus ascertaining her regal lineage—the day-dream of her meditations. "How, how am I to reward thee, noble men, for the protection of my infancy, for the salvation of my life, for the re-attainment of my dignity? And thou particularly, father Malchior, for all thy disinterested kindnesses, thy ever-zealous prodigies in my behalf, how, indeed, can I repay thee?"

The maiden threw herself upon the neck of the veteran and wept most profusely; as, in acknowledgment of the many favors rendered her, she attempted to utter, in soft broken words, expressions of gratitude.

"Donna Blanca," responded Malchior, "Heaven has long since rewarded me for all the toils and perils I have

tempted in thy forlorn cause. I have fulfilled my duty, and thou hast attained thy legal pretensions, and if I have been an humble instrument in working out the problem of thy destiny, the congratulations of an honest heart will amply recompense me for a lifetime of toil."

The delicate maiden clasped her arms more closely around the seneschal, and seemed instinctively to nestle in his kind bosom for protection.

"Donna Blanca," quoth the Infanzon, tenderly addressing the damsel, "there is a more sacred duty uniting the fate of Malchior to thine own. He is the husband of thy mother!"

"Then there was truth in the words of Balthazar," mournfully ejaculated the weeping Zelda. "I am not his daughter, but the child of a fallen mother. I am the offspring of sin."

"Daughter," interposed Malchior, tears of anguish rolling down his care-worn, weather-beaten cheeks, "speak not in such terms of her who gave thee birth. True, she did err in momentary temptation, a failing of an overloving heart; still the sin of a moment has been long washed out by the burning tears of a penitential life. For thy glory did she sacrifice her heart's blood; in simple gratitude, within thy bosom's recesses, bury memory of her thoughtless crime, expiated by an age of suffering and of agony."

"And now methinks," rejoined the maiden, abstractedly, "within the Carmelite Convent, there came to me a nun, who did proclaim me her long lost child, and bid me fly from that abode of wretchedness, when the Soldier Estrada smote her to the earth with direful violence. Tell me, did she too speak the truth?"

"Of a verity did she," mournfully assented Malchior.

"Then why tarriest thou? Let her be free!" exclaimed Zelda, in a paroxysm of excitement. "Why should she linger within those gloomy walls, while I breathe the free air of heaven?"

"For her, my beauteous Blanca," gently interposed the Infanzon, "the breath of free heaven will break upon a sterile wilderness. Alas! she is no longer susceptible to the

softening influence of liberty, as it matters little to her insensible frame whether she is bowed to earth by the sirocco or fanned by the zephyrs of cooling eve."

"What meanest thou, noble Infanzon?" wildly inquired the maiden, bending upon him the full lustre of her piercing eyes. "Is she dead—lost to us for evermore?"

"Donna Blanca," mildly resumed Don Alphonso, "thou tastest for the first time the brackish water of regal dignity. We have hailed thee as Princess of Viarna, and it becomes thee to muster nerve to drain the bitter draught left untouched by thine ill-starred ancestors. For generations did the Viarnian dignity entail upon thy race most hideous calamities: one died beneath the assassin's murderous stroke; another lingered to debase within a darksome dungeon; still another, by the leprosy of poison attained, dragged his ulcerated carcass to an ignominious grave; and thou, last of thy line, art left to taste the dregs of their misfortunes."

"Mind not my fate, but tell me of my mother?" plaintively beseeched the songstress, her bosom heaving with violent emotion.

"Princess of Viarna," replied the Infanzon, "thy mother lives, and yet is dead. True, the animal functions of her weakened frame still fulfill their offices; but then the world to her is a universal blank—for reason, the sole guardian of the living soul, hath winged its flight from that disconsolate being. She exists, Blanca, but lives not; plunged into the deep abyss of lunacy, all consciousness of the present hath passed from her mental sight. With meaningless lamentations, and hideous howls of painless anguish, she inhales the vapors of a living tomb, and better were it for her restive soul to be transplanted to that sphere, wherein alone human miseries shall cease. Princess of Viarna, thy mother—her, whom thou encountered within the fatal walls of the Carmelites, overpowered by the sudden joy of thy recovery—hath perished into absolute dementation, being denied the power of recognizing even the unconscious cause of all her wrongs."

The Jongleuse stood appalled and motionless—a statue of mute despair—her eyes intently riveted upon the countenance of Malchior, who, despite the tumultuous passion raging within his breast, preserved an austere demeanor—an aspect of stern endurance.

“God’s will be done !” tranquilly ejaculated the maiden, as with energetic courage she mastered control over her passions. “It is from some just, inexplicable cause, that I, upon the threshold of life, at the early dawn of a new and brilliant future, am thus doomed to most agonizing misfortunes.”

“Donna Blanca,” quoth the seneschal, recovering from his temporary abstraction, “thou, like many others, gazing upon the gilded paraphernalia of power, hast been dazzled by the meretricious glitter of rank, and art compelled to taste the bitterness of thy princely dignity. Inured to hardships and the vagaries of fortune, this change of condition possesses consolation unknown to those born to high estate. When the Princess is weary and sad, the mind of the Jongleuse can be blithe and happy ; therefore calm thy feelings, and enter upon thy new existence with the exalted fortitude, the heroic determination of thy ancestry.”

“So will I,” calmly replied the Princess ; “guarded by the happy advice of honest Malchior, defended by the stout arm of the Knight of Estella, I can face dangers with confidence, and regard adversity in peace.”

“Princess of Viarna,” interposed the Infanzon, “it is but proper that thou shouldst, upon this very eve, be invested with the honors and dignity of thy rank. Within this ancient palace, encircled by the doughty cavaliers, who in secret have revered thy honest authority, have I determined to place upon thy breast the sacred emblems of thy sovereignty. So, I pray thee retire unto the ladies, awaiting thee, that thou mayest be apparelled as becomes thy estate.”

The Infanzon gave a shrill signal ; at its sound a respectful dame opened secret portals, masked by the tapes-

try, and, motioning the astounded damsel to approach her, tenderly conducted her into a gorgeously decorated apartment.

“Princess of Viarna,” said the dame, “thy servants wait upon thee.”

Within the large and richly painted reception hall of the goldsmith’s mansion, illuminated to a degree of brilliancy rivalling the light of day, upon that evening was congregated a group of cavaliers, of soldiers and officials, young men and old counsellors, noted as faithful adherents to the pretensions of the House of Viarna, during the stormy period of its abeyance. From the obscurity of social retirement, of compulsory solitude, there emerged the scattered relics of a once powerful faction, assembled nominally to support the pretensions of an individual, but in reality to vindicate the existence of a principle. Oppressed by the bigoted fanaticism of the Castillian monarchy ; expatriated from their native kingdom, the Princes of Viarna, an unfortunate race of regal pretenders, maintained, alternately, in Castille and in Andalusia, a species of illegitimate court, in which, surrounded by poverty-stricken retainers, they vainly attempted the assumption of the external appearances of royalty. Long deprived of all reasonable expectation of physically attaining the throne of Navarre. as each successive heir to its perilous and empty honors perished ignobly before the violence of more powerful, or more unscrupulous, usurpers, the successors to the legitimate Viarnian dignities sought popular recognition of their existence, simply to serve as a protective shadow to the numerous discontented classes of their countrymen. The principality of Viarna existed an empty title, a kingdom without an acre of land ; still the privileges attached to the unreal crown, founded upon immemorial usage, were such as, in the hands of an enlightened ruler, would contribute mightily to the alleviation of popular suffering. Under color of title, derived from this spectral authority, proud and generous nobles, disgusted at the unremitting persecutions of the populace by the priesthood, and excited by the politic

extinction of feudality by the Navarrese monarchs, exerted themselves to recover and maintain rights and immunities forfeited or denied by ruling sovereigns. The existence of this petty sovereignty as a legal, if not a physical fact, was a necessity for the administration of an unwritten jurisprudence, more in consonance with ancient usages than could be considered the stern, harsh, and exacting edicts of more modern potentates. Adherence to the Viarnian pretension embraced, therefore, respectful protests against the innovations of the Civil or Roman law, which, expounded by ecclesiastical dignitaries, became moulded so as to suit the ambitious designs and encroachments of both spiritual and temporal usurpers; consequently the allegiance of many Navarrese nobles to the imaginary sovereignty, breathed a spirit of resistance to an accumulation of power, which oftentimes expanded to the dignity of revolution.

The little court of Donna Blanca, temporarily assembled within the goldsmith's mansion, embraced representatives of the different elements of national discontent, naturally turning for protection towards a legal recognition of her presumptive dignity. Grave councillors, gray-haired in the acquisition of jurisprudence, treasuring a reminiscence of the vested privileges of the commons, hastened to respond to the summons of Malchior, the well-known and respected protector of the populace, to mingle their congratulations with those of learned scholars, antagonistic to the severe discipline of the Romish faith; of gay soldiers, sons of martial parents, wedded to a memory of past chivalry; of noble courtiers lamenting the infraction of their feudal dignities; of wealthy townsmen, mourning the desolation of traffic, and of a gallant host of adventurers, allured to the standard of the youthful princess by the glory of the Infanzon's reputation, and anxious to win distinction by service in his romantic companionship.

The group of motley courtiers, who, in sincerity of loyalty, compensated for a sparseness of numbers, respectfully congregated around a temporary throne, erected at the further end of the audience hall, a richly wrought chair

of solid oak, standing in solitary dignity, unprotected by armed attendants, and surmounted by an escutcheon ornamented with the gloomily expressive arms of Viarna—a lozenge sable, charged with three portcullises proper. In earnest converse the assembled crowd whiled away the passing moments, anterior to the period for the formal introduction of their youthful and beautiful princess.

The prolonged blast of a martial trumpet, sounded by a herald, bearing the armorial designations of Donna Blanca, commanded the reverential attention of the auditory, as the doors on either side of the throne were thrown open, and thence issued the fragile form of the Jongleuse, supported by her trusty guardians, and followed by a dozen blooming maidens, radiant with exquisite charmingness and dazzling gaiety, the hereditary attributes of Sevillean nobility. Mute from admiration at the miraculous beauty, the mild and beneficent aspect, and the queen-like dignity of their newly-found mistress, arrayed in regal robes of a simple grandeur, the courtiers saluted her approach in courtesy and meekness, their hearts beating with joy at the recovery of their long lost princess, so long regarded as a political myth.

Before ascending the steps of the throne the maiden was gently restrained by the hand of the Infanzon, who, in his full-toned, manly voice, addressed the attentive auditory:

"Citizens, behold before you the illustrious Donna Blanca of Navarre; accept ye her as a sovereign princess, of the regal fraternity of Viarna? If thus be your will, I will invest her with the insignia of her position—the simple regalia of our lawful monarch."

An affirmative response, enthusiastically uttered by all, and especially by the younger section of the assembly, who, in the fair and blushing countenance of the royal maiden, detected a supernatural glow of chivalric beauty, authorized the Lord of Estella to proceed with the ordained ceremonial.

"My liege mistress, Donna Blanca," he continued, "think not that because we, thy honest and faithful subjects, do

hail thee as our sovereign, that thou wilt rule over broad domains and feast in luxurious ease. True, in past generations thy illustrious ancestors possessed a monarch's throne, and wielded a sceptre over myriads of broad spread acres; still it has pleased an inexplicable Providence to humble human pride, and it has been bequeathed to thy hard lot to enjoy a landless kingdom and to rule over a powerless people, like thee, homeless and expatriated. Donna Blanca, in thee we recognize the physical exponent of an ideal nation, one, once glorious, but now trampled to the dust; we have gifted thee with an empire over all that is dear to us. From this hour thou rulest over our honor and our affections, and reignest supreme within our hearts—thy glory will be ours and our happiness thine. Such, Donna Blanca, is thy kingdom—a realm of the internal world, unpossessed by the proudest potentate in Christendom, and which thou canst ever preserve by the practice of justice, virtue, and philanthropy. In testimony of this declaration on our part, as a proof of our allegiance to thy rule, we present to thee this jewelled ornament—the necklace of thy sainted mother, the legacy of thy martyred ancestors.”

As the Infanzon spoke, he threw over the fair shoulders of the palpitating maiden the heavily-wrought golden collar, encrusted with jewels, diamonds, rubies, and pearls, which had been wondrously recovered by the alchemist from the possession of the Inquisitor-General, and then conducted her to the throne amid an outburst of patriotic enthusiasm from every section of the hall.

“Donna Blanca,” commenced the worthy Malchior, kneeling at the foot of the throne and carrying her hand to his lips, “thus swear I fealty to thee as did I to thy princely mother. May heaven in its mercy grant thee an existence of less misery than fell to her inauspicious destiny, and may our Supreme King on High ever guard thy footsteps in the pathway of righteousness.”

“Amen!” fervently re-echoed a hundred voices, and in due order each one of her subjects imitated the example

of Malchior, and generously proffered homage to the youthful sovereign.

Never could the bearing and demeanor of an individual be more thoroughly transformed, than was perceptible in the case of the Jongleuse, as the obscure maiden became converted into a princess—albeit ruling but for the hour. A sentiment of deep-rooted gratitude pervaded her soul, and in its external expression the features of the maiden beamed with seraphic benignity. Tear-drops glistened, diamond-like, upon her eyelids, while the sharp brilliancy of her glistening orbs flashed through them like the light of a meteor through the starry vault of heaven. Ennobled by the homage of her faithful adherents, she conceived herself a peerless monarch, ruling a fairy realm; the natural majesty of her virgin heart expanded the dignity of her sylph-like form, as she stood a living monument of celestial virtue, worthy the admiration of supplicating penitents.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE MONARCH OF TWO WORLDS.

SCARCELY a week elapsed after the impromptu convocation, and immediate dispersion of the courtiers of Viarna, who retired into their previous obscurity with a celerity rivalling the alacrity displayed in their congregation, ere Seville became the theatre of a royal pageant and its concomitant festivities. It having been officially announced that his most Catholic Majesty, Charles Quint, would condescend to receive the personal homage of his ever faithful subjects of Andalusia, the full machinery of Inquisitorial influence was employed to bestow upon the ancient metropolis of Moresco festivity, at least, an external appearance of public rejoicing. With politic generosity, the resources of the ecclesiastical dignitaries were lavishly expended, and the countenance of the municipality was invoked, to revive the mirthful passions of its inhabitants, dormant beneath the oppression of the Inquisitorial scourge, and to warn them into an expansion, resembling the spontaneous outburst of joy and hilarity, so quickly generated on national occasions, among the warm-hearted Sevilleans, of a blithesome period, anterior to that of Dominican despotism.

The capital of Andalusia upon this feast day wore a mask of deep dissimulation ; for, behind the alluring exhibition of momentary abandonment, floated a dense mass of discontent and of insubordination, ready to be evoked by the first summons of popular indignation. True, the façades of the palace were ornamented with gorgeous hangings of rich and heavy cloths from the Flemish looms, and festooned with garlands of flowers, congratulatory devices, with the morning dew still clustering upon their

petals. True, the sounds of soul-inspiring melodies resounded in every section, inviting the stragglers and wayfarers to a participation in the fascinations of the dance ; true, upon the countenance of each wandering Gitano and strolling vagrant beamed a ray of satisfaction, as with habitual recklessness they plunged into the current of excitement ; and truly, moreover, could there be detected upon the face of blooming youth, garbed in holiday attire, smiles of unconscious merriment, as yet unpolluted by the cankering contagion of afflictive misery. True, Seville on that day had dispensed with its ordinary apparel of desolation and revelled in a spectacle of hilarity ; still the expression of gaiety was either the wild mirth of a thoughtless vagrancy, or the forced merriment of a servile population, seeking to drown in the license of the hour the galling anxieties and sinister prognostications of the morrow.

Pedro Arbues and the Archbishop of Seville, upon the subsiding of the tumultuous demonstration of the outraged population to a degree of quietude, affording the Inquisitor an undisturbed passage through the thoroughfares of the city he ruled with a direful sceptre, held a conference upon the untoward aspect of popular-feeling. The Dominican and the prelate both comprehended the revolutionary symptoms of the moment, and acknowledged the fragile tenure by which their sovereignty could be maintained over this discontented people. With the sagacity characteristic of his ambitious temper, Pedro Arbues at once unfurled to his more indifferent colleague a simple method for resuscitating their passing influence, by acting upon which not only could their power be re-established, but the awful terror of the Inquisition be multiplied two-fold. Fortified by the approbation of the archbishop, the Inquisitor despatched a courier to Madrid, charged to lay before the religiously inclined Charles Quint an appalling picture of the mutiny against the regulations of the Church, and to request the presence of the monarch, to serve as a decisive mediator between the contestant parties. Pedro was well aware of the personal popularity of the Emperor,

and of the exalted affection ever evinced towards him by his subjects, who, as the conqueror of Francis Premier, was acknowledged as a hero, whose martial deeds in popular esteem rivalled the heroic achievements of a Gothic liberator. Apparently to commemorate the triumph of his master over the Lutherans and heretics of Germany, the Inquisitor determined upon the celebration of an auto-da-fé, at which, and in the Imperial presence, he would offer up the hecatomb of human beings confined within the nauseous prisons of the Inquisition, but in reality to serve as a holocaust to his wounded dignity. Seville had witnessed the measure of his shame, and, in bitter revenge, she was to feast upon the retribution of his implacable vengeance.

Attended by a numerous militia, surrounded by a chosen corps of the Imperial Guards, and accompanied by his court, composed of knights and nobles from every quarter of the Empire, Charles Quint entered Seville with an ill-concealed demonstration of triumph. Accustomed to the homage of the phlegmatic Germans, who, in moody inactivity, were content to offer recompense for royal attentions, as the natural consequence of victory, the Emperor readily appreciated the warm and enthusiastic congratulations of the Sevilleans, as based upon a more loyal recognition of his regal merit. In truth, the progressional entry of Charles, at this unexpected juncture, was hailed by the unsuspecting multitude as an act of condescension, marvellous to their comprehension ; and at his feet, in heartfelt generosity, they poured forth their adulation. At every gateway, and upon each barrier, were erected arches, garnished with inscriptions, corroborative of the high esteem in which the sovereign was regarded by his subjects, and at every turn of the winding streets the eye encountered ingeniously wrought devices, commemorative of the successes and glories of the Imperial reign.

Seville, upon the day of the Imperial entry, therefore, exhibited an animation, an abandonment of civic cares, never before witnessed in the ruined Moresco city, since

the hour that the dark cloud of religious fanaticism lowered upon the fairy-like town. It appeared as if, for once, the full energy of a tortured soul had been exerted to shake off the despondency hanging over popular genius ; for once, in an unaccustomed revelry and dissipation, was to be found a sovereign remedy for the afflictions of an omnipresent calamity, and beneath the wildness of feeling and of enthusiasm, was transiently buried memory of ills pressing sorely upon the social state. For a day, Seville appeared to enjoy a new atmosphere, whose freshening impulse infused renewed vitality into the stagnated veins of the commonalty ; as if, with an expiring determination at mastery over the depression of the times, the ancient spirit of Andalusia, heretofore the nursery of song and revel, summoned its full strength to stifle the agonies and miseries then ulcerating the body politic, and to hurl into oblivion saddening reminiscences of fanatical persecution.

Late in the afternoon, a dense crowd congregated around the ducal palace of Medina Cœli, that haughty grandee, who, yielding to the seductions of depraved bigotry, assumed the equivocal honor of Hereditary Grand Standard-bearer to the Holy Office, being the temporary host of his Imperial master. It was near the time appointed for Charles to receive the petitions and complaints of his subjects ; for, with a courtesy as remarkable for its affability as for its political tendencies, the Emperor hesitated not to mingle with his people, and orally to receive words of lamentation falling from their lips. Naturally generous, and susceptible of vivid impressions, Charles with difficulty restrained the flow of his better impulses, and even after his fanatical allegiance to the dictation of the Church, his sympathies were constantly shocked by the manacles imposed upon the free expression of his thoughts. The steady and augmenting ascendancy of the clergy over the Emperor's subdued judgment, robbed this well-meaning monarch of the highest attribute of greatness ; and from mere subservience to ecclesiastical domination, he forfeited claim to enduring glory, for whose acquisition he seemed to have

devoted the earlier portion of his reign. Notwithstanding his unbounded popularity and the evidence of a sincere attachment to his person, Charles, after his inoculation with bigotry, mistrusted the general sentiments of his subjects, and, to conciliate their favor, gradually employed a specious dissimulation, which subsequently degenerated into a selfish moroseness, only satiated by the tranquil isolation of the monk of Saint Just. As the frenzy of religion grew upon the unhappy monarch, that resolution and self-confidence, distinguishing his earlier acts, became absorbed imperceptibly by the depressing tendencies of his newborn fanaticism, until this mighty sovereign, ruler of two hemispheres, grew to be but a supple tool, an irreflective agent, in the hands of a diplomatic priesthood. At the period of his visit to Seville, the character of the monarch was verging toward the turn whereby his subsequent career was to be characterized, and in a blind wrestling between natural generosity and fanatical proscription, the powers of a fine intellect were wasted and exhausted in an endless conflict between Humanity and Religion. Confident, however, of the good-will of his subjects, who attributed his gradual alienation from the moderate policy he had pursued at the period of his accession to the throne, rather more to a corruption from foreign association than to any studied determination or perverted inclination, Charles Quint adopted the laudable system of personally presenting himself as the recipient of complaints.

Foremost among the crowd, awaiting the arrival of His Majesty upon the flight of marble steps leading to the reception halls of the Ducal palace, could be distinguished the person of Father Ximenes, who, with great humility of demeanor, appeared intent upon maintaining his favorable position, near the termination of the balustrade. In close proximity to the Dominican stood a stalwart Guapo, a child of the Garduna; who seemed wholly lost in amazement at the unparalleled magnificence displayed upon the jewelled robes of the courtiers and State messengers, constantly passing him upon errands of inclination or of duty.

"Father," commenced the vagabond, accosting the priest with a familiarity at variance with ordinary reverence for the friar's profession, "would it be a mortal sin for one to pluck a stray feather from these gaudy popinjays? For sorely am I tempted."

"Assuredly, my son," returned the Dominican, evidently annoyed by his strange companionship, "thou wouldst not steal?"

"Nay, not steal," responded the Guapo, "there are gentler terms in vogue, since we are smitten with priestly refinement. I would borrow a stray diamond to loan unto the poor, after the manner of most mendicant friars. Certainly, there is no crime in compulsory charity."

Father Ximenes endeavored to turn aside from his importunate comrade; for these few words, uttered by one of those vagrants, heretofore regarded as beneath the ban of clerical domination, testified to the universality of contempt in which the priestly calling had lately been held by the populace. The Father plainly perceived that the very same hatred he experienced against the Church Establishment, with its corruptions, licentiousness, and sensual depravities, had extended to the hearts of the masses, those zealous bigots, whose eyes seemed to be opened, as if by a sudden miracle.

An animated confusion, a bustling pressure, and the uproar of a thousand voices, announced the appearance of the Emperor, who stepped forth from the vestibule in person, to commune with his people. Halberdiers and archers, destitute of their accustomed weapons, mingling among the expectant crowd, mildly checked the contact of the rabble with the garments of royalty, and, without show of violence, at times forced the over-anxious assembly to a respectful distance, that all petitioners might have an equal opportunity to present their supplications to their gracious sovereign.

As Charles Quint appeared at the head of the marble stairway, he turned for a moment, as if to survey his subjects, congregated to extend mute homage to the man

before whose prowess Christendom trembled. The Emperor was a man of the ordinary size, and of unimposing mien ; still, habited in the graceful costume of his era, notwithstanding his physical defects, he presented an exterior of elevated dignity. His countenance approximated towards manliness and nobility, and displayed an open expression of honest frankness, considerably deteriorated, however, by his narrow cheekbones and pointed features, which, at the first glance, conveyed a somewhat sinister impression. A complacent smile played around his mouth, half-concealed beneath an auburn moustache, whose ends terminated in a bushy beard of the same color, while the contour of his face gave token of a gracious suavity — if not derived from natural impulses, at least acquired from habitual dissimulation.

The musicians of the martial band of the Imperial Life Guards, stationed in a balcony pendant over the entrance portals, commenced the performance of a newly-introduced national hymn, as the Emperor slowly descended the marble steps, accompanied by the Captain of the Yeoman Guard, and extended his hand alternately to the right and left, to receive petitions and supplications intended for his royal eye. As he accepted, and glanced over the headings of each in rotation as presented to him, he endorsed a rough note, designating an hour for the petitioner's appearance upon some subsequent occasion, and then committed the document to the custody of his military attendant. In this wise, despite the warmth of the atmosphere and the exposed situation of the scene of his labors, did Charles Quint exert the noblest of his royal prerogatives, amid the undisguised congratulations of his subjects, until, by a gradual descent, he reached the vicinity of the place occupied by the young Dominican. Ximenes hesitated a moment, his breast harassed by conflicting emotions, in his attempt to arrest his sovereign's attention, when, perceiving the monarch about to retrace his steps, he threw himself at the feet of Charles, and clasping his hands, as if inspired by fervency of internal prayer, re-

mained a mute suppliant. At this unexpected prostration of the friar, the Emperor suddenly stopped in his retrograde movement, and cast an inquiring glance upon the supplicating petitioner.

"What askest thou, Father?" demanded Charles, "hast thou no writing?"

"Most dread sovereign!" quoth Ximenes, his words huskily uttered, "oh! grant me justice, protection, life; I implore thee."

"Father," resumed the monarch, evidently interested at the humility and apparent despair of the Dominican, "of what and whom complainest thou? Why claimest thou of me protection, when thou art a priest of Him whose temporary instrument I am."

"I do complain, my liege," energetically responded the friar, his overwrought nervous system adding an irresistible vehemence to his demeanor, "against those who, in the name of our Holy Church, have destroyed thy subjects and ruined the physical wealth of thy realm. They, who are charged to protect the fold, have devoured the flock."

"Of whom speakest thou?" earnestly inquired the Emperor, standing in amazement at the spectacle.

"Of those who pour desolation and ruin upon this fair land!" continued the Dominican, his accent breathing a supernatural inspiration,— "those who slay, murder and persecute; and thou, in thy blindness, perceivest not the wretched havoc wrought upon thy realm."

"I am sworn a defender of national justice," interrupted Charles, his attention awakened to the misgovernment of Seville, by the numerous petitions already presented to him. "Whom chargest thou with wrong-doing?"

"Pedro Arbues, and his myrmidons of the Holy Office!" solemnly ejaculated the Dominican, in a sepulchral tone of voice.

At the mention of this accusation against the Inquisitor-General, the lips of Charles Quint quivered, and an unearthly pallor mounted into his hitherto rosy cheeks. It was evident that the general tenor of the petitions already received

by the monarch, had in some measure touched upon the alleged grievances, constantly urged against the members of the Holy Office. Charles, notwithstanding his augmenting fanaticism, still possessed a keen sense of justice, and wondered that the purification of the land from heresy should be attended with the commission of manifold wrongs against personal liberty. More than once had he promised a formal inquiry into the Inquisitorial system; but, alas for the prosperity of his people! the intrigues of Dominicans, profusely scattered around his person, diverted his attention to less important investigations.

"In what has Monsignor Arbues wronged thee, most worthy Father?" inquired the Emperor, after a prolonged scrutiny of the confessor's features.

"He has robbed me of my human wealth—of my very soul," responded the Dominican, his measured accents ringing sharply upon the imperial ear. "He has rendered me what I now am—a poor, miserable, God-forsaken wretch. He hath even tempted me to murder, and, mistrusting my sincerity, hath endeavored, by villainous poison, to cast my perjured soul, unwarned and unprepared, into the presence of my offended Creator."

Charles listened eagerly to the narration of the friar, his jewelled hand either passing restlessly, at times, along his bushy beard, or else nervously clutching the hilt of a Damascus dagger which garnished his body-belt. Then, leaning close to the ear of the Dominican, the Emperor whispered to the petitioner:

"Follow me, but be cautious; let not the scandal of thy accusation be bruited, lest all reparation for thy wrong be annihilated." The sovereign assumed an air of nonchalance, and, courteously responding to the farewell acclamations of the multitude, by a graceful wave of the hand, ascended into the vestibule of the palace, closely followed by the Dominican, whose entry was unmolested by the armed guardians, long accustomed to regard with reverence the robes of an ecclesiastic.

The king paused not until he led the way into a small

cabinet adjoining the reception-hall of the palace, whither, as upon other occasions, it was his custom to retire for silent meditation, and, in quietude, to mature his policy upon grave and serious matters. Into this cabinet of labor, containing a few chairs, and a table covered with vellum volumes, writing materials, and other fragments of traveling equipage, the Emperor ushered his ecclesiastical petitioner, with the air of one accustomed to obedience. Two secretaries were discovered, upon his entry, at work, transcribing public documents, or engaged in amplifying legal and diplomatic correspondence, from the rough notes, traced by the imperial statesman, upon innumerable scraps of paper, scattered about the apartment. For this was the apparently negligent manner in which Charles furnished the directions and materials for his State papers, as the emergencies and occurrences of the moment required his attention, or allowed him time for reflection on the complicated business of the day. Upon his entrance, the secretaries noiselessly departed, and relinquished the cabinet to the sole occupancy of their royal master. The Emperor threw himself heavily into a roughly-hewn arm-chair, and, for the first time that afternoon, exhibited symptoms of fatigue, so sedulously concealed during his long and exposed reception of popular complaints. For a few moments he remained in a state of comparative stupor, perspiration rolling heavily from his brow, his breast palpitating perceptibly, while short spasmodic gasps of breathing announced the exhausted condition of his wearied system.

Father Ximenes, standing respectfully opposite to the unnerved frame of the great Emperor, was lost in bewilderment at witnessing the comparative prostration of the illustrious monarch, whose iron nerve had braved the dangers of flood and field, and whose soul he had been instructed to believe to be beneath the immediate custody of holy saints, unto whose service he had dedicated the best hours of an adventurous existence. The Dominican sighed at the fallen condition of this chivalric warrior—this semi-

canonized militant of the Church, before whose arm drooped the hydra of heresy, and around whose head should glow the halo of superhuman sanctity. The friar regained his desponding courage, for he now perceived that in the person of the Imperial conqueror, he simply communed with a weak, pain-stricken fellow-being.

"Father," commenced Charles, in low, murmuring accents, as if the very act of speech aggravated some internal injury, "thou didst speak of wrongs done thee and thine by the Inquisitor, Arbues; relate to me the narrative of thy grievances, that we may summon the advice of learned justiciaries to check the growing insatiability of the Holy Office for the blood of our beloved subjects."

"Sire!" firmly replied the Dominican, "on my own behalf I do not complain—I am but a poor, depraved monk, whose righteousness is stolen from him; whose remorse of conscience destroys all interest in mundane matters; a friar, who would as soon plunge into the dubious mysteries of another world, as drag out an infamous existence, despised and loathed, on earth."

"Hast thou, then, been treacherous to thy vows?" sternly inquired the Emperor, awakening the dormant energy of his nature.

"Would to God I had been!" rejoined Ximenes, his voice assuming a deep melancholy, the tones of which rang in unison with the despair, the desolation of his soul. "Nay, Sire, in being faithful to the obligations of my Order I have become a traitor to my God, and learned to condemn the divine mandates of his wisdom. Still, it is not on my own behalf I would complain of the arch-tyrant, Pedro Arbues, who hath employed my ignoble self as an instrument to further his unworthy ends. Yes, penitent as I am, aware of the slough of degradation into which I have unconsciously fallen, I would atone for my past transgressions, by revelations of the sacrilegious barbarities perpetrated beneath the sanctity of the Holy Office, which alienate the affection of thy faithful subjects from just allegiance to their lawful sovereign."

"Thanks, worthy Father," calmly rejoined the Emperor, taking out his tablets and nervously preparing to take down some rough notes of the Dominican's confession; "truly there has been some discontent among our Andalusians—some passing trouble, wherein the worthy abode of the Carmelites has been sacrilegiously defiled."

"Passing trouble!" ironically replied Ximenes, "'tis but the prelude to the mighty storm, when the elements of popular indignation, bursting the restraint of law and custom, will unite in a devastating flood, and wash away the frail barriers of tyrannic power. Thinkest thou, Sire, that the children of the Cid, the sons of the Goth, will bear the burden of ecclesiastical tyranny, when their daughters are debauched, their fathers murdered, and their households desecrated, to feed the lechery of depraved followers of Baal?"

Charles Quint started in amazement at this highly-wrought picture of clerical domination, and, upon rapid reflection, concluded that the smouldering flame of discontent, whose existence had been partially betrayed to him in the disguised petitions received, owed its origin to virulent abuses. By nature, of a proud and chivalric character, although inclined by early associations to rely upon a blind adherence to the dogmas of a religion of which he claimed temporal defence, the Emperor was shocked, as well at the deep root these revolutionary symptoms had taken in the popular mind, as at the origin of their open demonstration.

"And why, Father, have not the commons claimed the interposition of our executive authority?" inquired the sovereign.

"That the wail of their voices might be stifled within the dungeons of the Inquisition!" replied the Dominican. "Alas! we had but one bold cavalier who dared uplift the veil, obscuring the regal vision. And what is the reward of the noble Infanzon?"

"Alphonso of Estella!" ejaculated Charles, with a movement of indignation,—"*mention not to me the name*

of him, a rebel, ruling riotous masses to the desecration of God's holy works !"

"Pardon me, Sire," meekly interposed the Dominican, "but thou knowest not the infamies perpetrated against that nobleman by Pedro Arbues—infamies in which I, miserable wretch as I am, was foully participant. Didst thou, illustrious Sire, suffer a tithe of his grievances, thou thyself wouldst rebel against this galling ignominy. Listen to my words, for they are those of truth—the outpourings of a penitential conscience."

As the manner of the Dominican assumed a dignity of demeanor, expressive of the enthusiastic veracity of his denunciations, Charles was irresistibly attracted to his discourse, and sat riveted to his chair, as each successive revelation of iniquity reverberated upon his senses with augmented vehemence.

"It is I," continued Ximenes, "who did abuse my holy calling, and strive to pollute the virtue of Donna Inez, the goldsmith's daughter, that, deserting the honest mansion of Miguel, the argentier, she might, within the Convent of the Carmelites, pander with her beauteous form to the unhallowed passions of Arbues, the Inquisitor."

"Did my royal argentier learn thy knavery?" inquired Charles, with a faint smile, "for thy back would receive an enduring recompense."

"The coming of the Infanzon to claim his betrothed," replied the friar, disregarding the interruption, "alone averted the downfall of the argentier's house. Then did we, my master Arbues and myself, plunge into the very deepest abyss of cowardly crime; we, and we alone, were the cause of popular tumult—of indignity to thy State. In fine, purchasing deadly poisons of Balthazar, the martyred alchemist, did Arbues attempt, in friendly conference, to destroy his injured foe, when, by a miracle, to me incomprehensible, the Almighty, in his wisdom, saw fit to disclose the foul treason, and suffered our noble victim to live, and to implore, through me, justice at the hands of his most illustrious king, whom he would serve in dutiful devotion."

An hour elapsed ere the Dominican emerged from this interview with the great Emperor, who, by dint of investigation, remarkable as much for its patient elaboration as for close scrutiny, reduced the statements of Ximenes to a clear and concise series of accusations, by which the enormities of the Inquisitor could be attained.

"Worthy Father," remarked the monarch, as the Dominican was about to leave the Imperial presence, "thou hast fully atoned for thy transgressions; still it would not be safe for thee long to tarry in the midst of thine enemies. Take this passport and leave our realms; henceforth thou art no longer a monk."

The Dominican gratefully accepted the document, and reverentially saluted his Imperial protector.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A DEATH-KING'S CARNIVAL.

BEFORE sunrise on the morning of June the 4th, 1534, the day appointed for the celebration of the sacrificial solemnities of the Auto-da-fe, the streets of Seville were alive with a gaily dressed multitude of curious inhabitants, seemingly as eager to participate in the equivocal spectacle announced for consummation, as they had previously exhibited themselves to enjoy the festivities of the royal progress. Long before the rays of a rising sun penetrated through the fleecy clouds of summer's dawn, groups of expectant sight-seekers congregated within the *plaza mayor*, the allotted locality for the gloomy ceremonial about to be perpetrated in the name of religion.

Dissimilar indeed was the aspect of the public square fronting the Ducal palace, from that presented on the occasion of the Imperial welcome; the masses crowding around its terraced front, were composed of the self-same animal ingredients, but a surprising alteration of sentiment pervaded the minds of these desultory vagrants, whose pilgrimage of life appeared to be limited to a search after excitement and novelty. Though callous, fanatical, and priest-trodden, even the most ignorant Sevillians comprehended the dreadful ignominy about to be inflicted upon their natal city. Low and subdued murmurs, grave and stealthy conversation, alone manifested their presence; the people spoke in trembling accents, as if from very fear of their words being wafted upon the morning breeze to the scattered groups of Inquisitorial familiars, lounging around the extensive square. Again did the threatening cloud of desolation lower upon the sorrow-stricken capital of Andalusia, and before its bleak and blasting

visitation, the hearts of even brave men crouched into querulous cravenness. Momentarily tempted to the semblance of hilarity, by the protecting presence of a well-beloved monarch, Seville, for a few fleeting days, enjoyed an oblivion of woe, buried beneath the exacted dissimulation of the public heart; still, at the re-appearance of the saddening source of their domestic afflictions, the honest citizens, sobered to moral consciousness, grew terrified as the time approached for a renewal of past horrors, and sank, unresistingly, into the slough of despondency. The tones of the cathedral bell, reverberating in re-echoed cadences through the silent streets, where the rarely ceasing bustle of daily labor had been suspended for the while, chimed forth the hour of six. Suddenly the chant of a monastic chorus, the voices of some hundred friars, encircling an altar, erected at one end of the public square and surmounted by a huge crucifix, painted green, and draped in funeral crape, announced the commencement of the morning mass, ordained for this fatal day. With reverential awe, the gaping crowd obsequiously knelt, facing the direction whence came these would-be solemn sounds; but, alas! as an appropriate introduction to the blasphemous orgies of the occasion, the harsh voices and tuneless notes of bacchanalian revellers, friars, emerging from wine shops and taverns, where they had maintained the prescribed vigil of the preceding night, rang a grating discord in lieu of the soft and soothing melody, "Glory to Him on high!"

"By my faith," ejaculated a hearty townsman, possessed of more courage than most of his compeers, "their copious libations have somewhat spoiled the harmony of these worthy Dominicans. Nevertheless, this praying for lost souls in the midnight air is dry work, and I wonder not that they have betaken themselves to the vintners."

"Prithee, señor," inquired a sturdy woman from the mountain regions, "have these poor friars fasted and prayed the livelong night? May Heaven bless them for their saintly martyrdom!"

"Such, senora, is their accredited custom," frankly responded the first speaker; "but I warrant ye that more were to be found stretched beneath the vintner's table than before the altar."

"Room! room!" shouted an archer of the Saint Hermandad, separating the crowd,—"room for the wood-dealers!"

The assemblage gave way to the right and the left, and through an avenue of human beings passed a long procession of woodmen, guiding mules bearing heavy faggots of pine and resinous timber, cans of oil, and bundles of highly inflammable matter. The woodmen bore a conspicuous and honorable part in the procession of the *auto-da-fe*; more honorable, however, than profitable was their service, for the Holy Office demanded the supply of combustibles, used in the destruction of heretics, as an act of zealous devotion, and not as an affair of commerce. Consequently the purveyors of wood to the Inquisition were content to exert their best abilities in attaining publicity, as their sole recompense for their labor. The woodmen proceeded directly to the centre of the square, where was erected a permanent platform of solid masonry, technically styled the *quamadero*, constructed at the expense of the municipality as a perpetual funeral pile for condemned heretics. At the four corners of this stone terrace stood *statues*, or hollow oven-like receptacles, capable of containing four persons each, armed with iron doors, and designed for the slow and torturing consumption of the bodies of relapsed heretics. Along the *quamadero*, at equal distances, were placed some dozen stakes, at the feet of which the woodmen placed heaps of their combustible materials, while around the statues they distributed faggots, straw, and kindling timber, leaving merely space sufficient to allow the iron doors to play upon their hinges.

Hours rolled by; the preparations for death were being completed, and monks, relieving wearied comrades, continued the chaunt of prayers and hymns, as the stream of

the populace, disgusted at a contemplation of the paraphernalia of torture, gradually directed itself towards the quarter of the Inquisitorial prison, whence would shortly emerge the procession of unfortunates about to undergo the fatal punishment. The cathedral clock struck eight, and then its heavy bell commenced tolling the funeral knell of the unhappy victims to ecclesiastical tyranny. The hour of Pedro Arbues' revengeful triumph had arrived, and, with an almost noiseless, semi-sepulchral moan, the huge portals of the ecclesiastical Bastile were thrown open to allow the final exodus of the condemned of the priesthood. As the vanguard to the procession, marched a body of woodmen, some hundred stalwart men, in the prime of life, bearing heavy lances, or formidable matchlocks. From a courteous acknowledgement of their indispensable services, the Holy Office had condescended to assign them the right of the line in the funeral cortege, and with proud demeanor, the volunteer executioners stalked apart, attendant upon the Inquisitorial sovereign.

A heavy black banner, emblazoned with a silver cross, borne aloft by a monk of the confraternity of St. Dominic, announced the presence of an innumerable host of that Order, whose members formed the sacred legion—the ecclesiastical militia, devouring, locust-like, the products of ill-fated Spain. Two by two, with down-cast eyes, and mumbling lips, the priestly harpies, by the assumption of a modest virtue, presented a striking contrast in appearance to their armed precursors—a contrast materially heightened by the long tunics of the children of Dominic, upon whose breasts were worn their distinctive scapularies, ornamented by a cross of dazzling whiteness.

Behind this ecclesiastical horde paraded, in the pomp of infatuated vanity, the Duke of Medina Cœli, personally carrying the Grand Standard of the Faith, upon whose rich purple damask field were wrought the royal arms, while its reverse bore the peculiar emblems of the Holy Office, a naked sword, encircled by a laurel crown, garnished by the scoffing legend—*Misericordia et Justitia*.

Neither was the noble servitor alone in his ignominious vassalage, for grouped around him in contemptuous humility, walked a crowd of nobles, Grandees of the kingdom, titled descendants of valorous sires, whose memory, treasured within the hearts of a grateful people, was sullied by the bigotry and servility of their degenerate children.

After this congregation of nobility came the veritable army of the Inquisition, soldiers of Christ, archers of the Saint Hermandad, and avowed familiars of the Holy Office,—an armed multitude, drawn from every source of dignity, and enlisted in the sacred militia by an infinity of dissimilar motives. With ponderous weapons, lances, arquebusses and drawn rapiers, these dauntless men-at-arms drove back the multitude, who, while maintaining melancholy silence, pressed to catch a more satisfactory glance at the features of the unhappy victims, honored with this hideous and appalling funeral ceremonial.

The detestation of the spectators augmented at the sight of these forlorn beings, following upon the heels of the clerical militia. The condemned marched in a confused mass, without distinction as to age, sex, or station; the old, the young, the feeble and decrepit commingling in a sorrow-stricken despairing procession; floods of tears bedewed their wasted cheeks, as, with an effort of forlorn shamefulness they dragged their wretched limbs along, as if impelled by an earnest desire to hasten the accomplishment of anticipated tortures. At the sight of their disheveled locks, their pale and care-worn countenances, their contorted limbs, almost refusing the functions for which they were created, the crowd of terrified citizens vented their undisguised displeasure in an irresistible exclamation of bitter reproach against the existence of a tribunal thus adding ignominy to torment.

The prisoners were about fifty in number, distributed in classes, walking in inverse order as to the degrees of their punishment. First came those sentenced to light penitence, with bare heads and naked feet, the sun stream-

ing upon their unprotected brows, and blood gushing from their lacerated soles, upon whose *san benitos* were sewn huge crosses of Saint Andrew, of yellow cloth, in token of their determined punishment. Next to them walked those condemned to the galleys, to the whipping-post, or to perpetual imprisonment. After them followed penitents condemned to the stake. Of these first approached those who, by dint of a tardy avowal of their sins and a recantation of their errors, had obtained the ultimate favor of strangulation before being consigned to the flames. These rescued souls bore a *san benito*, ornamented with the effigies of devils, between which were painted flames burning reversedly.

This troop of hopeless victims closed with those condemned to a death by the living flames, and upon their *san benitos* glowed representations of that destined mode of execution, in fearful accuracy of design. Both of these classes of penitents wore upon their head the *corazo*, or pointed cap, three feet in height, garnished with devices corresponding to those emblazoned upon their respective *san benitos*. All the condemned, without distinction, carried in their right hands long candles of yellow wax, and were respectively attended by a Dominican confessor, and guarded by an athletic sbirre of the Holy Office.

A terrible spectacle, indeed, was this procession of martyrs, pacing with tottering limbs and haggard countenances into the deepest shadows of the valley of death. The world to them was a dismal blank, and in the consolatory realms of the future they hoped for a resting-place beyond the jurisdiction of vindictive persecutors, where the pains of mortal anguish would inevitably cease.

A violent clanking of horses' hoofs upon the rough pavements announced the presence of the Inquisitorial dignitaries and their ecclesiastical attendants, accompanied by the mounted champions of the Holy Tribunal. In the midst of these, encircled by his body guard, rode the Inquisitor-General—observed of all, and the object of countless imprecations.

Pedro Arbues smiled grimly down upon the congregated masses as he rode in triumph, his restive Arabian palfrey disdainfully pawing the earth, as if proudly conscious of the burden imposed upon him. Clad in rich violet-colored robes, concealing a heavy coat of mail, prudentially worn for personal security, the herculean form of the Dominican towered above the troop surrounding him. Repulsive as was the usual expression of his sinister features, this day they were impressed with a sardonic complacency, with an aspect of domineering assumption, harrowing the very soul of each beholder, who turned aghast from the sad spectacle of self-sufficient enjoyment so earnestly impressed upon the revolting countenance of the Inquisitorial destroyer. Callously and firmly Arbues gazed upon the multitude, as he clearly interpreted the reading of their innermost souls ; well aware of the deadly enmity entertained against him by the people, he coolly returned their mute execrations with an undisguised sneer of contempt, in which he concentrated the full virulence of a vindictive spirit. Conscious of his security, the Inquisitor manifested his sovereign disregard for the unequivocal indications of popular detestation, and upon his lips played a smile of triumph.

But a short time elapsed ere the Inquisitorial procession, assailed on every side by the half-suppressed clamors of the multitude, awed into reverence by the presence of an extraordinary militia, progressed to the theatre of judicial slaughter, and entered the *plaza mayor*, the balconies encircling which fairly overflowed with dense masses of human beings. Upon the main amphitheatrical erection allotted to the Emperor and his suite, were seated the Justiciary of the kingdom, councillors of State, civil and military dignitaries, and even illustrious foreigners, ambassadors from distinguished contemporaries of the Spanish monarch. Such was the countenance bestowed by irreflective royalty upon the powers of illegitimate tyranny. And, allured to the temple of torture by an irresistible attraction of morbid curiosity, the presence of numerous

fair spectators, who should have shrunk with horror and disgust from witnessing the tortures of their fellow-creatures, augmented the dreaded influence of the Holy Office. Wonder we then that the masses, fascinated into an attendance at these terrible spectacles, proved obdurate against the supplications of a commiserating humanity?

Charles Quint ascended the Imperial balcony, and, for the first time in his royal career, witnessed in reality the expiatory sacrifice. Morose and melancholy as his looks betokened him upon ordinary occasions, it was apparent that the unexpected spectacle, unfurled to his vision, working upon his naturally susceptible character, conferred upon his features a deeper shade than usual of gloomy meditation. As his eye compassed the vast square, and momentarily rested upon successive preparations, each increasing in ghastliness of terror, to work out the awful condemnations of the Inquisition, the Emperor became impressed with all the hideousness of the spectacle, and openly evinced his abhorrence of the aggravated barbarity of a triumphant bigoted priesthood. Suddenly his brow grew more placid, and, riveting his attention upon the scene disclosed before him, Charles noticed each passing incident with that depth of penetration and critical observation for which he was particularly noted. Steeling his mind to a degree of callousness, of which he was scarcely susceptible, the monarch internally resolved upon a rigorous survey of the ecclesiastical proceedings, and, in order to determine upon a reformation of their atrocities, as well as a mitigation of the clerical penalties, he composedly directed his attention upon the occupants of two pulpits erected in front of him, close to the wooden cages wherein were confined miserable penitents during the announcement of their transgressions, and of the sentences attached to them.

While the Inquisitorial procession slowly made the circuit of the Plaza, Pedro Arbues dismounted before the amphitheatre, constructed to the right hand of the royal

balcony, whose benches were crowded with the spiritual and temporal judges of the law, and, adjusting his robes gracefully, deliberately and majestically ascended the steps leading to the throne created for the Inquisitor-General. As Pedro Arbues mounted into his canopied stall, he assumed to notice not the admiring glances bestowed upon him, but, while endeavoring to animate his sinister features with the radiance of unaffected piety, he lowly bowed his head and disguised the ostentation of his triumphant spirit beneath the forced humility of a penitential friar. Then seating himself, he turned his eyes towards the altar, surmounted by its green cross, and, uplifting his hands heavenward, appeared to invoke a blessing upon the masses, congregated at the foot of his temporary throne. Having thus discharged the external obligations of reverence, the Inquisitor gave the preconceived signal for the commencement of the services, while a half-suppressed smile of arrogant pretension played upon his curling lip, as he bent his keen eyes upon the observant countenance of the Emperor.

Charles, who had watched every movement of the Inquisitor with a keen earnestness, at this moment perceived that the throne of Arbues was more elevated in position than the one erected for his own occupancy. With difficulty could he restrain an ebullition of passing anger, at this evident affront to his regal dignity; still, by a politic determination, the monarch stifled his rising indignation, and calmly meditated upon the lesson inculcated by this contempt for precedence. The consciousness of a subject's super-elevation, in the presence of assembled multitudes, over the accustomed position of a monarch, was, to a sovereign of Charles's pride, an unpardonable insult; nevertheless he was at a loss to compass means for the neutralization of the Inquisitor's pretension. Potent, honored, victorious, almost without an equal among contemporaneous temporal princes, the Emperor of the West perceived himself virtually secondary to the representative of the Roman Pontiff.

By assisting at the religious saturnalia, Charles sacrificed his worldly dignity; and could Pedro Arbues, exponent of clerical supremacy, be blamed for the assertion of the precedence, pompously assumed by the master and spiritual king of nations, whose mantle had that day descended upon his shoulders? True, it was a struggle between the dignity of the Imperial diadem and that of the Apostolic tiara; Pedro Arbues, representative of the Eternal Church, towered over Charles, representative of worldly state. Galling, in fact, were the reflections of the proud conqueror, as he viewed his hereditary sceptre almost imperceptibly passing into the hands of an upstart friar.

"So, so," muttered the Emperor to himself, "it appears that the Emperor of Germany is no longer monarch of the kingdom of Spain. But many days will not elapse ere I will rule my subjects according to my sovereign will."

Ambitious Charles harshly grated his teeth, and intently watched the countenance of the Inquisitor, as in obedience to his silent mandate, the condemned were being forced into the cages in front of the regal balcony, by the attendant sbires, while a Dominican mounted the pulpit to read aloud their sentence. The monarch failed not to detect the animated expression of Pedro's features, as his subordinate pronounced, in his name, sentence upon an athletic prisoner, whose tall and manly figure attracted the Emperor's attention.

The unhappy condemned turned an imploring glance upon his sovereign, and pathetically exclaimed: "Beloved Sire—"

The naturally element disposition of Charles tempted him to listen to the suppliant's prayer, but, at a motion of the Inquisitor's hand, the miserable petitioner was hurried afar from the throne, whose grace he sought to invoke. Again was the Emperor convinced of his comparative insignificance, and moodily lamented the departure of his executive prerogative.

"Accursed be these traitorous monks, these new weapons of destruction," exclaimed the monarch, whose anger

exceeded the government of politic decorum, "that they steal away the simple dignity of my regal office. What crime hath that man committed, that he is thus paraded to ignominious death?"

"Your Majesty," returned the Duke of Medina Coeli, assuming his seat upon the right hand of the Emperor, "that man has proclaimed foul heresy, and did deny the Immaculate Conception of the Holy Virgin, beside maintaining pernicious doctrines, with respect to the accursed Augsburgh Confession of Faith."

"Has the fellow not served in our armies?" inquired Charles, "methinks, by his demeanor, he has a tinge of the military art."

"Truly, I have heard say," replied the Duke, "that in the stormy fight of Pavia, as leader of a troop, he plied his sword with wondrous efficacy, scattering braggart Frenchmen to quick perdition."

"And thus must he die!" ejaculated the Emperor, "the brave in arms, have they no right to controvert the errors of dogmatic faith, save to jeopardize in spiritual battle the issue of a soul's contention?"

The Grand Standard-Bearer gazed upon his Imperial master in mute abstraction. There was to be detected in this honest speech of manly indignation a prophetic spirit, boding ill to the uncurbed sway of the Holy Office. As insignificant particles, floating upon the surface of the sea, denote the silent course of the hidden current, in like manner these simple words, falling from the lips of the great Emperor, betokened the invisible tendency of a reformatory mind. The timorous Duke noted well the tenor of his sovereign's thoughts, and maintained a thoughtful silence, as Charles narrowly watched the progress of the trooper's condemnation.

Conducted by the sbire, attended by a confessor, perpetually exhorting his recantation of error, that his soul might glide into the bosom of the Church, the soldier mounted the *quamadero* and assumed his position at the funeral stake, smiling contentedly upon the crowd anxiously thronging around the fatal terrace.

A mournful silence, a total cessation of chants and of hymns; a death-like solemnity, interrupted only by the clatter of faggots falling around the person of the condemned, succeeded the proclamation of his martyrdom. Each nerve-braced spectator held his breath, and muttered not a sound of life, as above the melancholy calm rang the clear, unbroken voice of the prisoner, its dying cadences touching the heart of every auditor, restrained by terror in the presence of the executioners of the dreaded Inquisition.

"I confess," exclaimed the penitent, "that I have sinned against God! I have served him less faithfully than have I the Emperor. Now, in the presence of my enemies, whom I forgive, I make this solemn act of repentance, and with my last breath acknowledge my redemption in the covenants of the Augsburgh Confession."

Further utterance was denied the condemned, as, with the bound of an infuriated tiger, the Dominican Confessor leaped upon the pinioned soldier, and endeavored to stifle the unwelcome sound of his undaunted voice. A burst of wonderment and of anguish broke from the astonished concourse, while the face of Arbues grew purple from desperation of rage.

The Inquisitor-General gave from his throne the signal for final punishment, and with surprising alacrity the woodmen piled burning faggots around the resolute sufferer.

"More wood, that I may more quickly bow unto my King on High," exclaimed the trooper, smiling meekly upon the attendants, aiding in his destruction, while the sweetness of his voice electrified the admiring masses, as, above the din and confusion of the scene, the martyr was heard to chant an exquisitely melodious hymn of Lutheran composition.

With undisguised satisfaction, Pedro Arbues watched the progress of the livid flames; dense volumes of black smoke encircled the unfortunate victim, and as these wreathing clouds were wafted to the remote regions of air, bright embers and crackling timbers glowed with furious

avidity, while the devouring element clambered in serpentine columns, spreading a wide sheet of irresistible flame around the tortured body of the heretic.

In like manner were given to destruction the remnant of the Inquisitorial procession, until at each post of the *quamadero* burned a human body, gradually consumed by the livid flame, while from within the bowels of the hollow statues issued heart-rending moans and despairing lamentations, the agonizing shrieks of victims, slowly reduced to ashes by the augmenting heat of blazing embers, incessantly heaped around those suffocating furnaces.

At length, the fires slowly becoming extinguished, from the elevated posts dangled the scorched and charred remains of fellow-mortals, irrecoznizable, from mutilation, even to their most loving friends, and the dense smoke-beclouded atmosphere was tainted with the noxious odor of burning human flesh, striking upon the nostrils with nauseating vehemence, when Pedro Arbues, king of death, turned his keen, piercing glance upon the royal balcony.

The Imperial throne was vacant ; Charles, oppressed sorely at heart by the saddening spectacle, had taken advantage of the irrepressible excitement of the multitude, straining their eyes to catch a glimpse, through fleecy clouds of smoke, of each contorted limb, struggling in desperation of deadly violence, to withdraw from the spectacle harrowing his very soul. But one king ruled in Seville ; the ambition of Pedro Arbues had attained its warmest aspiration ; and, conscious of the victory by him wrought over the defiant tendencies of the State, the Inquisitor-General, as he wended his pathway prisonward, deigned not to solicit, nor even to accept, the caresses of a terrified populace.

The darkness of night had fallen upon the *plaza mayor*, when a small body of Gitanos, children of the Garduna, gathered around the still smoking trunk of the martyred trooper's body, and, tenderly loosening the blackened corpse, bore it off to a place of secret sepulchre. A youthful friar, half-decked in Dominican garb, reverentially super-

intended the translation of these maltreated bones from the scene of their mutilation. It was Ximenes, the recusant monk, who, by order of the Emperor Charles, was about to entomb the mangled corpse of a soldier, who had escaped injury in the service of his king, to win laurels in that of his God.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE WRATH OF VENGEANCE.

WHILE the repentant colleague of the Inquisitor, awakened to a deep sense of remorse for his constant co-operation in working out the wily schemes of his implacable master, was bestowing furtive funeral rites upon the remains of the heretical soldier, Pedro Arbues, flushed with the victorious triumphs of the day, hastened to summon a convocation of ecclesiastical dignitaries within the banquetting hall of the Inquisitorial Palace. Beneath the fretted dome of an arabesque pavilion, supported by half a hundred slender columns, springing lightly from the marble pavement and gracefully touching the grotesque vault, painted in truthful representation of the celestial sphere, was spread a table loaded with the richest and rarest viands, confectioned with the daintiest skill of epicureanism. The vast storehouse of inquisitorial treasure, upon that occasion, displayed its golden wealth ; and heaped upon the polished oaken board, glittered vases, ewers, urns and goblets, wrought of precious metals, by the craftiest workmen of the world. Within these jeweled vessels of infinite value sparkled wines of exquisite delicacy, of the choicest vintage, fermented from grapes pressed during auspicious moments of siderial influences, when flaming comets, traversing the air in their fiery course, portended evil to struggling man, or when the obscured disc of the eclipsed moon poured a beneficent gleam of partial hope upon a sorrowing world.

Pedro Arbues, in commemoration of the restoration of his shaken authority, determined upon this night of revel, resolved to outvie the marvellous prodigality of his previous archiepiscopal banquets, and true to the instinct

of an ignorant presumption, to astound his guests with an illimitable display of sensual appliances, with which he had ingeniously contrived to cause himself to be surrounded. Flattered by an appreciation of his temporal authority, extorted from the terrors of a craven multitude, the Inquisitor, upon the evening of his labors, sought to assume the position of an hospitable prelate, and therefore exposed to the wondering eyes of his brother ecclesiastics the gorgeous spectacle of regal magnificence, illicitly usurped by him as a representative of a Church, whose founders were mendicants and wanderers.

Discarding the formal ceremonies of outward usage, the recipients of Arbues' hospitality, archbishops, priors and other reverend dignitaries, threw aside all consideration of the cross and crozier, of the chalice and the missal, as an impediment to an unrestrained indulgence in the hilarity of the hour. Within the banquetting hall, oblivious as to the existence of dogmatic feuds, and neglectful of schismatic dissensions, the Dominican Archbishop of Seville pledged in the froth-beaded wine-cup the Franciscan Prelate of Toledo, while the stalwart prior of Minorca, suspected of secret Arianism, joined in fraternal congratulation the Commander of Calavatara, champion of ultramontane orthodoxy. In a general communion of undisguised debauchery, they rejoiced with each other over the physical triumph of the Church : that incomprehensible myth, in whose service these chosen few of her many servitors had obligated themselves to the observance of temperance, chastity and physical abstinence.

Thus sought forgetfulness in sensual revelry the men whose selfish fear and ambition had been lately satiated by a holocaust of human victims. Such is the justice of the world. Thus is it that the weak, the innocent, the good, suffer for imaginary transgressions, and even for what is really meritorious ; while the powerful, supported by established law and superstition, trample on justice and defy religion, and secretly indulge in all vice and debauchery, pretending to be the maintainers of right and the minis-

ters of heaven. The powerful and the high in station and authority may commit with impunity wrongs and sins, for which those lower in position would meet with speedy punishment. That which is sinful in the heretic, becomes merely an indiscretion in the acts of the shepherd; and consequently, while the contagious sincerity of the fanatic, the laudable heroism of the Israelite, open examples of pertinacious contumacy against ecclesiastical despotism, were suppressed beneath the tortures of the Inquisition, the genius of Christianity looked with a pardoning eye upon the frailties of the anointed of the Lord.

Did not then Pedro Arbues aright to spread a banquet for the children of the Church? For, as the heart of man is obdurate, better is it for the flesh of the heretic to moulder into ashes, physical relics of a purity destructive to the theory of priestcraft, than that the heaven-appointed hierarchy ignobly suffer from a lack of the luxuries of the kingdom they were sent to govern. Ecclesiastical sin exists not in the body; and if the soul be purified by the sacrifice of a worthless neighbor, call ye it crime, that the chant of revelry ascend from priestly lips, while the expiatory flame enwraps the body of martyred penitents? Truly may the Christianity of nature deem it thus; still otherwise is transgression regarded by the Christianity of artificial sovereignty.

Leaving the Inquisitor and his colleagues to sink gradually before the exhilarating fascinations of the wine cup, let us turn our glances upon the movements of the young Dominican, who has sadly superintended the entombment of the martyred soldier. Among the desolate ruins of the Alhambra, encircled by a few stragglers from the camp of the Garduna, Father Ximenes erected a fragile cross. Sadly he knelt before it, and with words of penitential bitterness, outpoured a prayer imploring mercy for the soul of him they thus clandestinely deposited in the bosom of our common mother earth.

"Father Ximenes," quoth the rude voice of Mandamiento, as the priest arose from his pious meditations and

moved along towards a clump of broken columns, "thinkest thou the hour of judgment hath not arrived for a man guilty of so many crimes as Pedro Arbues, or must for evermore our land be tainted by scenes such as of those to-day?"

"Mandamiento," answered the priest, "armed with the triple armor of sanctity, girded with the two-edged sword of the Church, the Inquisitor possesses a vitality denied less unscrupulous destroyers. Have I not indeed sought to open the Imperial eyes to a contemplation of the ruin wrought upon unhappy Spain through the shackles of this curse?"

"And the Emperor," interrupted the Master of the Garduna, "will he not rid us from this accursed nightmare—this deadly pestilence?"

"Mandamiento," resumed the Dominican, drawing nearer the brow of the eminence, and gazing intently upon the slumbering city, stretched beneath his feet, basking as it were in the beams of pale bluish moonlight—"Charles, the beloved monarch of our land, mourns the destruction of his people as bitterly as do we; still is he not sold into bondage, fettered even unto the tongue, and impotent as to utterance of justice?"

The Master of the Garduna shook his head mournfully; although the robber chieftain had been a man of most unscrupulous antecedents, his better nature, warmed into regenerative commiseration by the friendly countenance of his newly-found protector, the Infanzon, still leaned towards an exhibition of judicial clemency. A man of the masses, deeply tainted with ignorance and religious superstition, his youth had been wasted in lawless vagabondage; yet, upon his assumption of command over the felon community, his rude comprehension of natural legislation, had gradually expanded into an equitable scheme of government, despotic, it is true, but nevertheless conducive to their common weal.

"I cannot comprehend, Father," continued the Master, "how, if Charles be a sovereign, his will is not the law, and his commands obeyed."

"Alas! Mandamiento," replied the friar, "we, who dwell not in courts, little understand the isolation of the great luminary directing our political destiny. Charles is but a mortal, and his eyes penetrate not through the film obscuring his vision; he loves the people, and would remedy their grievances, but between him and the objects of his philanthropic solicitude, a hundred barriers are erected by designing men, to shield their own iniquities. Blame not, then, a monarch, if justice, entrusted to others in his name, rarely attains those for whom it is intended."

The Master of the Garduna proceeded in silent cogitation, until he and his companion reached the extreme verge of the hill overlooking the ancient capital of Granada.

"Father Ximenes," resumed the robber chief, "thou hast bestowed a favor upon me, and I fain would return it. Thou art determined to leave this realm and wander into distant countries?"

"Yes, Mandamiento," replied the priest, "such is my intent. Not that I dread the wrath of Pedro Arbues, who will not fail to wreak vengeance upon my shattered frame, when he learns, as he assuredly must, my revelations to the Emperor; still I would practice peaceful charity in some land, unpolluted by the contagion of monomaniacal destroyers."

"This ground, Father," tranquilly resumed the Garduna, "is sanctified by a legendary title, and from this point it best befits thee to bid a last adieu to the smiling towers of Seville. We stand upon turf hallowed by the tears of a royal exile, one who ruled in mercy and humanity."

The Dominican gazed at the Gitano in amazement, at this unexpected historical allusion, but the other proceeded, apparently without noticing his listener's concern, and pointed out the steeples and turrets, glistening beneath them.

"This mound I, in common with every other of Moorish descent, have been taught to reverence as an unde-

stroyed monument of our ancient greatness. Upon this spot tarried Boabdil el Chico, last monarch of Granada, to turn his tearful eyes for the last time upon his forfeited inheritance—it is known as the 'Last sigh of the Moor.' But sadder indeed is the memory of this melancholy nook to him who has oft bedewed it with his tears in expiation of his own crimes."

The masculine form of the Master became convulsed with a fearful movement, and shuddering from head to foot, the strong man shed tears of pain and of anguish. The friar gently supported his sinking limbs.

"Courage, Mandamiento," quoth Ximenes, astounded at the violent paroxysm of grief assailing his companion, "give vent to thy penitence that the mercy of Heaven may descend upon thy purified heart."

"This desolate spot," continued the Gardunan chief, in a voice broken by deep drawn sobs, "was the scene of my first outrage against my kind. Allured by the accursed gold of Pedro Arbues, I foully seized and carried off a beauteous maiden and a lovely child, orphans of a noble house. Their shrieks of despair still ring in my ears as that terrible scene recurs to my imagination in fearful vividness."

"Thou didst not murder them?" meekly inquired the Dominican.

"Nay, I did worse," returned the Master, roughly wiping away burning tears from his rugged cheek; "I did deliver them in to the power of that insatiable harpy—of him whose gold purchased my degradation. Alas! Father, how heavily has my conscience smote me for my unhallowed aid in the cruel separation of that orphan pair. Oftentimes, seated upon the broken columns of this desolate mound, do I listen to the wailings of the bereaved maiden, as the echoes of her supplicating voice haunt my solitary footsteps around a spot I find it impossible wholly to desert. Yea, even now, upon the wings of the breeze I hear the dying moan of the forlorn one's agonizing shriek—it follows me, even in thy presence!"

Mandamiento seated himself upon some fragments of the Moresco palace, and bending his face almost to his knees, sobbed hysterically, and tore his hair in abjectness of sorrow.

"Calm thyself," quoth the friar, addressing the Gitano in kindly accents, "and continue thy confession—what became of the maiden?"

"Once within the grasp of the destroyer," resumed the Master, "transplanted within the walls of a convent, her honor was violated, and thenceforth her dazzling beauty ornamented but a desecrated fane. Deserted, betrayed, dishonored, for years she battled against the temptations of despair; one tie alone bound her to this wretched earth—the consciousness that her brother lived, and might some day prove the avenger of her outraged purity."

"Truly, does the youth survive?" earnestly inquired the Dominican.

"Educated within the Dominican convent," replied the Gardunan, "beneath the very eye of the violator of his sister's chastity, the boy hath grown to manhood in blissful ignorance of his grievous wrongs; and even now, a friar of the Order, he honors and esteems his enemy as his benefactor, and pardons the crimes of Arbues from love for his holy calling."

"It cannot long be thus," quoth the priest; "when he learns the bitterness of his grievances; when he views the hapless wreck of fraternal happiness; when upon his astounded soul is outpoured the full knowledge of his wrongs, the fury of an uncaged tiger will seize his frenzied spirit, and there will be no rest for him in this world until the blood of the desecrator washes the disgrace from the name of the outraged family."

"Would that it could be so!" mournfully ejaculated Mandamiento. "Thinkest thou that he, a priest, sworn to blind obedience, would violate the obligations of his Order and slay the author of his wrongs?"

"He owes a holier duty to his sister's honor," replied the Dominican, "than can be restrained by the vile obli-

gations, unconsciously assumed by one, honestly designing to serve his God, and not to mar his justice."

"And what retaliation would he deal forth to me," inquired the Master, in a tone expressive of entreaty, "who was the active cause of his grief?"

"In gratitude would he thank thee for thy revelations," responded the friar, turning his expressive eyes upon the changing features of his companion; "for Christian charity would forbid his harboring revenge against the repentant perpetrator of even an irreparable injury, when the instigator lives within reach of his vengeance."

"Then, Pedro Arbues," joyfully exclaimed Mandamiento, resuming his characteristic expression of energy, "I will fulfill my meditated vengeance, and into the hands of an injured brother, yield punishment for the cruel debauchment of a pure, celestial maiden."

"And who is to be the avenger?" inquired Ximenes.

"None other than thyself!" answered the Master of the Garduna, his voice gathering strength, as he pronounced the sentence, until the final word burst upon the Dominican with the deafening peal of a thunder-clap; "go thou into the streets of Seville, and there breathes not a garrulous dame, who cannot relate to thee the piteous tale of thy sister, Donna Isabel, the flower of Granada!"

"Isabel!" ejaculated the friar, his eyes rolling in wild excitement, "I well remember that name in connection with my early youth—and doth she still breathe this Spanish air—my poor, insulted sister?"

"Yea," muttered the Master, "and her living voice calls for vengeance. Wreak his just doom upon her base destroyer, and thou shalt behold her."

"Mandamiento, deceive not a desperate man," piteously implored the Dominican, turning abjectly to the Gitano; "the wrongs Pedro Arbues has wrought against me personally, I may forgive, but a stain upon my family honor—a blot upon our escutcheon—never!"

"My tale is true—true as the ever-living God above us!" exclaimed the Gardunan, pointing reverentially to

the canopy of heaven; "hearest thou not the voice of thy fallen sister, loudly summoning thee to vengeance?"

"Thou shalt be obeyed, my sister!" solemnly ejaculated Ximenes, the perspiration standing upon his brow, and his limbs quivering.

"Hark!" quoth Mandiamento, as the booming sound of a heavy bell broke upon his ears, "the day breaks, there is no time to lose. Hence to the good work, and by the hour of noon meet me at the barrier of the Triana; thence will I bear thee to rejoin thy expectant sister. Courage—remember Isabel!"

With that mysterious celerity of movement, ever distinguishing the felon chieftain, Mandamiento glided almost imperceptibly from the eyes of the Dominican, who stood riveted to the spot, in anguish and astonishment at his companion's revelations, gazing vacantly in the direction of his retiring figure. Overpowered by the succession of incidents occurring within the few past days, the mind of Father Ximenes grew bewildered, and sought repose in tranquil meditation, as he wandered among the architectural ruins of the ancient palace, from whose gate the royal Moor breathed his last farewell to his lost Granada.

Heated with the noxious vapors of the wine-cup, Pedro Arbues retired from the banqueting hall to his small, confined and gloomy cabinet, adjoining the chapel of the Palace of the Inquisition. Notwithstanding his deep potations and the narcotic properties of the liquids, after the effervescence of their forced exhilaration the eyes of the Inquisitor-General remained unvisited by slumber, long after he had thrown himself upon the humble pallet, upon which, in accordance with the ordinances of his Order, he had habituated himself to repose. Vainly he sought to compose his disordered thoughts, and to banish from his mind the unwelcome ideas and feelings that disturbed him. Although a painful weariness, a nervous sensation of unrest, pressed heavily upon his limbs, to him was denied the consolations of restorative sleep. To no purpose

did he seek distraction in the reiterated counting of his beads; to no purpose, by the fitful light of a flickering lamp, did he re-peruse the pages of his Missal; upon him came not the forgetfulness of slumber. Hours rolled by as he tossed to and fro in galling restlessness of spirit, and it seemed to him that each passing moment augmented the intensity of the fever that was consuming him. If, perchance, his eyes closed for a moment from excess of physical weariness, a heavy burden rested upon his bosom, binding him to his couch with an oppressive weight, stifling the circulation of the life current through his veins, and torturing him with an inexplicable combination of pains and horrors.

When at last the feeble lamp ceased to burn, and darkness gradually fell upon the chamber, a succession of gloomy spectres, of hideous spectacles, of indescribable shapes of terror, passed around his bedside in a phantasmagoria of fearful reality. Increasing in hideous exaggeration, these spectral shadows took countless horrid and disgusting forms: headless trunks besmeared with blood flowing from revolting wounds; demons of uncouth size, and of terrible aspect; reptiles of gigantic magnitude exhaling vapors of pernicious quality—until the brain of Arbues quailed at the vision, and his thickening blood seemed to chill and curdle. At length the coveted boon of slumber descended upon his palsied frame, and the Inquisitor sank into a dismal troubled dreaminess, far different from the healthy peaceful slumber he desired in vain.

It was long after his usual hour of awakening that Pedro Arbues was aroused from the lethargy into which he had fallen. The sun gleamed through the narrow casements of his chamber, and a straggling beam played upon his livid, sweat-bedewed, countenance, revealing the hideous deformity of his features, now contorted and spasmodically convulsed.

By his pallet side awaited the Soldier Estrada, whose nervous movements gave ample evidence of impatience for

the Inquisitor's awakening. As the latter, with difficulty, opened his eyes, and unconsciously beat his arms against the air, as if to dispel an imaginary cloud hanging upon his brow, Francisco addressed him in a coarse, rude voice, entirely different from the humble and obsequious accent, usually employed by him in converse with his dreaded superior.

"Awake, Pedro Arbues, I have business with thee?" quoth the Soldier, the huskiness of his tones grating harshly through his clenched teeth; "why art thou sleeping, when Seville boils in threatening commotion?"

"Francisco, thou here?" muttered the Inquisitor, with a vacant stare.

"Aye, for the moment," returned Estrada; "arouse thee, that I may depart."

"Francisco," quoth Arbues, arising partly from his couch, and shaking himself, as if to re-circulate the congealed blood through his veins, "I have had such terrible dreams!"

"Mere precursors to the stern realities of the morrow," bitterly resumed the Soldier—"realities thou must combat by thy own skill, wholly."

"What meanest thou, Estrada?" ejaculated the Inquisitor, gazing intently upon the person of his former colleague, in astonishment and surprise.

Truly had Pedro Arbues cause for wonderment upon remarking the altered habiliments of the Soldier of Christ. No longer clothed in the rich raiment, the velvet mantle and ornamented doublet of his professional attire, Estrada presented the strange spectacle of a wandering mendicant, habited in the ill-fitting, cumbrous and coarse garments prescribed by law for those vagrants, licensed by legal custom to rely for precarious support upon alms from the charitable. A loose serge gown enveloped his limbs, rude leather sandals protected his feet, a scanty pack dangled from his shoulders, while a metal badge fastened upon his breast proclaimed the ignominy of his newly-assumed calling.

"Yea, Pedro Arbues, stare with all thine eyes," harshly

spoke the Soldier. "Dost thou admire my new uniform—the outward cloak of ambition?"

"Art thou crazed?" interrupted Arbues. "What means this masquerade?"

"Simply the reward of toil in thy ennobling service," replied Estrada, his words of irony parching his palate; "to this fine pass have I come after the waste of manhood. Behold me, a licensed mendicant, suffered by royal authority to beg my daily bread from door to door, to gather crumbs from the tables of those thou promised me should tremble at my name."

"How comes this," earnestly interposed the Inquisitor; "is thy authority despised?"

"My authority, forsooth!" rejoined the Soldier, a sneer playing upon his lips; "there is not a cur in Seville but bays against me. Behold my patent of undying nobility—read this edict, and rejoice."

Estrada placed in the hands of the Prior a piece of parchment, countersigned in bold characters and impressed with the Emperor's privy seal. As his eyes followed its unequivocal mandate of banishment, the features of the Inquisitor became purple with rage, then pale with fear. Still holding in his trembling hands the fatal document, and gazing at it—

"This from the Emperor!" he muttered, "it is passing strange that he dare tamper with the God-derived authority of the Church. Estrada, despise the presumptuous dictates of the selfish monarch. I will protect thee!"

"Thou, protect me!" jeeringly responded the familiar. "Twere better look to thyself. Pedro Arbues, thy pride hath been our ruin; in thy vain parade, in thy ostentatious display of rank, thou didst seat thyself one step too high for Imperial pride to brook. There can be but one monarch in Spain; and who shall rule? Charles, beloved of his people, anointed of the Lord, or Pedro Arbues, tyrant of the Inquisition, detested, hated and despised?—One must swallow the other."

"Has it come to this?" gasped the Inquisitor, "dares

Charles rebel against our Holy Office? would he brave the thunders of the Vatican?"

"I know not," composedly returned Estrada, "save that I am the victim. To this degradation have I brought myself, by placing my trust in thee. An exiled mendicant, after years spent in thy ignoble, detestable service; such is my fair reward. Pedro Arbues, with my parting voice I curse thee, yea, curse thee! For thee I have sacrificed honor, repute, gratitude, and love; yes, for thee I would have slaughtered the offspring of my loins! Sinking step by step, I have reached perdition. Here we part; but look to thyself, lest a deserved mortal judgment overwhelm thee as the kingly wrath crushed me. Pedro Arbues, I go, but I leave behind my foulest, deadliest curse. Villain as I am, my curse may avail naught; still that of my Zelda, that of the ravished Isabel, may conjure up some implacable avenger!"

The Soldier of Christ gathered around him his loose garment of serge, and, clutching firmly his stout oaken staff, stalked forth with a heavy tread from the Inquisitor's cabinet. He vanished from the sight of Pedro Arbues with the aspect of an avenging spectre; his tall, muscular figure was distended to an enormous height, while upon his relentless countenance beamed a scowl of superhuman hate. The Dominican made an ineffectual gesture, as if to prevent the precipitate departure of his unwelcome guest; then, reeling, as if overpowered by the recurrence of physical stupor, he staggered to the couch side, and fell heavily upon the pallet. Exhausted in frame, prostrated in spirit, Arbues panted spasmodically, as if the simple act of drawing breath involved an unendurable torture. Convulsively clutching the air, contorting his limbs as if with agony, he buried his face within his hands, and abandoned himself to utter despair. The heavy bell of the cathedral aroused the Inquisitor to a partial recognition of external occurrences; straightway, summoning the remnant of his strength, he quitted his prostrate position, and sought to reanimate his paralyzed limbs.

Feebly he paced the apartment, as the dim mist, floating before his bewildered eyesight, dissipated before his returning powers.

"O God! God!" he hopelessly exclaimed, "have I thus fallen? Is peace for ever denied my agonized soul? True, I have sinned—horribly sinned; still is there no rest for the repentant sinner? O Heaven! why have I crushed myself beneath the allurements of deceptive power? Rebellious against my Master, I forgot that I was mortal, and outraged every feeling of humanity. Now I am lost—lost to eternity."

The Inquisitor rested some moments in anxious abstraction, and then clasping his hands above his head, exclaimed,—

"Yea, yea, there is salvation, even for the fallen! O gracious God! grant me but strength to reach the foot of that cross I have spit upon, that to thee, O Lord! I may confess my sins, and may arise in thy sight a regenerated being. Oh! grant me that the blood of my Saviour may wash away the transgressions of the unworthiest of thy creatures."

Apparently revived by the consciousness of repentance, Pedro Arbues divested himself of his rich violet garments, which he had preserved on his person, as worn at the banquet of the previous night, threw aside his fine-wrought coat of mail, and replaced them by a suit of haircloth, bound to his body with heavy penitential chains. Over these coarse disciplinarian garments, he threw the poverty-stricken, rudely-fashioned robes prescribed for the humble brethren of St. Dominic. Thus habited, the Inquisitor dragged himself, with painful exertion, along the corridor, and entered the chapel by a private doorway, nor far distant from his chamber. The temple of prayer was deserted, and through its silent hall swept but the gentle breath of the morning air—never could the holy spot be more proper for the outpouring of a sincerely repentant spirit.

Pedro Arbues knelt upon the steps of the master altar,

praying fervently ; soon the world without became lost unto him, as in fervency of devotion he gave vent to an earnest confession of his manifold transgressions. As he progressed in his internal exhortations, tears rolled down his pallid cheeks, softening the anguish of his tortured soul, until convinced that his prayers had been heard on High, his spirit, relieved of the oppressive burthen, grinding him to the bosom of the earth, rang forth into a joyful hallelujah :

"Saved ! saved !!"

Intently occupied in his humiliation and devotion, the Inquisitor failed to perceive, that near him stood another figure, likewise robed as a Dominican. It was Ximenes, who had noiselessly followed him into the sanctuary, and with cat-like patience watched every movement. The young friar glided close to the bended form of the Inquisitor, and hanging over him, drank in every word he uttered. Mutely the listener noticed each varying phase of the penitent's countenance, as, wrapt in the contemplation of the scene, he stood silent as a statue.

"O Lord ! in gratitude I adore thee !" enthusiastically exclaimed the Inquisitor, bowing reverentially to the altar ; "now, indeed, could I leave this wretched world, and seek happiness in eternity."

"Thinkest thou so, Pedro Arbues ?" inquired a reverberating voice.

"Yea, since I have confessed, and am forgiven," responded the penitent, without noticing the human source of the inquiry.

"Hast thou remembered Isabel ?" reiterated the voice.

"Isabel ! Isabel !" ejaculated the Inquisitor, calmly, "thou, too, wilt forgive the grievous wrong I did inflict upon thee ; wilt thou not ?" he added, in energetic fervency, his eyes glistening with tear-drops, as a reminiscence of the past flitted before his brain.

"Art thou then prepared to desert this sphere of care ? canst thou die in the confidence of redemption ?" again inquired the voice, its tones assuming a sepulchral hollowness.

"I can ! I can !" enthusiastically ejaculated the penitent.

"Pedro Arbues, the angel of death demands thee !"

While thus speaking, the young Dominican drew from beneath his robes the heavy dagger, which he had purchased of the learned Balthazar, and plunged its poisoned blade firmly into the breast of the Inquisitor, who, moaning piteously, fell almost instantaneously upon the marble steps leading to the altar.

"Ximenes !" groaned forth Pedro Arbues, "thy hand, too, imbued in blood ?"

"I have but fulfilled my mission," triumphantly returned the Dominican. "'Upon the heads of the dealers in blood, shall rest the vengeance of blood !' Better that thou shouldst die now than await the recurrence of temptation. Moan, hound of Satan, moan ! it will avail thee not ! the deadly poison of the Orient is infused through thy veins ; the jaws of eternity gape for thee !"

Father Ximenes hurriedly emerged from the chapel, into which, ere long, a host of Inquisitorial attendants, alarmed at the sobs and groans of the poison-stricken Inquisitor, rushed in time to witness his dying convulsions. By the side of the dead man lay the instrument of his decease, a richly wrought weapon, dissimilar from any in general use. Vainly did the sbires implore, from the lips of the victim, the name of his murderer ; the jaws of Pedro Arbues were locked in death.

CHAPTER XXV.

NO COUNTRY—NO HOME.

It was a day of festival at the Castle of the Sorcerers. Both within the castle gates and without, among the meadows, spread at the base of the steep and rugged mountain crested with battlements, there ruled a spirit of genial contentment, spreading its happy influence alike over the rich and the poor, the cavalier and the peasant. Two happy nuptials had been solemnized within the obscure castlet, according to the simple rites of its honest and peaceable tenants. True, the pomp and ceremony of vainglorious celebration, the paraphernalia of ecclesiastical benediction, the idle formula of mocking words, had been dispensed with; nevertheless, the petty community of the Sorcerers, blended as they were into a confraternity of love and peace, had on this day witnessed the espousal of two noble cavaliers and two gentle dames. No priest in capuchin and cowl had mumbled chants of senseless jargon; no acolyte had flourished censers, fragrant with rich frankincense; no brawling choir had moaned forth staves of monkish minstrelsy. On the contrary, beneath the open vault of a cloudless sky, in the tranquil presence of Him who created the heart to love and the arm to protect, did two gallant knights pledge their fealty to two youthful beauties, vowing in recompense eternal love and fidelity to their accepted champions. In this wise were espoused Captain Sanchez to Donna Blanca, and the Knight of Estella to the Goldsmith's heiress.

The broad banner of Viarna floated in regal dignity from the donjon keep; huge tables, loaded with healthful viands, lined the court-yard, and countless sacks of grate-

ful wine were offered to assuage the wayfarer's thirst. In hall and in cottage revelry resounded in honor of the propitious day, and upon the features of the motley assembly gleamed but an honest expression of hearty joy. For a day, at least, had the Sorcerers shaken off their habitual solemnity of demeanor, and abandoned themselves to the enjoyment of a chastened mirth, a sincere hilarity, consonant with the staid and disciplined manner of their ordinary life. The fountain of their impulses being the heart, the moral centre of their mutual obligations, their pleasures were simple and natural—the overflowing of pure and kindly feelings—and their dearest enjoyments and indulgences were mingled with a generous benevolence.

Sanchez, late Captain of the Archers, nursed into healthfulness by the kind attentions of the matronly chatelaine, appeared feverishly jealous of the passing hours denying him the comfort of Blanca's presence. He had espoused the Princess of Viarna in due solemnity of faith, and, as the consort of so worthy and distinguished a lady, vowed to return the lustre borrowed from her alliance by a constant recompense of grateful fidelity. Without a pang he relinquished the roving company of halberdiers; without a sigh he tore himself from the many scenes of equivocal mirth and indulgence, over which he had presided in mock royalty. In the honored presence of his beauteous bride was concentrated an enjoyment, tranquil, it is true, to the pleasure-hunter, but unattainable amid the bustle and excitement of an irregular existence. Sanchez was trebly happy at the consummation of his marital projects; no longer did he conceive himself an isolated creature of accident, lacking as it were a standard of life; beloved and esteemed by his wife, admitted into the companionship of an honorable society, he threw aside the idle fantasies of his past career with enthusiastic resolution, and, believing that no worthier task could engage him than to enhance the dignity of her who had conferred upon him the distinctions of rank and honor, he fervently determined to devote his future to the prosecution of an ennobling calling.

"Sanchez," quoth Donna Blanca, leaning tenderly upon the arm of the youthful bridegroom, "is not the simplicity of a virtuous life, the tranquil enjoyment of peaceful retirement, preferable to the noise and vanity of an empty pursuit after worldly pleasure? Look around us and behold the petty group of revelers, intoxicated with simple mirth, with a sincerity of contentedness, we, creatures of the busy world, would despise and scorn. To their unsophisticated tastes the gaieties of this festive hour convey more genuine pleasure than a half century of the pageantry, turmoil, and excitement those of the great world style life."

"Of a verity, thus is it," interposed Miguel, upon whose features, overshadowed by locks of iron-gray, beamed a heartiness of joy, heretofore a stranger to his toilsome existence; "vain are the delusions of ambitious contestants amidst the placidity of nature; for in disappointment and sorrow must ever terminate the ceaseless struggle of selfish beings against the calm of nature's harmony. To the world within, the mind, and to it alone, man must ever be indebted for the indestructible resources whereupon hinges the real happiness of his condition. While the flesh moulders into decay, and the outward frame is afflicted by disease, the mind furnishes a well of everlasting contentment, pure and inexhaustible."

"Truly spoken," responded Malchior, who was standing near the goldsmith; "and of a verity, friend Miguel, has not thy craft as argentier brought thee less comfort than the occurrences of these few past hours? Thou livest henceforth honored; thy daughter hath espoused the noble Knight of Estella; thou art rejoiced at beholding her elevation and thine own; and thinkest thou all the wealth, attainable by thy trade and cunning, could elsewhere purchase the happiness bestowed upon thee?"

"Nay, honest Malchior," replied Miguel, "wealth hath no longer charms for one who hath attained the summit of his aspirations. I care not for gold for its own sake, but esteem it as the instrument whereby we can extend

the circle of that happiness bestowed by Heaven on us. Henceforth it will be my sole care to dispense to the worthy of our race a portion of the means, whereby we have secured our own satisfaction. In this castlet have we not a miniature world, wherein are centred the elements of social happiness? Of the treasure, we possess in superabundance, can we not bestow a moiety upon the less favored?"

"True," interposed the Infanzon, at whose side walked Donna Inez, a blush of pride mantling to her blooming cheeks, as she smilingly returned the glad embrace of her venerable sire, "we are all blessed within this sanctuary; still how long will our castle, founded on reason, maintain itself against the disguised assaults of enemies, envying our happy condition, and incapable of comprehending the justice of our self-created state? We have gathered here all the wealth man should desire, and were we permitted to enjoy that liberty, undenied by Heaven to the birds of the air and the beasts of the forest, we might live and die in the luxury of modest contentment. Man, from the demon-like inspirations of his evil nature, destroys the very freedom God hath bestowed on all His creatures. By greedy men and the discontented masses, seekers after the self-same wealth we have attained, our individual treasures will be regarded as a prize, which force or fraud will soon find means to seize. A unit amid the mighty population of our native land, contemned for the elements of greatness others throw aside, and detested for the simple crime of worshiping the Author of our existence, acknowledging His greatness and goodness, in our own way, man's envy hath made us, like the children of Ishmael, wanderers upon the face of the earth."

"Too true," quoth Malchior, with the resignation of genuine fortitude; "kingdoms, states, yea, even individuals, comprehend not the simple means of prosperous happiness. They oppress and destroy, when they should cherish and build up; and, in their insatiable destructiveness, trample under foot the unrecognized elements of national and individual welfare."

"Friend," interposed a voice, as a plainly-costumed stranger, deferentially approached the group encircling the veteran, "I have ventured to trespass upon the hospitality of the mansion, despite its evil appellation; for, upon festivities of this nature, I have been given to believe the ingress of even the wayfarer is undenied, to participate, for a moment, at least, in the general revelry. Have I transcended in aught?"

"Thou art welcome, kind cavalier," replied the Infanzon, with an unostentatious gesture of invitation, "for, among the children of men, we have no enemies, provided they come to us in peace: and those coming to do us wrong we sincerely forgive."

"Thanks, noble Infanzon," replied the stranger, who, despite the simplicity of his attire, could be seen to be a person of rank, "I have heard words of wisdom, and would fain drink deeper at the source whence they emanate. Tell me, prithee, venerable man, why cannot all men, rich, poor, noble, church and laymen, dwell within the broad domains of this country, without let and hindrance, provided always they practice the Christian faith."

"Christian faith!" ejaculated Malchior, "I fear me thou art a new comer to Spain, whose monarch, prosecuting frivolous enterprises in distant lands, reaping glories by the murderous sword, hath suffered his sovereignty at home to be swallowed up by a remorseless enemy of that people God hath called him to rule."

"By whom is the royal power usurped?" inquired the stranger, evidencing a warm emotion at this candid enunciation of opinion.

"By the devouring fiend of Rome!" solemnly responded Malchior, "By the grasping tools of him who rules in the name of the Saviour of men. Thinkest thou it behooves a wise and merciful king to delegate his power, when upon the funeral pyre, upon the rack, upon the thousand instruments of diabolical torture, the bravest and the best of his subjects are, year by year, torn from the land their talents would adorn, and daily consigned to premature and ignominious graves?"

"Yea," interposed the Infanzon, "would that Charles could read aright the genius of his people, and learn the true value of those whom he has deserted and yielded up to slaughter! Could he but know the intrinsic worth of each atom, robbed from the concrete mass, forming the basis of national grandeur, then would he lament the loss of each humble artizan, mechanic and laborer, soldiers in the industrial army, who, in an age to come, must sway the world, with a power thrice more potent than that of the destroying cannon."

"If ruin threaten the Empire," resumed the stranger, meditating upon the prophetic picture, thus vividly delineated, "is there none among his counsellors charitable or humane enough to invite the royal attention to these crying evils, readily to be averted?"

"To what purpose?" frankly responded Don Alphonso! "to excite the envy of less far-seeing courtiers, to evoke the direful enmity of the Holy Office, or uselessly to ornament the quamadereo, and to furnish another victim for the orgies of an *auto-da-fe*? Truly, too deeply rooted is the evil, too destructive the curse, for the breath of one man, yea, even of an army of patriots, to work a remedy."

The stranger gazed abstractedly upon the Lord of Estella, and then broke forth in a tone of lamentation: "Certes, Charles, thou art no monarch in thine own realm! But tell me, honest knight, whither wend their way those fearing the vengeance of the Inquisition?"

"God in his mercy," prophetically exclaimed the Infanzon, pointing with his extended hand towards the western horizon, "hath directed the course of the exile across the wide waters to a savage land—to a wilderness bequeathed by Him as a heritage to expiring civilization. Thither the star of liberty, that type of man's regeneration, which, after guiding the footsteps of the wise pilgrims of the East to the manger of Bethlehem, progresses in a never-ceasing westward path, summons the feeble and oppressed, the down-trodden and the homeless, to a new abode amid forest lands, where the voice of emancipated freedom shall

ring a perpetual hymn of thanksgiving and of peace. In that rich and golden realm, long after the sceptre of the seas hath passed from the enervated, crime-stained hand of Spain, will arise a new race—children of martyred sires, before whose might Emperors will tremble, and despots sink into merited insignificance. In that new home will be developed the mystery of man's self-government, and the astounded universe will behold nations without kings, religions without priests—the promised millennium of freedom and of reason !”

“And even that newly-discovered continent belongs to Castille and Leon !” replied the stranger, to whose enthusiastic vision this revelation of the Future disclosed a new theatre for the further glory of Romanism.

“For a time,” tranquilly responded the Infanzon, “during the birth of the giant, whose Briarean arms shall grasp the exiles, not of one land alone, but of all climes. Still, when the torch of pure freedom is alighted, before its ever moving flame, the terrible darkness of ignorance and of tyranny must be dissipated for evermore. Aye, and long ere the dawn of that glorious era, living Spain will be a ghost among nations.”

“What meanest thou, mysterious seer ?” quoth the stranger, interested and amazed at discourse differing so materially from the stereotyped expressions of flattery, current with the courtiers of that period. “Why dost thou anticipate the ruin of this fair kingdom, especially since the arms of the great Emperor are daily extending its renown, and our adventurous navigators are adding new lands—yea, worlds—to our control ?”

“It is neither glory of arms nor width of domain,” replied the Infanzon, with startling energy, “which giveth greatness unto a nation—it is the living thought within. Behold now Spain, champion of the Romish faith, whose banners float upon every continent, whose argosies plough the waves of every sea—yet she is rotten at the very core, and lacks a heart to vitalize her vast but dying frame. True, she glitters in the pageantry of glory ; still she

wants the essence of enduring greatness. Upon a rocky island of the North sits enthroned a paltry king, whose armies are insignificant and whose vessels the mariner rarely meets. That king is but an atom of his people, ruling by force of their own free will ; still he directs the influence of rising greatness.”

“Meanest thou poverty-stricken England ?” inquired the stranger.

“In faith do I ?” returned Don Alphonso. “Before the lapse of a century the Anglo-Saxon will scatter Spain's proudest flotilla, and gradually sweep her argosies from off the seas, while by force of arms, the rebellious descendants of our race, indignant at the practices of Castilian tyranny, will deny our sovereignty in the distant lands we have peopled.”

“And why this afflicting destiny ?” interposed the stranger, incredulous as to the accuracy of the prediction, which fell upon his ears with the harsh bitterness of poignant reality.

“We have sown the seeds of discord within our own hearts,” replied the Infanzon ; “thinkest thou a tree can grow and flourish with a noxious vine strangling its existence. Thus have we planted the Inquisition : to devastate the homes of our native land, and to spread its destructive poison, by which the most innocent may perish. From Papist Spain, the star of empire will pass to Protestant England : it will not be the triumph of man, but of God !”

“Horrible ! horrible !” ejaculated the stranger, who appeared more keenly alive to the realization of the decadence of Spanish glory, as the words of the Infanzon settled deeply upon his mind ; “is there no way to avert the dreaded evil—none ?”

“None !” solemnly re-echoed the voice of the Lord of Estella ; “hath not the work of dissolution already commenced ? Who at this moment rules Spain—Charles V. or Pedro Arbues ?”

“Pedro Arbues !” ejaculated the stranger, with an into-

nation of contempt, "traitor to humanity, thy future career shall be brief, indeed !"

Upon hearing these words the assembled group, who had heretofore watched the mysterious unknown with a feeling of curiosity, were struck with amaze, not only at the startling words of the speaker, but likewise at the stern and authoritative manner of their utterance. Quickly the Infanzon turned his keen glance upon the person of the stranger, as if to decipher his inward thoughts ; the Goldsmith gazed upon him with a vacant stare, and attempted to connect his features with some shadowy reminiscence, flitting before his mental vision ; while Malchior, with mute sagacity, watched the countenance and bearing of the unknown visitor, and recognized the manner of one accustomed to command, yet animated with every generous impulse.

The stranger remarked not the commotion caused by his abrupt assumption of dignity, for, subsiding into a fit of abstraction, he mused intently upon some subject unrevealed to those about him.

While the assemblage were thus engaged in their respective reflections, none among them apparently willing to break the pause so suddenly introduced into the conversation, their number was augmented by the arrival of two persons, wearied by travel, their clothes covered with the dust of the road. Noiselessly the wayfarers approached the Infanzon, and saluted him with a gesture of respectful recognition, without venturing to disturb the silence resting upon the group.

"Pedro Arbues !" again ejaculated the mysterious unknown, the profundity of his voice and the violence of his expression commanding the attention of all present, "thou hast abominably abused thy trust ; thou hast wronged God and thy King ; thy reign of terror must cease !"

"It hath ceased !"

This exclamation, uttered in deep, husky tones, with a dreary reverberation, burst upon the assembled crowd like the warning croak of some bird of evil omen. Each shud-

dered, and nervously turned towards the place whence it emanated.

"Who art thou ? What meanest thou ?" inquired the stranger, awakening from his meditations, and turning towards the younger of the wayfarers, whose robes, soiled and stained by travel, designated him as a Dominican friar.

"Pedro Arbues," responded Father Ximenes, for the traveler was none other than the confessor, although his frame exhibited traces of weariness, and his countenance was distorted by an unearthly glare of vengeance, "hath atoned for his manifold crimes by the outpouring of his blood. He is dead !"

"Dead !" exclaimed all ; a convulsive thrill seizing upon them.

"Yea, dead !" repeated the Dominican, his voice agitated with emotion, as he muttered forth his vindictive exultation. "At the foot of the altar of St. Dominic, weltering in his blood, gasping in the agonies of a certain death, thou wilt find the polluted carcass of Seville's deadliest curse !"

"Hast thou murdered him ?" inquired the Infanzon, turning sharply towards the Dominican. "Man, what hast thou done ?"

"I have but avenged the dishonor wrought upon my family," replied Ximenes, his words attaining a dignified eloquence, thrilling the hearts of his listeners. "Yes, with my own hand have I washed out the stain inflicted upon my sister's defenceless reputation. Isabel ! I listened to thy entreating voice ; I have done thy bidding. Where art thou, Isabel, that thou mayest kiss thy brother, ere he passes to the throne of mercy ? Mandamiento, fulfill thy promise. Where is my sister ?"

Ximenes, who had preserved up to this moment a moderation of demeanor, now broke forth into a wildness almost maniacal, and rushed impetuously to the Master of the Garduna, who tranquilly awaited his coming, with unmoved countenance and folded arms.

"Demand her of the Infanzon," quoth Mandamiento ; "seek her as the nameless Chatelaine, and I warrant ye thy sight shall be blessed with a view of thy long-lost treasure. Noble Knight," he continued, addressing the Lord of Estella, "this is Juan of Calvares, whom I, in the beginning of my criminal career, yielded with his fair sister into the possession of the perfidious Inquisitor of Seville."

At the mention of the name of Juan of Calvares, a piercing and agonizing shriek startled the bewildered group, and before its sharp ringing ceased, the pale and disconsolate Chatelaine forced her way rudely among them, and endeavored to throw her arms around the neck of her brother and avenger. But Ximenes recoiled from her, and appeared to subdue the violence of his passion into an insurmountable modesty against the approach of a female, so habitual had become his aversion to a feminine embrace under his long ecclesiastical training. Amazed and confounded, however, by the presence of his newly-discovered sister, he submitted to the caresses prompted by her grateful soul.

"Juan, Juan!" she muttered in sobbing accents, spasmodically clinging to the Dominican with an irresistible vehemence, "art thou restored to me?—never again to desert thy desolate sister?"

Ximenes stood for a moment paralyzed ; a novel sensation had been generated within his breast, dissipating the dictates of his self-imposed duties. The priest stood in abject confusion, as conflicting impulses operated upon his inclinations, until, subdued by the mastery of an exuberant fraternal affection he melted into tears, and throwing himself upon the bosom of his sister, clasped her to him with the violence of overflowing affection.

"Isabel! Isabel!" he murmured. "In the purity of youth wert thou torn from me: in the fullness of crime have I returned to thee!"

"Weep not, Juan!" tenderly responded the Chatelaine, "thou hast again found me, and let us part no more.

Oh, let the past be forgotten—let us live only for the future!"

"Dearest sister!" sadly resumed the Dominican, "we have met but to part again. I must leave Spain now and for ever."

"And why must thou wander hence?" anxiously inquired Isabel.

"I have sinned against God and man," quoth Ximenes. "I am henceforth a wanderer upon the face of the earth—a homeless murderer."

"Speak not thus, Juan," ejaculated the Chatelaine, clinging more closely to the breast of her brother, "here we are among friends!"

"Nay, I cannot tarry; the stain of human blood is upon my hands!"

"The blood of whom?" wildly inquired the suffering matron.

"Of Pedro Arbues!" exclaimed the Dominican, his livid features blanched with a supernatural whiteness. "I have desecrated the altar of my God by his pestilential blood, and therefore I fly from the sight of men. Oh! Isabel, thy cruel wrongs called on me for vengeance, and I have avenged thee!"

The words of the Dominican had scarce passed his lips ere the fragile form of the Chatelaine grew stiff, and suddenly dropped from the arms of her brother, who was almost equally unnerved and helpless with herself. Without the utterance of a word, the convulsed features of Isabel became settled into a terrible rigidity, and her quivering body subsided into a total unconsciousness, her eyes closed, her face and hands became cold, and of a death-like pallor.

Terrified, the spell-bound spectators, who had stood like breathing statues during this harrowing scene of fraternal recognition, rushed to the relief of the prostrate woman. The Infanzon and Malchior raised her from the ground, and the powerful Mandamiento lifted her in his arms, and gently bore her into one of the castle apartments. The

youthful brides speedily followed him, to tender to their unhappy friend what aid they could, leaving on the open parapet the wonder-stricken assembly of males.

"Then thou hast avenged thy sister's wrongs," calmly said the stranger, as the confusion, consequent upon the sudden illness of the Chatelaine, subsided. "In accordance with the law of vengeance alone didst thou massacre the despot Arbues?"

"The honor of my departed ancestors demanded his sacrifice," enthusiastically ejaculated Ximenes, "and I fulfilled my duty!"

"Juan of Calvares," slowly responded the stranger, "as far as man can pardon thee, thou art pardoned. Join thy sister—her comfort requires thy ministration; and when she awakens to reason, tell her that the State hath forgiven the transgressions of her brother."

"And who art thou that canst remit the penalty of crime?" eagerly inquired the confessor, overjoyed at the semblance of pardon.

"Dost thou question my authority? In me thou seest thy Emperor!" calmly and slowly answered the mysterious unknown.

The announcement of the sovereign dignity of the unexpected visitor was hailed by a mute and respectful expression of joy. The Infanzon and Miguel the argentier, advanced towards him, and on bended knee proffered their homage and hospitality.

"Arise, my subjects," quoth Charles Quint, "and learn that the freedom of your communications hath infused new life into the councils of your sovereign. Worthy Alphonso, honest Miguel, how cometh it that you could not recognize the Imperial person, who, like the famous Caliph of the East, fears not to wander among his people?"

"Pardon us, your Majesty," responded the Infanzon; we were too much preoccupied with our own affairs, and with our own little private interests; for we have retired from the cares of the pompous, heartless world, and, hermit-like, have sought consolation within this humble abode."

"And here in peace thou wilt end thy earthly pilgrimage?" resumed the Emperor. "I would fain employ thy counsels, and hard-earned sagacity, to lighten the cares of State; for alas! overpowered by the weighty diadem of Imperial sovereignty, my strength fails me, and therefore have I determined to throw aside the sceptre, and seek consolation among the quiet cloisters of Saint Just—more congenial than the glaring magnificence of a palace, and the selfish restless intrigues of courtiers and partisans, to one weary and worn out with the thankless labors incident to sovereign power."

"Nay, sire," remonstrated the Infanzon, "wouldst thou leave Spain a prey to discord, to fanaticism, to tyranny, in a word, to ruin?"

"My noble friend," sincerely answered Charles, "think not that my disappearance will cause such evil to the State—another will arise in my stead to rectify the errors of my sway. Too long have I worn a crown of worldly power; what time remains for me on earth I must devote to gaining, for my own weak and sinful soul, a place in the Kingdom that is on high."

"Joy!" shouted the Master of the Garduna, advancing precipitately to the Infanzon; "the light of reason is restored. Isabel of Calvares hath recovered life and strength!"

"Thanks be to God!" ejaculated Don Alphonso. "Mandamiento, this act of thine will gain thee pardon for many an unlawful deed. Now kneel and pray clemency of thy Imperial master." Then addressing Charles, he continued: "My liege, this penitent is the much abused Master of the Garduna, who, at your feet, supplicates mercy."

"A valiant knave," uttered the Emperor, smilingly, as Mandamiento bent his brawny figure humbly before him, "who, I understand, is recognized as the very pink of highway chivalry. I am told thou art the leader of a confraternity of criminals. Thinkest thou that such a fellowship will shield thee from the penalties of the outraged laws?"

"Sire!" modestly responded the robber chieftain, "the Garduna, which your Majesty—deceived by our enemies, who are also enemies to you, and to our beloved country—so stigmatises, was called into existence by the unhappy condition of Spain, encouraged by the oppressions of the Inquisition. In after ages the name of Mandamiento, Master of the Garduna,—although he may now be branded as robber and rebel—although he ride to execution upon an earless ass—will stand fairer in the esteem of honest men than that of the canonized Pedro Arbues."

"It may be so, and should be so," calmly and sadly said Charles. "Let the past be forgotten and forgiven. Then, friends, you are bent upon forsaking your native land, and trying your fortunes in this wonderful New World?"

"Yes, beloved Sire," responded the Infanzon. "Yes, there will the sons of this once free, now priest-ridden country, seek a refuge from the tyranny that is blasting the land of their birth. There we will revive the greatness and freedom of the Spanish race, and defy the secret and unholy hierarchy that is fast desolating this our fair and much-loved Spain."

"Let us hope that a better fate than you anticipate awaits our country. But, since you will leave it, take my blessing with you. Princess of Viarna, with the valiant cavalier to whom thou hast joined thy destiny, mayst thou be more fortunate than thy illustrious ancestry. Infanzon of Estella, thy valor and rectitude have gained their reward in thy union with the fair and beloved Inez of Seville. Malchior of Cordova, whose wisdom and courage have been so often proved, mayst thou end thy days in happiness and prosperity, amidst those thou didst not desert in adversity. And thou, my honest argentier, let thy aged locks descend to the grave in grateful enjoyment of the honors Heaven has bestowed upon thee! And now, my lieges, let me entreat you to teach your children to reverence the name of Charles, that unhappy Emperor, who, in the possession of the highest splendor and power, feels himself forced to seek the seclusion of a cloister, afar from the warring ele-

ments defying his Imperial power. Farewell, my friends! Charles, whose splendor and power millions regard with awe and admiration, is grateful to Heaven that he can resign it all, and become a poor forgotten monk."

Slowly and solemnly the great Emperor turned from the now kneeling group, and left the castle, alone, as he had entered it. The Sorcerers, its tenants, continued to kneel, but to a higher Power. Despairing of longer resisting the powerful encroachments of the ecclesiastical authority, which, by its possession of the very person of their beloved monarch, had annihilated all hope for the final emancipation of their native land, they spontaneously joined in earnest prayer that the curse of priest-craft might be averted from their future home in the New World, whither, with mingled feelings of hope and sorrow, they would soon take their departure.