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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE SPANISH CAVALIER: A STORY OF SEVILLE ***



**THE CATHEDRAL OF SEVILLE.
Page 21.**

THE SPANISH CAVALIER.

A STORY OF SEVILLE.

By A. L. O. E.



**THE GATEWAY OF A SPANISH
MANSION.
Page 26.**

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THE SPANISH CAVALIER.

A Story of Seville

By

A. L. O. E.,

Author of "Rescued from Egypt," "The Lady of Provence," "Hebrew Heroes," &c.

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Contents.

[Pg iii]

I. THE COUNTING-HOUSE	7
II. A SAUNTER THROUGH SEVILLE	17
III. FADED SPLENDOUR	26
IV. PRIDE AND ITS PENALTY	35
V. ANNOUNCEMENTS	43
VI. A SISTER'S SACRIFICE	50
VII. DRIVEN TO THE SLAUGHTER	62
VIII. WITHOUT AND WITHIN	69

IX. THE BRIEF FAREWELL	78
X. STRUCK DOWN	83
XI. FAILURE	93
XII. DARKNESS AND LIGHT	101
XIII. NEW LIFE	108
XIV. AN UNPARDONABLE WRONG	116
XV. CONFESSION	122
XVI. A MIRAGE	132
XVII. ARRESTED	147
XVIII. TURNED AWAY	155
XIX. WANDERING ALONE	161
XX. AN IDOL ON ITS PEDESTAL	170
XXI. TWO ANGELS	181
XXII. STRANGE COMPANY	185
XXIII. PREACHING IN PRISON	193
XXIV. A FRIEND	201
XXV. WARNINGS	212
XXVI. THE LONELY POSADA	220
XXVII. FOLLOWING SCENT	231
XXVIII. WANDERINGS	239
XXIX. THE EARTHQUAKE	247
XXX. PURSUED	253
XXXI. VENGEANCE	262
XXXII. A LAST FAREWELL	270
XXXIII. A TREASURE	275
XXXIV. GLAD TIDINGS	284
XXXV. FICTION AND TRUTH	291

[Pg iv]

List of Illustrations.

[Pg v]

THE CATHEDRAL OF SEVILLE,		<i>Frontispiece</i>
THE GATEWAY OF A SPANISH MANSION,		<i>Vignette</i>
THE ALCAZAR OF SEVILLE,	<i>Facing Page</i>	20
SPANISH SENORAS AND THEIR DUENNA,	"	24
BEFORE AND AFTER THE FIGHT,	"	66
THE ENTRANCE TO THE PRISON,	"	184
A STREET IN SEVILLE,	"	212
INTERIOR OF A SPANISH POSADA,	"	220

THE SPANISH CAVALIER.

[Pg 7]

CHAPTER I.

THE COUNTING-HOUSE.



He has not made his appearance in the office to-day!" exclaimed Mr. Passmore, the working partner in an ironware manufactory in Seville. "If this Señor Don Alcala de Aguilera think it beneath his dignity to keep faith with his employer, and stick to his business, I'll find some one else who will. The high and mighty caballero may smoke his cigar, or take his siesta, like the rest of his lazy nation; I'll not disturb him, though his nap should last till the Moors come again!" Mr. Passmore rubbed his heated face with his spotted handkerchief as he concluded his speech, for the fiery sun of Andalusia had not yet sunk, and the small office-room attached to his manufactory glowed like one of his own furnaces.

[Pg 8]

"De Aguilera may have been kept away by illness, sir," suggested Lucius Lepine, a young English clerk in the employ of the manufacturer. "He appeared to be far from well yesterday, when translating the letters from Madrid."

"And a pretty hash he made of the business," exclaimed Mr. Passmore in a tone of irritation, yet unable to refrain from laughing. "The don's thoughts must have been wandering to the Plaza de Toros,^[1] or he would scarcely have made out that Tasco and Co. sent our firm an order for twenty dozen bulls instead of knife-blades."

"De Aguilera is not wont to make such blunders," said Lucius, who had sympathy for his fellow-clerk, partly arising from a belief that their circumstances were somewhat the same—that the proud Spaniard had been, like himself, driven by necessity to work under one who, by birth and education, belonged to a sphere much lower than their own. "I thought," continued Lepine, "that De Aguilera looked very ill."

"Ill! yes, he always looks ill—as if he fed, or rather starved, on chestnuts and raisins," interrupted Mr. Passmore, "and had never tasted a slice of good roast beef in the course of his life! I guess there's many a one of the whining beggars that beset one in the Calle de los Sierpes, that fares better than the caballero Don Aguilera. And yet, forsooth, the señor must keep his horse (a lean one, to be sure), and carry himself with a lofty air, as if he were, at the least, Secretary of State to Queen Isabella! I do believe that his worthiness never made his appearance to-day, because I offended his dignity yesterday by calling him simply 'Aguilera,' without all the fine additions to a name already too long, which Spaniards wear as their mules do tassels and fringes, I suppose, to make one forget the length of their ears!" Mr. Passmore rubbed his hands in evident enjoyment of his own joke, and laughed his peculiar, explosive laugh, which reminded his hearers of the snort of a hippopotamus rapidly repeated. Lucius was not inclined to appreciate or join in his mirth.

[Pg 9]

"By-the-by, Lepine," said the manufacturer abruptly, "would you like to go to the bull-fight to-morrow? for if so, I'll treat you to a seat, as I'm going myself. As these affairs always come off on a Sunday, there will be no business time lost."

Had the offer been an acceptable one, the coarse air of patronage with which it was made would have prevented the young Englishman from feeling grateful for an invitation so proffered. But Lepine's views of keeping the day of rest were by no means in harmony with the sickening horrors of the Plaza de Toros, and he rather coldly replied, "I thank you; but I have no wish to witness a bull-fight."

[Pg 10]

"Nor I, nor I; but just for once in a way, one must do at Rome as the Romans do," observed Mr. Passmore, as he fastened the clasp of the large ledger-book in which he had been making some entries at the end of the week. "Barbarous spectacle it is, disgraceful to any civilized people, but quite in harmony with Spanish character. A century or two ago," (Mr. Passmore was less accurate in his chronology than in his accounts,) "these people had their autos-da-fé,^[2] in 1868 they must have their bull-fights; fire or blood, fire or blood, the only means of rousing them up from their lazy lethargy, and keeping them wide awake for a couple of hours!" Peter Passmore, himself a sharp trader and active man of business, regarded idleness as one of the greatest of sins.

"Bull-fighting causes a waste of human life," began Lucius; but his employer cut him short.

"I don't think much of that," observed Passmore. "If a fellow choose to run the chance of getting a horn between his ribs, I'd let him have his fancy; if he's killed, there's but one fool less in the world. Ho, ho, ho! But it's a disgraceful waste of horse-flesh. Not but that the Spaniards, to do them justice, manage the thing in an economical way. They send blindfold into the circus poor brutes only fit to be made into dogs' meat, and the bull does the job of the knacker, that's all!"

[Pg 11]

An expression of disgust crossed the frank features of Lucius Lepine. He was impatient to leave the counting-house; but as to him belonged the duty of shutting up the place, he was unable to quit it till his employer should please to depart. Mr. Passmore was in a conversational mood; and while his short, thick fingers slowly tied up some bundles of papers, he went on talking, regardless either of the oppressive heat of the room or the impatient looks of his hearer.

"Spain will never be much of a country," said Passmore, "until her people learn to do their own business, manufacture their own wares, lay down their own lines, instead of making over everything that is useful to strangers. The dons leave others to cut up their meat for them, and think it condescension enough if they open their mouths to eat it! Ho, ho, ho! Idleness is the bane of this land."

"And superstition," added Lucius Lepine.

[Pg 12]

"Ay, superstition, as you justly observe. The country is eaten up by a swarm of lazy monks and friars, who tell their beads instead of tilling their ground, and who make every other day a saint's day, to give the laity an excuse for being as idle as they are. If I'd the rule here," continued Mr. Passmore, "I'd make a clean sweep of them all; turn the convents into parish unions, and clap into them all the beggars. What Spain wants to make it a fine land, as fine a country as any in Europe, is a better government, a more vigilant police, brisker trade, and—"

As the manufacturer paused, as if at a loss for words with which to wind up his oration, Lucius suggested—"a purer religion."

"Ah, there's one of your Exeter Hall notions," cried Peter Passmore, tossing down on the table the packet which he had just fastened up with a bit of red tape; "you young hot-brains are always ready to air your romantic ideas on subjects which you don't understand." Let it be observed, in passing, that young Lepine seldom uttered a dozen consecutive words on any subject whatever in the presence of his employer; but the manufacturer, probably from liking to monopolize the talking, was wont to accuse of loquacity every one with whom he conversed. "But hark'ee, young man," continued the principal of the firm, in a tone rather more dictatorial than usual, "I'd advise you, whilst you remain in Seville, to lock up your fanatical notions as tight as you would your cash-box. The Plaza is not Piccadilly, nor Isabella our good Queen Victoria. The Inquisition may not be actually catching and squeezing victims to death, as in the old times; but, as Joe Millar would say, 'The snake is scotched, not killed.' The priests, lazy as they are, will be sharp enough, in both senses of the word, if any one meddle with their profits. Don't you be playing the Don Quixote against what you are pleased to call superstition. It is not only in the Plaza de Toros that a fool may wave a red rag, go full tilt against an enemy too hard for him, and find himself caught on the horns of a dilemma. You may get yourself into grief," continued the oracular Passmore; "and I've no mind to spend time or money in fishing my clerk out of prison, if he manage to stumble into one unawares. That's no part of the bargain between us; so I give you fair warning, my lad." Taking up his hat as he ended his oration, Peter Passmore quitted the place.

[Pg 13]

Lepine saw the stout figure of his employer disappear through the doorway, and gave a sigh of relief. It was during conversations like the preceding that the young English gentleman most keenly realized the trials of his position. He was isolated from his family and friends in a foreign land, and forced to endure the companionship of a low-minded man, who regarded money-making as the great aim and end of existence. Lucius was obliged to listen with a decent appearance of respect to the advice which Passmore proffered with an assumption of superior wisdom, which was in itself offensive. It was somewhat hard for a youth, who had been one of the cleverest scholars at Rugby, to receive instruction on all kinds of subjects from a man who had never construed a line in Horace or opened a page of Cæsar.

[Pg 14]

"But what could the eldest of a family of nine do, without money, without interest, but take advantage of the first opening that presented itself to him?" mused Lepine, as, able to leave the office-room at last, he locked the heavy door behind him, and went forth into the street. "I knew that to accept the clerkship was like plunging into a river in December, and that he who would make his way thus must throw off, as a swimmer does his clothes, all consideration of personal inclination and family pride before making the plunge. But what matters it!"—thus flowed on the current of thought—"I am thankful to have the means of swimming, thankful to be no drag on a widowed mother—nay, to be able already to hold out a helping hand to the young ones. Anything is better than standing idly on the brink of the icy stream, waiting till some boat should chance to appear and ferry me across. The struggle is strengthening, the cold is bracing, and the feeling of independence is worth all that I have given up for awhile. Yes, my northern constitution may bear it; but the strain comes much harder, I fear, on poor Alcala de Aguilera. He has doubtless been brought up from childhood to regard labour as degradation, and clerk-work under a despised foreigner as but a degree better than the galleys. He has not the buoyancy of spirit with which I am blessed, and the cold which is bracing to an Englishman may bring deadly chill to a Spaniard. I must find out De Aguilera's house, and ascertain the cause of his absence to-day. Though there may be no foundation for that extraordinary report which I heard this morning, and which I cannot believe to be true, I shall not rest easy until I learn its falsehood from himself. I trust that the cavalier's Spanish courtesy will forgive my intrusion, if intrusion it be. I long to penetrate through the reserve which De Aguilera wraps around him like his mantero, and speak to him freely as man to man, in a place where we can be secure from perpetual interruptions, and unfettered by the trammels of business. The address given me was the Calle de San José, in the suburb of Triana, somewhere at the other side of the river. As I am now pretty well up in my Spanish, I think that I shall have no great difficulty in finding my way."

[Pg 15]

[Pg 16]

FOOTNOTES:

[1] Circus for bull fights.

[2] Public burning of those convicted of heresy, or what the Church of Rome regarded as

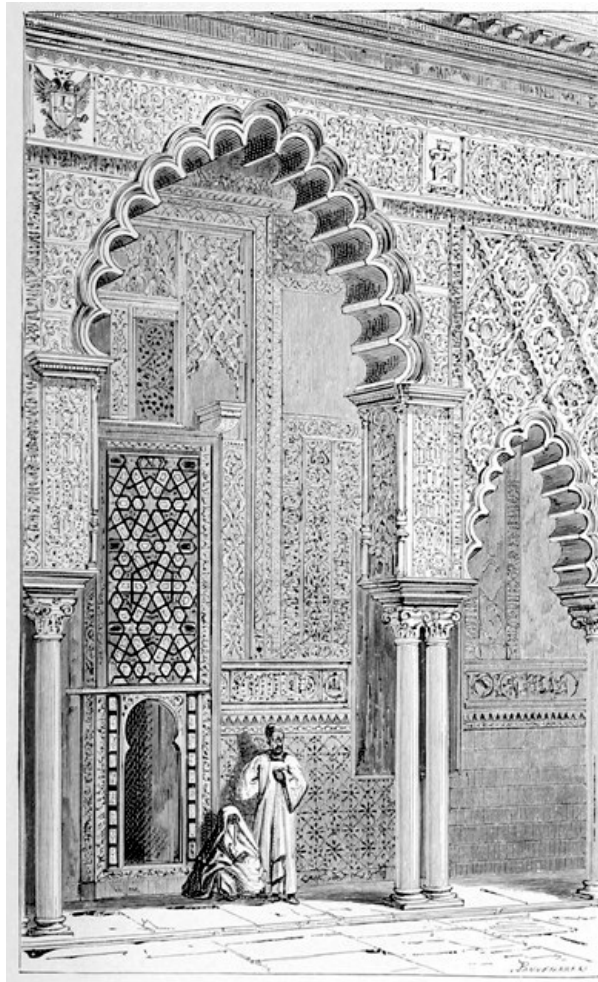
CHAPTER II.

A SAUNTER THROUGH SEVILLE.



Lucius Lepine was the son of an officer of the royal navy. The youth had been eagerly and successfully pursuing a course of education in one of the public schools of England, when the sudden death of his father had deprived him of the means of completing it, and of leaving Rugby, as he had hoped to do, at the head of the school. The widowed mother of Lucius was left to support, on very slender means, a numerous family, of which he was the first-born. The youth's ambition had been to enter one of the universities, with a desire—as yet mentioned to no one—of preparing himself for the ministry of the Church. He now saw that the desire must be suppressed, the ambition relinquished. Lepine's first earthly object must be to become, not a burden, but a stay to his mother. Lucius had for some time exerted himself unsuccessfully to discover some means of [Pg 18] earning independence, when a situation was offered to him in the firm of Messrs. Passmore and Perkins, which conducted an ironware factory in Seville. A boyish fancy, which had induced Lucius to acquire the Spanish language that he might read Don Quixote in the original, great intelligence, and a talent for keeping accounts, made the admiral's son peculiarly qualified to fill such a situation with credit to himself and advantage to his employers. Mr. Passmore's terms were liberal: he was at least good as a paymaster, whatever he might be as a man. Lucius did not hesitate long ere accepting the offer made to him. He took the "plunge" so bravely, and apparently cheerfully, that none, save perhaps his mother, guessed with what an inward shudder of repugnance it was made.

When thus separated from his family and all the companions of his youth, Lucius, who was of a genial temperament, looked around him for friends in what was to him a land of exile. He had had no letters of introduction, and the society of Mr. Passmore, the working head of the firm, and of a few merchants and manufacturers occasionally met with at his table, by no means satisfied the yearning of the young man's heart for intercourse with congenial spirits. The only person in Seville towards whom Lucius felt drawn by a feeling of sympathy was the stately young Spaniard, De Aguilera,—who had, like himself, been induced by liberal offers to accept a situation in the firm of Messrs. Passmore and Perkins. The aristocratic bearing of Don Alcala de Aguilera, his refined manners, his lofty courtesy, gave to him an interest in the mind of Lucius—an interest made up of mingled admiration, curiosity, and pity. The Spanish clerk, compared to his English employer, appeared to Lucius like a polished Toledo blade compared to a kitchen utensil. Lucius was occasionally reminded by the mien of his companion of other qualities of the rapier besides its exquisite polish. Insult, or what he deemed such, would make the Spaniard's dark eyes flash with an expression which told that his pride was not subdued, and that his anger might be dangerous. It was perhaps well that Mr. Passmore's inability to speak Spanish with anything approaching to fluency made him generally employ Lepine as the channel of communication between himself and De Aguilera. Many a dictatorial command or coarse reproof, uttered by Passmore, came softened from the lips of the English gentleman,—words which, if repeated in the tone in which they had first been spoken, would have made the haughty Spaniard lay his hand on his stiletto. [Pg 19]



THE ALCAZAR OF SEVILLE.

Page 20

"Inglesito!" (Englishman!) muttered a gitána (gipsy), looking after Lucius as, after courteously inquiring his way, he passed down one of the narrow winding lanes which give to a great part of Seville the character of a labyrinth. It would have needed no gipsy skill to have detected the nationality of the stranger, even had the gitána but seen him with his back turned towards her. The quick, firm step of Lepine could not be mistaken for the step of a Spaniard. But the woman had seen the face, bronzed, indeed, by the southern sun, yet of complexion naturally fair; the bright gray eye; the auburn hair, clustering at the temples, and shading the upper lip. Lucius might have been singled out as an Englishman amongst crowds of the cigar-puffing idlers who were enjoying their *dolce far niente* at the corner of every street. And at that hour of gorgeous sunset, under the most brilliant of skies, there was indeed in Seville a luxury in mere existence which might form some excuse for the indolence of its people. As Lucius emerged from a lane into one of the open plazas, he was strongly sensible of the charm which enwraps the queen-city of Andalusia. [Pg 20]

Bathed in golden glory rose the Alcazar, that splendid monument of Moorish art which has been compared to a palace of fairies, with its gorgeous colouring, its profusion of ornament, its gilded arches and marble columns. At some distance, in strong relief against the sky, appeared the glorious Cathedral, a rival in beauty, but a contrast in style, being the most magnificent Gothic building to be found in all Spain. The square tower of the Saracenic Giralda—grand relic of the past when the Moors bore sway in Andalusia, but now used as belfry to the Cathedral—glowed rosy red in the beams. Lucius paused for several minutes to admire the exquisite beauty of the buildings around him,—that beauty which to a poetic mind is heightened by the charm of antiquity, the colouring of romance. The Englishman seemed to have left every care behind him in the counting-house in the Calle San Francisco,—cares can be readily thrown aside at the age of nineteen. [Pg 21]

The eye was not the only sense that drank in delight. The air was fragrant with the perfume from orange-trees, and musical with the peal of bells from the summit of the Giralda, blending softly with the nearer sound of a Spanish song, sung in rich tones to the accompaniment of a guitar.



SPANISH SENORAS AND THEIR DUENNA.

Page 22.

"What a glorious city is this Seville!" said Lucius to himself as he went on his way. "There is not an object on which the eye rests in which an artist would not find a subject for a sketch. What a picture might be made of yonder donnas, with their mantillas and graceful lace veils, as, accompanied by their duenna, they ascend the steps of that magnificent church! No women are lovelier than those of Seville,—long may they keep their graceful costume! How picturesque is yon group of gipsies by the fountain—the man in his striped mantle of many hues leaning over the back of his ass, as he talks to the dark-eyed girl with scarlet blossoms wreathed in her raven-black hair! The very beggars wear their rags with grace! And what thoughts of the past crowd upon the mind in this old city of the Moors! Yes, what thoughts of the past!" repeated Lucius to himself, while a sterner expression marked his features; for he had now reached a spot associated with memories of the Inquisition, which had held its headquarters at Seville. Again Lucius paused, but it was not now to admire, and it was before the mind's eye that a picture of thrilling interest arose.

[Pg 22]

"Do I indeed stand on the very spot where, a few centuries ago, thousands of martyrs yielded their bodies to the flames, their souls to their God?"^[3] mused Lepine. "Was it here that—clad in their yellow san-benitos,^[4] and surrounded by curious crowds to whom their pangs were a pastime, and fanatical priests to whom their torments were a triumph—men and tender women endured the most painful of deaths! Yes; this pure balmy air was once polluted with the smoke from human sacrifices—this sunshine darkened with the clouds rising from stakes to which living victims were bound! What deeds of heroism—what unblenching courage—what unshaken faith displayed in the hour of nature's agony, have made this spot holy ground! Here—a spectacle to angels and to men—martyrs showed what the sons of Spain could dare and her daughters endure! Are the idle, self-indulgent inhabitants of Seville in the nineteenth century descendants or representatives of heroes who counted not their lives dear to them, but who, having embraced evangelical truth, grasped it firmly even unto death? Or can it be that martyrs have suffered in vain—that the light which they kindled is quenched for ever in Spain? Is the cry, 'How long, Lord, how long?' never to meet an answer as regards this benighted though beautiful land? I cannot believe it;" and Lucius resumed his rapid walk. "The seed sown amidst tears and blood must spring up one day, and ripen to a harvest of light! Happy—thrice happy—the reapers! Spaniards will show themselves worthy of their martyrs, and no longer appear to the world as a degenerate race, indifferent to their highest interests, or cold in the holiest cause. But what right have I to upbraid them either with indifference or coldness? Here am I, proud of the name of Englishman, thankful for having been brought up in the clearness of gospel light. I have been for a year in Seville, and I have never so much as shown to a Spaniard the New Testament in his own language, which I carry now on my person. Nay, the only man in this country for whom I have a feeling of friendship—the man whom I meet almost every day of my life—he knows nothing of the faith which I hold, save that he probably deems me a heretic, simply because I was reared in

[Pg 23]

[Pg 24]

England. Of Alcala's inner life, his views, his hopes, I, his friend, am as ignorant as if we had never met till to-day! I cannot tell—I have never inquired—whether De Aguilera be a bigoted son of that Church which is drunken with the blood of the saints, or whether, like many of his countrymen, he has adopted sceptical views, the pendulum swinging from superstition into infidelity—from believing that which is false, into denying that which is true.

"And the Spaniard may now be on the eve of meeting a violent death—of having the martyr's agonies without the martyr's crown! I have been made uneasy by the bare rumour of the danger to which his person may be exposed. How little have I thought of the perils which surround the soul of one brought up under the dark shadow of Romish error! I must see De Aguilera, and speak to my friend as I have not ventured to speak before. God help me to break through a reserve which I have often suspected to be cowardly, but which I now feel to be criminal!"

[Pg 25]

FOOTNOTES:

- [3] It is said that in the year 1461, when the Inquisition was established in Seville, it sacrificed *two thousand* victims; and that from the same date to 1517, *twelve thousand* were burned alive.
- [4] A garment, covered with representations of demons, worn by the condemned.

CHAPTER III.

[Pg 26]

FADED SPLENDOUR.



"Is this a prison or a palace?" was the mental inquiry of Lucius, as, after again asking his way to the house of Don Alcala de Aguilera, he reached the stately building, which was one of the numerous relics which the Moors have left behind them in Seville. The high, dead, fortress-like wall, suggested the former term; a glimpse through the open archway of the dwelling, the latter. From this archway a vestibule led into an inner court, from which it was divided by an ornamental grating; this grating also being open at the time, nothing impeded the view into the marble-paved patio beyond. This patio, or court, was surrounded by clustering columns of the most graceful proportions; while in the centre of it orange-trees and broad-leaved bananas, the oleander and the myrtle, bordered a fountain of exquisite design. The vestibule itself was paved with Moorish tiles, of hue the most brilliant; and the exterior of the archway was gracefully sculptured. The first impression made by a glance through the opening was, that a scene of Oriental beauty and splendour lay beyond it. Had Lucius had time for closer observation, he must have noticed also marks of poverty and decay. Every here and there a bright tile in the passage, and marble square in the patio, had been broken or displaced—the carving on the fountain had in many places been injured, and no water fell into its basin; but the plants in the little central garden looked fresh and green in the softened light, as if tended by a woman's hand. The aspect of the place, so unlike that of any mansion in a northern clime, was calculated to raise admiration and excite curiosity in the mind of a stranger, and waken a desire to explore the interior, and make acquaintance with the dwellers in so picturesque and romantic a home.

[Pg 27]

The appearance of the one whom Lucius saw at the entrance, however, contrasted with the stately elegance of the mansion of which she was an inmate. Chaffering with an itinerant vendor of fish stood an old woman, wrinkled and bent. From her coarse dress, arms bare to the elbow, and the strong scent of garlic which hung about her, the dame might rather have been deemed a denizen of one of the low purlieus of Seville, than the servant of an aristocrat. The old crone, who used much gesticulation in speaking, was so eager about her bargaining that she did not notice the approach of Lucius Lepine. The colloquy between her and the hawker had probably lasted for some time, as both parties looked heated and angry.

[Pg 28]

"Five cuartos a piece! why, I would not give twenty for the whole lot of them; they're not fresh—not fit to set before the señora!" were the first words heard by Lucius as he came up to the archway.

"I tell you again, they were alive and swimming this morning," interrupted the man.

"Don't you think I know good fish when I see them?" cried the shrill-voiced dame. "I who have been for nigh sixty years in the service of the illustrious caballero Don Pedro de Aguilera, his son, and his grandson besides!"

"It's not the fish, but the price, that don't suit you," retorted the hawker. "Come, you shall have them a bargain,—let's say nine cuartos a pair."

"I'll give eight, and no more," cried the dame, eyeing the fish with a hungry look, but clinching hard the coppers which she held in her hand.

The hawker shook his head, and shouldered his basket.

[Pg 29]

"You'll lose the custom of the house," threatened the woman.

"No great loss," laughed the hawker, as he turned from the arch; "the barber round the corner will buy all this fish, and he earns enough with his razor to pay a fair price for his dinner!"

The torrent of abuse which the old dame launched after the retreating hawker, was suddenly stopped by the question of Lucius,—

"Is Don Alcalá de Aguilera within?"

Old Teresa was startled and annoyed at the preceding colloquy having been overheard by a stranger. It was also wounding to her vanity as a woman, and her pride as a retainer of a noble family, that she should be seen in the *deshabille* in which she had emerged from the kitchen, instead of the black silk dress in which she was wont to attend Donna Inez to mass. In a tone of irritation Teresa replied that the illustrious caballero was not in the house.

"Is he likely soon to come in?" inquired Lucius Lepine.

The servant did not know, or chose not to tell. The caballero came in and out at his pleasure: he might be spending the evening at the governor's palace, he might not be home till midnight. Teresa stood in the middle of the archway like a jealous guardian of the place, who would suffer the entrance of no stranger to disturb its dignified seclusion. But the sound of Lepine's question had reached other ears than those of Teresa.

[Pg 30]

"Alcalá, is it you at last?" exclaimed a sweet, eager voice from within; and Lucius caught a glimpse of a youthful form hurrying across the patio with a rapidity very unusual in the movements of a lady of Spain. It was indeed but a glimpse, for the donna, seeing that he at the entrance was a stranger and not her expected brother, instantly retreated, disappearing behind the foliage of the shrubs that surrounded the fountain.

The young Englishman would fain have sent in his card, and presented himself to the lady or ladies within, but shyness prevented his thus making an attempt to enter the house without a formal introduction. Lucius had seen little or nothing of society in the higher circles of Seville, and feared to give offence by some unintentional breach of its rules. The manner of Teresa would have shown a less intelligent observer than Lucius, that she at least would have resented and resisted as an intrusion any attempt on his part to venture within the archway. A little disappointed at his failure in procuring an interview with his friend, Lucius placed his card in the soiled, wrinkled hand of Teresa, to be given to her master on his return. With a lingering look through the vestibule into the beautiful patio beyond, the Englishman quitted the place.

[Pg 31]

In a state of high irritation, Teresa hurried through the passage into the court, taking care to close and lock the grating between them. With the air of a *duenna* who, having grown gray in service, thinks that she is privileged to say what she pleases, the old woman approached her young lady.

Donna Inez, on a low marble seat, was bending over the work on which she had been engaged when roused by hearing the voice of Lucius. The work was that of decorating some garment of the gayest description,—of bright green richly embroidered with silver, into which Inez was fastening spangles of the same brilliant metal. A scarf of the most vivid scarlet lay carelessly thrown across her knees. The gay colouring of the work on which she was employed contrasted with the black dress of the Spanish maiden; and she was pursuing her occupation with anything but pleasure, if one might judge from the gushing tears which ever and anon fell on her beautiful work.

"Donna Inez, Donna Inez! how could you do anything so unseemly?" exclaimed old Teresa, giving vent to her irritation. "What would the *hidalgo* Don Pedro de Aguilera have said, could he have seen his grand-daughter, without so much as a veil on her head, rushing towards an English stranger—a heretic, too!—with no more dignity than if she were some wandering *gitána*?"

[Pg 32]

Inez raised her tear-swollen eyes, and there was no lack of dignity in the tone of her gentle reply, "Methinks you forget your place, Teresa."

"Forget!" repeated the old woman angrily; "I should remember well enough, if I knew what is, or rather what is *not*, my place in this house. Am I not doctor, sick-nurse, and attendant to the old señora, and *duenna* to the young one; purveyor, keeper of stores, preparer of meals, anything and everything here,—helped by no one but bandy-legged Chico, who only serves the señor because no one else thinks him worth the *puchero*^[5] which he eats? Ah! it was very different, child, in your grandfather's days, before the hated French soldiers swarmed like wasps into Seville!"

Inez knew that poor old Teresa had entered on an inexhaustible theme when she began to speak of the good old days before the occupation of the city by the French in 1810. Teresa had been little more than a child when she had entered the service of Donna Benita de Aguilera, then a happy young wife and mother, but soon to be left a widow with wrecked fortune and shattered mind. Her husband, Don Pedro, a wealthy nobleman, and of the bluest blood in Spain, had joined the army raised to repel the invader. The tidings of De Aguilera's death in fight had reached his young wife at a time when French soldiers were quartered in her house. The shock had weakened the lady's intellect; and though she had lived on, was living on still in extreme old age, her subsequent life had been but as a lengthened childhood.

[Pg 33]

The family fortune had also at that time received a blow from which it had never recovered. Teresa was never weary of telling of the treasures which Don Pedro once had possessed, services

of silver plate, and a splendid goblet of gold, and of the jewels of his bride,—which, by her account, might have purchased half Andalusia. Bitter were Teresa's invectives against the foreign robbers, who had not only killed her master, but plundered his helpless widow and orphan. Teresa had clung to the De Aguilera family in weal and in woe; but age and adversity had rendered more irritable a temper not naturally sweet; and having once dandled in her arms the father of Inez, the old duenna always looked on his daughter as a mere child. Teresa was as ready to chide as to serve the señorita; but the retainer's long-tried fidelity made Inez tolerate from her what from another she could not have borne.

[Pg 34]

Teresa now went rambling on with her reminiscences; but the mind of Inez was so painfully preoccupied, that she took in the meaning of nothing, and was only aware of the fact that the old woman was speaking, by the babble of her voice distressing an ear intently listening for the step of Alcala. The sun had sunk, and the first faintly visible star shone over the patio, which was unprovided with the awning commonly used in the courts of the wealthy to soften the glare of a southern sky. Inez could no longer see to work; but her labour was finished—the last silver spangle had been fixed on the glossy green satin sleeve. The maiden sat listening, waiting, weeping, till startled again by a sound at the entrance to the house, which made her spring to her feet with the exclamation, "It is my brother at last!"

FOOTNOTES:

[5] A kind of soup, common in Spain

CHAPTER IV.

[Pg 35]

PRIDE AND ITS PENALTY.



ut again Inez was disappointed. Instead of her brother appearing, Teresa ushered in a visitor, Donna Maria de Rivas, a middle-aged lady of Seville, well known to the Aguileras, as she had been brought up in the same convent as the late mother of Alcala and Inez.

The señora entered the patio with the stately grace peculiar to Spanish ladies. But the expression on her face was that of keen curiosity; and even before she greeted Inez with a kiss on either cheek, the visitor's eyes were riveted on the garments of scarlet and green.

"It is then true!" exclaimed Donna Maria, "and Don Alcala is to appear in full fice^[6] in the Plaza de Toros to-morrow!"

The look of anguish on the pale face of the sister might have been sufficient reply, but Donna Maria was not one whose curiosity could be so easily satisfied. She was an old friend of the family, and, as such, she deemed it her right to know all that concerned them. Perhaps to the motherless girl at her side it was some relief to pour forth the tale of her sorrows to one who professed at least to feel a strong interest in the children of her early companion. In the deepening twilight, under the clear blue sky of Andalusia, while star after star twinkled forth, Inez, often interrupting herself to listen, told the cause of that distress which was blanching her cheek and well-nigh breaking her heart.

[Pg 36]

"You know—I need not tell you—that we—my grandmother and brother, I mean—have no longer the wealth possessed by our fathers."

"They were some of the most distinguished hidalgos of Spain," interrupted Donna Maria.

"My brother," continued Inez, "though willing to suffer anything himself rather than degrade his dignity by doing anything that the world might deem unbecoming in one of his rank, could not endure to see our aged grandmother wanting what her infirmities required. Alcala therefore consented to—to"—Inez was a Spaniard, and may be forgiven if she had inherited enough of the pride of her race to feel it a deep humiliation to own that the heir of the Aguileras had stooped to serve in an ironware factory, and accept the foreigner's gold.

[Pg 37]

"I know, I know, my poor child," said Donna Maria, pitying her friends under what she regarded as an almost unbearable misfortune and disgrace.

Inez went on with her story.

"But Alcala had still, of course, the right to mix in the highest society of Seville. He spent his evenings often—ah! much too often—at the palace of the governor, Don Lopez de Rivadeo."

"Ah! the governor has a daughter, and Donna Antonia has beautiful eyes," observed the visitor with a meaning smile, which it was well that Inez did not see.

"The evil eye, the evil eye!" exclaimed the poor girl with passionate emotion; "would that Alcala had never, never met their basilisk glance! It is not her wealth that he cares for,—that wealth which draws round Antonia so many idle worshippers, like moths round a flame!"

"I have heard that one of these suitors insulted De Aguilera in her presence," said Donna Maria.

"One whose ancestors would have deemed it an honour to hold the stirrup of an Aguilera disputed with Alcala the privilege of handing Donna Antonia into her galley on the Guadalquivir," said Inez. "'The hand that had accepted payment for clerk's work,' sneered the courtier, 'has no right to touch a lady's white glove.' Then Alcala fired up at the taunt; it had stung him to the quick. He was roused to speak of his fathers, of their triumphs over the Moors, and to tell how one of our race had gained a chain of gold from Queen Joanna for spearing a huge bull at a *gran foncion* held in her presence. 'It is pity,' said the mocking Don Riaz, 'that in these days caballeros are content to win money, though their fathers only cared to win fame.' Alcala was goaded by the taunt into saying that he was as ready as was ever an Aguilera to ride in the bull-ring, and break a lance for the smile of a lady."

[Pg 38]

"And they actually nailed him to a word so hastily spoken?" asked the visitor eagerly.

"Ay," replied Inez bitterly; "though every one knows that caballeros never now encounter the bull, that the desperate struggle is left to picador and matador^[7] trained and paid to expose their lives for the sport of the crowd."

"Did not Donna Antonia forbid her cavalier to attempt so rash an exploit?" asked Donna Maria.

"Forbid! oh no!" exclaimed the indignant Inez; "for an Aguilera to risk or to lose his life for her sake would be to her proud nature as the crowning triumph of her beauty! She will be there— Antonia will be in the Plaza de Toros, and she will look on with those calm, cruel eyes, whilst Alcala, my pride—my darling,"—Inez could not finish the sentence, but buried her face in her hands.

[Pg 39]

"Do not despair, *cara amiga*," said Donna Maria, laying her hand caressingly on the shoulder of the sobbing girl; "Donna Antonia de Rivadeo may see the triumph of your brother. Don Alcala is a good horseman, and a brave cavalier."

"Brave as a lion, and he rides like the Cid!" exclaimed Inez, raising her head, and speaking with animation. "But what will that avail him?" she added sadly. "Alcala has had no training for the bull-ring, as had knights and gentlemen of old. They had active and powerful steeds; Alcala has but poor old Campeador, who bore our father ten years ago—good faithful Campeador, whom I have often fed from my hand!"

"But your brother will not be alone in the arena," suggested Donna Maria; "there will be the matadors, the picadors, the chulos,^[8] to divert the bull's attention, or to give him the *coup-de-grace*."

"May they come to the rescue! the blessing of all the saints be on them if they do!" cried Inez with fervour. "But oh! *amiga mia*, I hope little from those who make this horrible sport a profession. They are natural enemies of the caballero who dares to do for honour what they are trained to do for gold. These men are jealous, and they are cruel; is it not their very trade to torture and to kill? I never saw a bull-fight but once," continued Inez, speaking rapidly. "My father took me when I was a child; but he never ventured to take me again. The sight—the horrible sight of the poor gored horses madly rushing round the circus in their agony haunted me for weeks,—it brought on a nervous fever! And how the scene comes back on my memory now in terrible distinctness! I long lay awake last night trying, but trying in vain, to drive away thought by repeating *aves* and *credos*, till I dropped asleep at last, and then—and then," added Inez with a shudder, "I was in the dreadful arena! I saw the bull tearing onwards, the banderillas in his thick strong neck; with bloodshot eye, and head bent down, he made his furious charge! I shrieked so loud that I awoke my grandmother, who usually sleeps so soundly! I used to pity and grieve over her feebleness of mind,—I could almost envy it now; she is spared the horrors of my dream, and the worse misery of my waking!"

[Pg 40]

There was an oppressive silence for several seconds and then Donna Maria said, "Have you attempted to dissuade your brother from prosecuting this wild adventure?"

[Pg 41]

"Have I not?" exclaimed Donna Inez; "have I not knelt and clasped his knees, and implored as if for my life? I pained, but I could not move him; Alcala said that his honour was pledged."

"You have been preparing the picador costume," observed Donna Maria, glancing down at the embroidered jacket and scarlet scarf which lay beside her, faintly visible in the starlight.

"Yes; if Alcala must appear in the arena before all those gazing eyes, he shall appear as becomes an Aguilera," replied the Spanish maiden. She did not dwell on the theme, or tell how much of her brother's hardly-earned gains had been frittered away on that gaudy costume; nor how she had not only given the labour of her hands, but sacrificed every little silver ornament which she possessed to add to its value and beauty. Bitterly had the poor girl felt, as she plied her needle, that she was but, as it were, decking out a victim for slaughter.

"Don Alcala will look a goodly cavalier," observed Donna Maria in an encouraging tone. "We will pray the Madonna to give him success."

"I have wearied every saint with my prayers," sighed Inez de Aguilera, "and yet—hark! surely there is the sound of a ring!" and again she eagerly sprang to her feet.

[Pg 42]

"Your brother would not ring, but enter," suggested Donna Maria. "Poor child! how you are

trembling!"

Inez was indeed trembling violently; she had to lean against a column for support, as the grating of the vestibule was unclosed, and not Alcala but Teresa appeared. The old servant bore in one hand a letter, in the other a lantern borrowed from Donna Maria's attendant, who was waiting with her mule-carriage in the street. Inez had a presentiment that the missive was from her brother, and that his sending it was a sign that he was not coming himself. She took the letter from Teresa, and eagerly tore it open; for by the lantern's light Inez recognized the handwriting of Alcala.

The brief note was as follows:—

"It is better, dearest, that we meet not again till all is over. Send Chico at dawn with Campeador and my dress to the Posada^[9] de Quesada; he knows the place well. Kiss for me the hand of our venerable parent. Farewell! a brother's blessing be with you! Inez, you have been more than a sister to Alcala."

FOOTNOTES:

- [6] The full costume of a picador.
- [7] The picador is he who encounters the bull on horse-back. The matador meets him on foot, and gives the last stroke.
- [8] Those who irritate the bull by sticking into him small darts with flags attached, called banderillas.
- [9] An inn

CHAPTER V.

[Pg 43]

ANNOUNCEMENTS.



It has been seen that rumours of Alcala's proposed venture had reached the ears of Lucius Lepine, but he had not been disposed to give full credence to such reports. Lucius had been long enough in Spain to be aware that in the nineteenth century it is as unusual for a Spanish nobleman to take an active part in the bull-circus, as it would be for an English one to show off his strength in the prize-ring. The strange report was, however, painfully confirmed in the mind of Lucius when on that Saturday evening he was proceeding on his way to the house of Mr. Passmore, where he was engaged to take dinner.

A large lamp burning before an image of the Virgin Mary, at the corner of one of the narrow lanes through which Lucius was passing, threw light on the opposite side, where a large space of boarding had been taken advantage of by the bill-posters of Seville. It would have required less light to have deciphered the large red capital letters in which appeared the following announcement:—

[Pg 44]

"GRAND AND EXTRAORDINARY ATTRACTION.

"To-morrow, August —, 1868, the most noble and illustrious caballero, Don Alcala de Aguilera, mounted on his superb charger, will encounter a bull of unequalled size and fierceness in the circus of the Coliseo."

The red letters seemed to swim before the eyes of Lucius Lepine. He stood as if rooted to the ground, till roused by a light touch on the shoulder. Turning round, he saw a stout personage, who from his black robe, huge hat with flaps turned up at the sides, and rosary with crucifix suspended from his neck, he knew to be one of the Spanish priests.

"Inglesito, mark *that* well!" said the priest emphatically, pointing, ere he passed on, to another placard which, printed in black and in smaller type, and therefore not so conspicuous, appeared close to the announcement of the bull-fight in the Plaza de Toros. The attention of Lucius being thus directed towards it, he read with surprise the following extraordinary charge from the Lord Bishop of Cadiz:—^[10]

[Pg 45]

"The Enemy of mankind desists not from his infernal task of sowing tares in the field of the Great Husbandman, and to us it belongs, as sentinels of the advanced post of the house of Israel, to sound the alarm, lest his frauds and machinations should prevail. We say this, because we have read with profound grief, in a periodical lately published, that the Protestant Bible Societies and Associations for the distribution of bad books are redoubling their efforts for inoculating our Catholic Spain with the venom of their errors and destructive doctrines, selecting, in particular, our religious Andalusia as the field of their operations," &c. &c.

At another time such a placard as this would have been read by Lucius with intense interest, and would have wholly engrossed his thoughts for the time. Even under present circumstances, with

his mind painfully preoccupied by anxiety for his friend, the charge of the Bishop of Cadiz left a deep impression on Lucius. Others then were actually doing the work from which he had shrunk. Others were coming forward, like Gideon's three hundred heroes moving bravely on through the darkness. Already the lights which they bore must be flashing here and there; for Rome would not sound such a cry of alarm had she not heard the tramp of an enemy's feet in her camp, and caught sight of gleams of evangelical truth carried into the midst of her hosts.

[Pg 46]

"There must be a movement going on, even in Seville," thought Lucius, "of which I never knew till this moment. Not all of my countrymen have been cold-hearted laggards like me."

Lucius, for once, arrived late for dinner, found the company already seated at table, and forgot to make an apology. Mr. Passmore, at the head of a board loaded with a repast more profuse than elegant, was too much engaged with his double occupation of eating and talking even to notice the entrance of his clerk. The familiar sound of the snorting laugh of his employer reached Lucius before he came into the room.

"Ho, ho, ho! it was a shabby trick in the cavalier to engage himself as a butcher, without giving due notice that he intended to leave the ironware business! And I paid the fine gentleman his quarter's salary only last week! Don Alcala de Aguilera is no great loss to the firm, for he took his very pay with an air which seemed to say, 'I'm a hidalgo, a gentleman born; I honour you too much by soiling my fingers with an Englishman's dirty cash.'"

"Aguilera has not a bad headpiece, though," observed one of the party.

"Oh, for a Spaniard he's clever enough," replied Passmore, speaking with his mouth full; "had it not been for his ridiculous Spanish pride, the don would have made a fair man of business. Save in that matter of the translation yesterday;—I told you that capital story! ho, ho, ho! I see now how twenty dozen bulls came to be running in the poor fellow's head; no wonder that he looked pale at the idea of such an awful squad of the beasts!" Peter Passmore leant back in his chair, and laughed till he seemed to be in danger of suffocation.

[Pg 47]

"Aguilera will find one of them enough, and too much, I'm afraid," said the former speaker.

"Perhaps the don thought that he'd do a sharp bit of business," resumed Mr. Passmore, as soon as his explosive mirth had sufficiently subsided; "he'd contrive to get double pay for double work, by writing on week-days and fighting on Sundays. I wonder now what he'll receive for sticking his bull!"

"Nothing but honour," said an onion-merchant who was one of the guests. "Folk say that there is some fair donna of Seville mixed up with the business."

"Then Don Alcala de Aguilera is a greater idiot than I took him for!" exclaimed the ironware manufacturer. "I can imagine a man's selling his blood to support himself and his family; every soldier does that, and if he get a cannon-ball instead of promotion, one can only say that the poor fellow has had the worst of the bargain. But a man who is willing to run the chance of being gored or tossed for the sake of the prettiest girl that ever danced a bolero, is madder, in my opinion, than Molière's far-famed knight of La Mancha. Ah! Lepine, so you're here at last. You are Aguilera's friend; did you know anything beforehand of this freak of romantic folly?"

[Pg 48]

Lucius only shook his head; he could not trust himself to make other reply.

"They say," observed the merchant who had spoken before, "that Don Aguilera's family, of whom he is the chief if not the only support, are mightily distressed at his venturing as a picador into the Plaza de Toros. I hear that he has a poor old grandmother, who lost her husband in the war with the first Napoleon; and a young sister who, it is said, is breaking her heart with grief."

Lucius remembered the light graceful form which he had seen springing across the patio, and the tones of the sweet eager voice which had exclaimed, "Alcala, is it you at last?" The young Englishman thought of his own favourite sister, and felt for the Spanish girl, though the reality of her misery exceeded the picture drawn by his fancy.

[Pg 49]

The conversation now turned on other subjects, but the mind of Lepine was full of but one. He could not join in discussions on Spanish politics, or the current business of the day. The untasted viands lay before him; he cared not to touch food, though he had fasted since the morning. Lucius took the earliest opportunity of quitting the party and returning to a small lodging which he had taken in one of the humbler streets of Seville.

FOOTNOTES:

- [10] This is taken verbatim from a translation of the charge, given in "Daybreak In Spain," by the Rev. J. Wylie, D.D.

CHAPTER VI.

[Pg 50]

A SISTER'S SACRIFICE.



It is the dawn of a sweet Sabbath morn, peaceful and calm. The last lingering star is trembling still in the sky, but the fleecy clouds have caught a tint of rose from the not yet risen sun.

By the archway of the dwelling of the Aguileras stands a bay horse, gaily caparisoned. His saddlecloth has been made out of a Moorish mantle striped with gold, a relic of happier days. Deep fringes of scarlet girdle his chest and encircle his haunches, and tassels of the same bright hue hang from the band above his eyes. The noble animal looks conscious of his dignity; he has been generously fed for the last few days, and the unwonted luxury of corn has restored to the old war-horse some of his former spirit. But "with arched neck, and drooping head, and glancing eye, and quivering ear," Campeador gently receives the caresses of the young mistress whose hand has helped to deck and to feed him, and who with tears and sighs is bidding him now farewell.

[Pg 51]

Inez is no striking specimen of Spanish beauty, though her appearance on this morning must have awakened sympathy and interest even in a stranger. Her graceful form is rather below the middle size; she has the clear brunette complexion and the large almond-shaped eyes, shaded with long dark lashes, which are characteristic of the Andalusian race. The cheek is very pale, and the eyes are heavy with weeping, and the slender hand trembles as it strokes Campeador's long flowing mane.

Inez has passed a restless, miserable night, devising all kinds of wild schemes for keeping her brother from the perilous encounter; schemes which melted away with the first gleam of morning light. If she kept back his horse, if she detained his accoutrements, Alcalá, his sister well knew, would but provide himself with others. He would rather ride into the circus on one of the wretched hacks destined for slaughter, than fail at the hour of appointment. Inez could now but send, both by letter and word, entreaties to her brother that he would at least come and see her before going to the Plaza de Toros. The letter and messages were intrusted to Chico, a dark-browed, bandy-legged, ill-favoured groom, who was to lead the horse about a mile beyond the boundaries of Seville, to the Posada de Quesada, where Alcalá had chosen to pass the preceding night. Chico's stunted form was half hidden under the burden of finery which he carried; he did not, however, bear with him the picador's spear, for that needful weapon Alcalá had selected for himself, not trusting the choice of it to a servant.

[Pg 52]

A little in the rear of the group appeared Teresa; but Lucius, had he been present, would scarcely have recognized in her the work-soiled, poorly-dressed old drudge whom he had seen bargaining with the hawker. Teresa was now attired in her best Sunday apparel; and the look of complacent pride on her wrinkled face was in strong contrast to that of despairing sorrow on that of her youthful lady. Teresa allowed herself the one annual treat of going to a bull-fight, to her Spanish mind the greatest of pleasures. She had a cousin to whom belonged the office of cleansing the blood-stained arena, and who always contrived to smuggle Teresa into a good seat, she being content to go early and wait for hours before the entertainment began. Nothing would have bribed the ancient Andalusian to have been absent from the Plaza de Toros on the present occasion; her strong desire to go overcame her reluctance to leaving for the greater part of the day her infirm old mistress and the sorrowing Inez. To Teresa, blinded by pride even greater than that which usually characterizes the Spaniard, the coming struggle in the Plaza de Toros appeared in a very different light from that in which it was viewed by Alcalá's more clear-minded and tender-hearted sister. Full of the glories of the race of heroes from whom her master was descended, Teresa felt not a doubt that she was going to be a witness to his triumph. It had been a bitter humiliation to the old domestic to know that Alcalá was earning his bread by honest industry. Had he consulted Teresa, the family might have starved before the caballero had so demeaned himself as to work for the firm of Messrs. Passmore and Perkins. But it was a very different thing to behold Don Alcalá de Aguilera ride in magnificent array into the Coliseo, to confront danger with all the courage of his race, and win the plaudits of assembled thousands. Teresa felt as an old retainer of some knight might have done in days of chivalry, when his master rode forth, with gilded spurs and waving plume, to win honour in the lists at some brilliant tourney. To Teresa's partial eyes Campeador was the noblest of steeds, worthy to carry the bravest of masters. The arm of an Aguilera, once raised to strike, must hurl to the dust whatever opposed it. Teresa would not have feared the result had Alcalá had, like Hercules, to slay the Nemean lion.

[Pg 53]

[Pg 54]

And the hopes of Teresa extended far beyond the triumph of a day. Donna Antonia de Rivadeo, the wealthiest as well as the most beautiful heiress in Seville, was to be present at the *gran foncion* in the Coliseo. The lady would look on Alcalá no longer as the drudging clerk, serving a foreign heretic, but as the chivalrous caballero of Andalusia, valiant as ever was knight who couched lance against the Moors in the time of Queen Isabella. The days of pinching poverty and humiliation would be ended at last; Alcalá would spear his bull, and win his beautiful bride, and Teresa would receive at last the reward of her long faithful service. In imagination Teresa, in the richest and stiffest of silks, already presided over a numerous household in a sumptuous palace, instead of toiling from morning till night, ill paid and scantily fed, with no one to abuse and order about but bandy-legged Chico, who always disputed her commands. Such bright visions seemed to take ten years of age from the ambitious Teresa, and she saw with impatience and indignation the grief which showed how little Inez shared in such hopes.

"Shame on those tears, Donna Inez!" exclaimed old Teresa. "It is well that your illustrious brother is not here to see your weakness; it would make the caballero blush for his sister! Are you a daughter of the house of De Aguilera, and yet tremble with cowardly fear?" The spirit of Inez was

[Pg 55]

too much broken for the insolent taunt to raise even a flush on her cheek.

They were gone. Campeador had been led away by Chico, and Teresa had hobbled off with what energy hope and pride could lend towards the Plaza de Toros. Inez returned into the house to perform a homely duty which sorrow did not make her forget. There was no one but herself to prepare her grandmother's early cup of chocolate; Inez made it ready, and then carried it to the bedside of Donna Benita.

There were fewer signs of poverty in the old lady's apartment than perhaps in any other in the house. The draperies, though very ancient, had yet an effect picturesque and rich. The coverlet over the bed was delicately white, and had been embroidered with small bunches of flowers in coloured silks by Inez. There was fine old lace on the cap which covered Donna Benita's scanty gray hairs; very thin and aged was the face which appeared beneath it.

"Where's Alcala? where's my boy?" murmured the widowed lady. The cloud on her intellect did not prevent Donna Benita from loving her grandson, or missing his presence, as a child might do that of an accustomed companion. "He was not here yesterday, was he? tell him to come to me quickly."

[Pg 56]

Inez silently kissed the thin wasted hand extended towards her. She stood with her back to the light as she first beat up the pillows and then proffered the cup, that the old lady might not see the traces of tears on her face. When Donna Benita, in a fretful tone, repeated her question, Inez tried to speak cheerfully, as she replied that Alcala had been specially engaged. Inez had to say the words thrice over before the aged lady could take in their meaning.

"And where's Teresa? why does she leave me?" asked the invalid, in feeble complaining accents.

"Teresa has gone to the Plaza de Toros," replied poor Inez with an effort.

"Ah! I used to go there with my Pedro—long, long ago," murmured Donna Benita. The feeble mind was trying to recall images once traced on the memory, but gradually fading away into one dull blank of oblivion. Even that slight mental effort wearied the aged lady, and having finished her chocolate, she soon fell into that dozing state in which she now passed by far the greater part of her time.

[Pg 57]

As soon as Inez saw that her grandmother slept, she glided away to the patio, and from thence through the vestibule to the archway, to watch for the coming of her brother. Could he resist her entreaties? could he refuse her the one poor boon which she had asked, the sad luxury of bidding him—perhaps a last—farewell?

While she was gloomily gazing forth into the now silent street, a sudden thought occurred to the mind of the sister. Inez would make one effort more to move the resolution of Aguilera, or to bribe her patron saint to protect him. The maiden hastened back into the patio without giving herself time for reflection. There, in a recess between two columns, Inez had left the writing materials which she had used when penning the note intrusted to Chico. She sank down on her knees at the place, and resting her blotting-book on the base of one of the columns, hastily, and with trembling fingers, wrote the following letter:—

"I have vowed a solemn vow to Santa Anna. If you, brother of my heart, venture to-day into the arena, and the blessed saint bear you unharmed out of the terrible encounter, I will take the veil, and devote myself to her service for the rest of my life in the nunnery of Cordova. Judge what you risk, Alcala, before you ride into the Plaza de Toros. If, regardless of my prayers and my tears, you keep your fatal appointment, you lose either your sister or your life. You may return unharmed and victorious, but it will be but to see your only sister offer herself up as a thank-offering for your preservation. If you would miss your Inez, if you have ever loved her, break your dreadful engagement. I know too well what it will cost you to do so, but anything is better than the misery—the ruin which is before us all if you keep it!"

[Pg 58]

With this missive in her hand Inez returned to the archway. If Alcala were coming at all before going to the circus, by this time he would surely have come. The poor girl glanced up and down the street; there was not a single person to be seen, save a muleteer who chanced to be passing, and who turned in some surprise to see a señora standing alone at the entrance of a mansion. Teresa and Chico both being absent, Inez had no messenger to send with her letter, unless she employed the stranger whom chance had brought into her way. The lady beckoned to the muleteer to approach her, drew off her rosary—the only ornament which she wore—for money she had none, and gave the coral beads, with the letter, into the hand of the man.

"For the love of mercy," she cried, "hasten with this letter to Don Alcala de Aguilera, at the Posada de Quesada. Oh, delay not; go as for your life!"

[Pg 59]

"I know the illustrious caballero, señora," said the muleteer, with an air of respectful pity. "The lady shall have no cause to complain of my slackness; ere an hour be passed I will bring a reply."

Was it a satisfaction or a terror to Inez when that letter was despatched? Perhaps it was both. Various feelings struggled in her breast, and it would have been difficult, even to herself, to have decided which was uppermost there. Inez, though pious, according to her superstitious views of religion, had no inclination whatever for the prison life of a convent. It was only her intense, unselfish love for her brother which induced her to threaten him and herself with a separation which would be, she felt, to her a living death. Inez had, from infancy, clung with the fondest affection to Alcala, her only brother. He had been to her companion, tutor, friend; and since the

death of their last surviving parent, had almost taken towards the orphan girl the place of a father. With Alcala, Inez had shared poverty, and had scarcely felt its burden. What luxury that wealth might have procured would have been to Inez like that of sitting beside or at the feet of Alcala, in the cool of the evening, enjoying the music of his guitar, or blending her voice with his own? Often too had Alcala read aloud to his sister, while her fingers plied the needle. Inez had specially loved to work for her brother, that so poverty should not oblige him to dress in a way unbefitting his birth. The library of the Aguileras was but a small one; it consisted of a few books which had belonged to their wealthy grandfather,—it need scarcely be said that a Bible was not amongst them; but from reading, and listening to reading, the mind of Inez had received more cultivation than is usually found amongst women in Andalusia, though in England her education would have been considered very incomplete. It had been no small advantage to Inez that she had been almost entirely secluded from the frivolous society of Seville. The pride of poverty had had much to do with the maiden's seclusion; for Alcala had been unwilling that his sister should accept hospitality which he had not the means of returning. Inez had never complained of want of amusement; she had scarcely even regretted the quietness in which she was passing the spring-time of youth, her hours divided between attendance on her grandmother and other duties, and the sweet employment of making her brother happy. Inez had her little garden in the patio to tend, and the maiden delighted in flowers. It seemed to her now, as she stood in that court, leaning against a pillar, with her eyes gloomily fixed on the broken fountain, that the past had been a bright dream, which was passing from her for ever. Unless Alcala should yield to her entreaties (and then his life would be clouded over by a sense of disgrace), there seemed to Inez to be no alternative between weeping over a sepulchre or in a convent cell. In either case Alcala, the joy, the sunshine of her life, would be lost to his only sister.

[Pg 60]

[Pg 61]

Slowly, very slowly to Inez passed the minutes. Alcala had not come, and his absence was in itself a reply. But before the hour was over, Inez, who had gone back to her watch at the entrance, saw the muleteer returning. The young lady could not refrain from running forth into the street to meet the messenger, who might be the bearer of a letter. The man held out to the eager girl a fragment of paper, crumpled and dusty, which had evidently been torn from a book. A few scarcely legible words were written in pencil on the margin of the page,—"*It is too late! Forgive, and pray for Alcala!*"

CHAPTER VII.

[Pg 62]

DRIVEN TO THE SLAUGHTER.



during the reign of Queen Isabella there was no church in Seville in which Protestants could assemble for worship.^[11] Deprived thus of outward means of grace, Lucius had formed a habit of walking on Sundays as far as he could into the country, and there, under the shade of some cork-tree, or clump of stone-pines, reading his Spanish Testament, and, in perfect solitude, lifting up his heart in prayer and in praise. On this Sunday he started on his walk rather more early than usual, glad to leave behind him the jarring sounds of the city. Already, however, Seville was all astir. Groups of people were passing to the different churches, but these groups consisted almost entirely of priests or women; by far the larger portion of the male population of Seville were drawn towards a centre of stronger attraction,—that centre was, as Lucius well knew, the Plaza de Toros. Thither, in an hour or two, gay carriages would be bearing their smiling occupants to gaze on scenes at which the bravest Briton might shudder. Already little streams of people were flowing forth from winding street and narrow lane, clad in holiday attire, eager to secure good places. Many a ragged beggar, many a barefooted urchin, who could not hope to be admitted into El Coliseo (as the Spaniards proudly name their circus), went to swell the crowd round the entrance. They would at least enjoy a sight of the gay procession of picadors, matadors, and chulos; they would be able to join in the shout when a slaughtered bull should be dragged out by a team of gaudily caparisoned mules.

[Pg 63]

At almost every street corner Lucius saw flaming placards from which glared on his view the name of his hapless friend. When he reached the bridge which spans the Guadalquivir, Lucius found the river dotted with boats bringing gaily-dressed sight-seers from villages and hamlets situated near its banks. Well pleased was the Englishman to turn his back upon the city, and pursue his walk along the wild Dehesa, as that tract of broken country is called which intervenes between the towns of Seville and Xeres. The mind of Lucius on this Sabbath-day was not attuned to enjoy the beauties of nature. He noticed not the glades carpeted with yellow lotus, or fragrant with the alhucena, the purple lavender of Andalusia. Unobserved by him, brilliant butterflies fluttered over the blossoms of the gum-cistus, or lizards of green and gold basked in the glowing sunshine. The spirit of Lucius was not only oppressed by anxiety, but saddened by self-reproach.

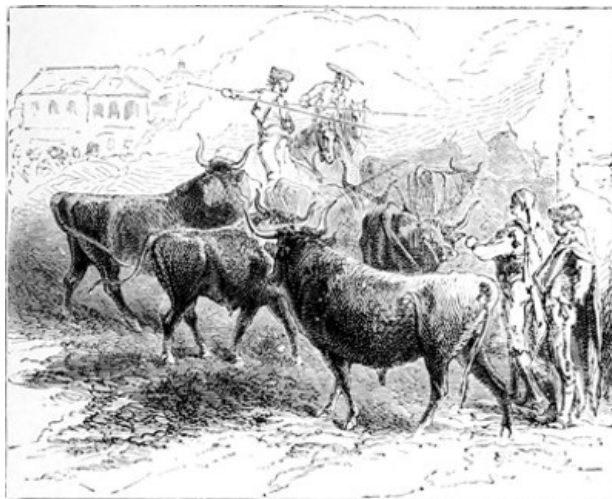
[Pg 64]

"Had Aguilera known the Word of Truth," was the young man's reflection, "he might have learned from its pages that his life is not his own, to be hazarded like the stake of a gambler on the cast of the dice! He might have learned that a nobler object is offered for the aspirations of the soul than the plaudits of a Seville mob, or even the favour of a woman! I have feared to offend the prejudices and lose the friendship of Aguilera,—and all opportunity of doing him good may now be passed away. Buried talent—buried talent—taken from me for ever!"

Lucius had not proceeded far on his way, when he was roused from his bitter reflections by the loud voice of some one in front of him warning him to stand aside. Raising his eyes, which had been fixed on the ground, the Englishman observed a cloud of dust before him, and heard the trampling of hoofs. The road in this place had been a cutting through a hill, and was somewhat narrow in breadth; high rough banks rose on either side. Advancing along this road were now seen two Spaniards on horse-back, armed with long spears. Behind them came a troop of Andalusian bulls, driven by men on foot, who were clad in sheep-skin, and armed with slings. Warned as he had been to get out of the way, Lucius took a few steps up the right bank of the cutting, less to place himself beyond reach of possible danger, than to obtain a better view of the troop. Formidable animals appeared the bulls, with their thick, powerful necks and large horns, as they moved onwards towards the city, snorting and pawing the ground in the pride of their mighty strength. As they passed the spot where Lucius stood, the largest of the herd raised his dilated nostrils in the air, and gave a bellow of defiance, which from that deep chest sounded terrible as the roar of an angry lion.

[Pg 65]

The savage beasts passed on, but one of their drivers lingered for a few minutes behind them, in order to repair his sandal, of which one of the fastenings had given way on the road. Lucius descended from his higher position, and joined the herdsman, who had seated himself on a small projecting knoll, to effect his work with more ease. Lucius courteously wished the man good-morning, and the roughly-clad peasant returned the stranger's greeting with Spanish politeness.



BEFORE THE FIGHT.



AFTER THE FIGHT.

Page 66

"Are these bulls bound for the circus?" inquired the Englishman with interest.

[Pg 66]

The driver nodded his head. "Ay, not one of them will be alive this evening," observed the peasant. "The poor brutes would not go on so proudly towards Seville if they knew what is before them."

"Danger awaits others besides them," muttered Lucius Lepine.

"Ay, señor," observed the herdsman, misunderstanding the drift of the words; "other folk may go as blindfold as these bulls to their death, strong and gay in the morning, dragged in the dust before night. There's my own brother, for instance, he who lives in our village under the sierra yonder. Poor Carlos was dancing the fandango one day at a bridal, the merriest of the company there; on his way home he but slipped his foot on a steep, rocky path, and down falls the strong, active man, to be picked up with a broken back, and carried to our cottage to lie, as he has done for months, groaning with pain, and helpless as a child."

It occurred to Lucius that here might be an opportunity given to him of introducing into an abode of suffering the comfort of God's holy Word. "Can your brother read?" he inquired.

[Pg 67]

"Read!—ay, almost as well as the priest. Carlos always took to the learning, whilst most of our

folk know no more of letters than one of the beasts that they drive." The man rose from his seat as he spoke, for he had finished repairing his sandal with a morsel of string.

"Will you give your brother this from me?" said the Englishman, taking from his breast-pocket the Spanish Testament, and offering it to the hind with an effort to overcome the shyness which had hitherto prevented his attempting to spread gospel-knowledge in Spain.

The man took the little volume with a blank stare of surprise at the stranger who had made so extraordinary a present. The peasant then opened and glanced at the contents of the book, and the expression on his face changed to that of fanatical fierceness.

"Bad book—heretical—*muer a los Protestantes!*" (death to the Protestants!) exclaimed the peasant, tearing out several pages from the sacred volume, and then flinging it back at the face of the giver. The fanatic would probably have added insults and imprecations, had not the necessity of making up for lost time, by rejoining the herd with all speed, obliged the driver to run on quickly in the direction of Seville. [Pg 68]

Lucius with a sigh—for failure in an attempt to do good is always painful—picked up first the Testament, and then the scattered leaves,—all save one which escaped his notice, for a light wind had whirled it away.

FOOTNOTES:

- [11] I have been informed, since writing the above, that there was an English chaplain; but we may suppose him to have been absent at this time.

CHAPTER VIII.

[Pg 69]

WITHOUT AND WITHIN.



Not long after Lucius had quitted that spot, there came to it a single horseman, slowly riding towards the city of Seville. The cavalier was richly attired in green and silver; a broad scarlet scarf was wound round his waist, and its fringed end hung gracefully over his shoulder. His feet, cased in high boots, rested on stirrups of peculiar shape, designed from their size and strength to act as a protection to the rider. A Spanish sombrero shaded the cavalier's brow, and his hand grasped a sharp spear. The horseman was Alcalá de Aguilera, in full fíco as a picador, bound for the Plaza de Toros.

But, save in costume, the young Spaniard had nothing in common with the bull-fighter by profession; Alcalá's face and form were both in strong contrast to those of the low-bred favourite of the Coliseo. The form was tall and slight, and conveyed no impression of possessing great physical strength. The pale intellectual countenance, with its delicately-formed features, suggested the idea of a student or poet, rather than that of a bold picador as dead to fear as to mercy. The expression on those features was that of intense melancholy, and formed but too faithful an index to the feelings of the heart which beat beneath the folds of that brilliant scarf. [Pg 70]

Alcalá was sensible that he had committed an act of the greatest folly. He had ventured all—his sister's peace of mind, his family's comfort, his own life—for a bubble that was not worth the grasping, even were it within his reach. Alcalá was not one to care for the applause of a mob; nay, his proud, reserved nature shrank sensitively from the idea of appearing to court it. The greatest success in the common circus would be rather a disgrace than an honour to an Aguilera; he could not raise but degrade himself by competing for popular favour with professional picadors.

Nor had Alcalá the incitement of passion to impel him onwards in his perilous career. His admiration of the governor's daughter had been but a passing fancy, a homage paid to mere beauty; it had no strong hold on his soul. The discovery of Antonia's heartlessness and selfish pride had changed that admiration into something almost resembling contempt. Alcalá contrasted Antonia with Inez, the vain selfish beauty with the loving, self-forgetting woman, and felt much as did the knight of old who scornfully flung at the feet of his lady the glove which she had bidden him bring from the arena in which wild beasts were contending. [Pg 71]

"Were I offered the hand of Antonia de Rivadeo," mused Aguilera, "I would not now accept it, though she should bring as her dowry all Andalusia!"

Thus even in success there was nothing to attract the young Spaniard. But Alcalá had scarcely any hope of success; and if the brighter side of the picture was but dull, the darker was gloomy indeed. Alcalá had not frequented bull-fights; the sport was little to his taste, though he did not regard it with all the horror and disgust which he would have felt had he been brought up in England. But though the cavalier had not been frequently seen at the Plaza de Toros, he had often enough been a spectator of the scenes acted in the circus to know well what dangers attend the contest with a furious bull, and how absolutely essential to the safety of a picador is skill in

the use of his weapon. Such skill could only be acquired by practice, and until this time Alcala had never handled a spear. In the grasp of the young cavalier it felt unwieldy and cumbrous. He was as little likely to use it effectually, as he would have been to climb to the mast-head of a vessel in the midst of a storm, having never had nautical training.

[Pg 72]

Superstition, from which Alcala was not perfectly free, although far more enlightened than most of his countrymen, tended to deepen the impression on his mind that he was riding to his destruction. When Alcala had been very young, his mother had consulted an old Gitana, famed for her skill in prognostications, as to the future fate of her boy. The child had never forgotten the weird appearance of the old wrinkled hag, nor the words of her mumbled reply: "He will die in his prime a violent death, and many shall look on at his fall." The warning recurred to Alcala's memory with almost the force of prophecy, now that he appeared so likely to meet such a fate as had been thus foretold.

Then, to think on the position in which his death would leave his family made Alcala de Aguilera writhe with mental torture. What would become of his aged parent, widowed and imbecile—what would become of his gentle loving sister, if their one prop were taken away? They had already parted with most of the relics left of his grandfather's wealth; not an acre which had once belonged to the estates of the Aguileras remained to them now. The mansion in Seville was out of repair, and situated in a now unfashionable quarter; should the ruined family be driven to part with their home, the sale of the house would bring but temporary relief to their need. It was not without a sharp pang that Alcala thought even of Teresa, with all her faults so loving and faithful a retainer, and revolved the probability of her ending her long life of service by becoming a beggar in Seville!

[Pg 73]

And it was his madness that had done all. He was ruthlessly sacrificing all who loved him, all whom he loved, to the Moloch of his own pride! Alcala, when tortured by such reflections, again and again almost resolved to break his fatal engagement, and make some excuse for not entering the circus. But the sneers of his acquaintance, the scoffs of his rivals, the yells of a disappointed mob, were harder to be encountered than the charge of a savage bull. Alcala had not the moral courage to face them. He could not endure to live on to be taunted as the foreign manufacturer's clerk, who with the estates of his ancestors had also lost all their courage and spirit. There was but one thing (and that thing the cavalier lacked)—the constraining power of faith and love—that could have enabled the Spaniard to throw down and trample under foot that Moloch of pride.

[Pg 74]

But worse even than fears for his family, worse than the anticipation of a violent death for himself, was the awful darkness which to Alcala hung over the future beyond the grave! To die was to him as a leap into chaos! Alcala was, as has been observed, more enlightened than many Spaniards: he had used the taper-gleams of man's knowledge; but of clear light from Heaven he had none. Alcala had read enough to make him loosen his hold on the vain superstitions of the Church in which he had been reared, but not enough to make him grasp any firm hope in their place. The Spaniard did not believe that a priest could absolve him from sin, therefore he felt that those sins were yet unforgiven. He could not ease his conscience by repeating Latin prayers or reciting a given number of penitential psalms, therefore his conscience remained oppressed. The cavalier had no faith in prescribed penance, purchased masses, or confessions to man, as means of propitiating One who was to him indeed an "unknown God"; where then was he to find peace? What was to assure Alcala that, if he gasped out his last breath that day in the circus, he might not be but exchanging the death agony for torments infinitely more terrible, because they would never be closed by death? The state of mind of the cavalier might, with little alteration, be described in the words of the poet:—

[Pg 75]

"Before him tortures which the soul may dare,
But doubts how well the shrinking flesh may bear,
Yet deeply feels a single cry would shame
To valour's praise his last, his dearest claim.
The life he lost below—denied above.

....*....*....*....*

A more than doubtful Paradise, his heaven
Of earthly hope, his loved one from him riven.
These were the thoughts that [Spaniard] must sustain
And govern pangs surpassing mortal pain,
And these sustained he, boots it well or ill,
Since not to sink beneath is something still."

In the anguish of his spirit the mind of Alcala reverted again and again to Lucius Lepine. The Spaniard was of course aware that his English companion held views of religion very different from those adopted by the Roman Catholic Church. Alcala had secretly wished to know more of these Protestant views, and now the wish became intense when it was too late to gratify it. Alcala thought his English friend the most upright and highminded man with whom he had ever met, and was acute enough to distinguish that highmindedness from pride. The Spaniard saw that Lepine had a loftier standard of duty than those around him, and asked himself whence had that standard been drawn. Alcala had never indeed heard his friend converse on the topic of Divinity; but in many things, some of them trifling in themselves, the observant eye of the cavalier had seen that his companion was guided by a sense of religion. No profane word ever crossed the lips of Lepine; he was pure in his life; he revered the Sabbath in a way that appeared novel and

[Pg 76]

strange to Alcala, but which the Spaniard could not but respect.

And yet this noble-hearted, conscientious Englishman was one whom the Romish priests would denounce as a heretic doomed to perdition! "How strange," mused Alcala, "that from the root of error should spring a tree bearing fruits so fair!" The Spaniard had yearned for a clearer knowledge of that faith which was branded as worse than infidelity, and which yet could produce such effects. He would fain have questioned Lucius on the subject, but pride and reserve kept him silent.

Once only had the ice been slightly broken. Lucius had been led to allude in conversation to the death of his father, who, when cruising in the Pacific, had been struck dead by a flash of lightning. It was a painful subject, and one on which he rarely touched; but the two friends were together alone under the quiet moonlight, and there had been more of interchange of thought between them than there had ever been before.

"It must have embittered your trial," Alcala had observed, "that your father had no time for preparation for death—no time to receive the last rites of his Church." Greatly had the Spaniard been struck by his companion's reply, "No; for my father had made his peace with God long before." Not a shadow of doubt had darkened the countenance of the Protestant as he uttered these words; Lepine had looked as fully assured of the happiness of his parent as if he had himself seen him carried by angels into the skies. Alcala could not utter the question which trembled on his lips, "Have you then no fear of the purgatorial pains which, as our priests tell us, are needed to purify even the good?" That question was answered, ere it was asked, by the peace—the more than peace—which shone in the eyes of Lucius.

[Pg 77]

"What would not I give," thought the unhappy Alcala, as he rode towards Seville, "to know on what basis rested that assurance of hope which evidently made the Protestant look upon sudden death but as a step into glory! Lepine's father had 'made his peace with God long before!' How had he made his peace; how could he know that his sins were forgiven, and that he might stand without trembling before the awful judgment-seat of his God?"

CHAPTER IX.

[Pg 78]

THE BRIEF FAREWELL.



Alcala had now reached the place where the narrow lane in which stood the posada in which he had passed the night opened into the highway leading directly to Seville. He was now on the road along which, ten minutes previously, had passed the herd of fighting-bulls destined for the arena. Alcala saw the print of their hoofs in the dust; he noticed at no great distance the gleam of their horns above the cloud raised by their tramping and that of their mounted conductors. Alcala had been near enough to hear that defiant roar of the monarch of the herd that had thrilled on the ear of Lucius. Campeador had raised his tasselled head, and pricked up his ears at the noise.

Alcala bent down to stroke the neck of his steed. "Ah! Campeador," he gloomily said as he did so, "does instinct tell you that there is death in that sound? You too will suffer from my accursed folly and pride. You deserve a better fate, my poor horse, and a far better master!"

[Pg 79]

As Alcala slowly rode onwards, following in the track of the bulls, he saw a muleteer approaching towards him. Lepine, after his brief and unsatisfactory colloquy with the herdsman, had turned off in a different direction, or he must have encountered his friend. The figure of the muleteer was the only one visible at this point upon the narrow road, which lay through a cutting.

Alcala, buried in his painful reflections, would scarcely have noticed the muleteer, had not the man, when they had almost met, respectfully greeted him by his name.

"Señor de Aguilera," said the messenger of Inez, approaching the cavalier's stirrup, "I bear to you a letter from a señorita." And the muleteer held up to Alcala the epistle which had been intrusted to his charge.

Alcala stopped his horse, shifted his lance to his bridle-hand, took the note, and with a little difficulty disengaged it from its envelope. Only the presence of a stranger made him refrain from groaning aloud as he read the impassioned words of his sister. Her threat to bury herself in a convent thrilled his soul with unspeakable anguish; for gentle and yielding as was the nature of Inez, her brother had never yet known her fail in keeping her word, even in the face of opposition. If anything could have added to the misery of the young Spaniard, it was such a letter as this. For a moment it almost shook his firm resolution to brave out the consequences of his rash boast; for a moment Alcala thought of turning his bridle and urging Campeador to bear him afar from Seville! But it could not be; every drop of proud Spanish blood in the veins of an Aguilera seemed to protest against so ignominious a flight. Alcala, whose brain was dizzy from the violence of his emotions, was recalled to himself by the muleteer's question,—

[Pg 80]

"Has the caballero any message for me to take back to the señorita?"

The muleteer was no stranger to Alcala, who knew him to be an honest but ignorant man, unable

even to read. The cavalier would not send a verbal reply to the note of Inez, but had no time to return to the posada in order to write what he could not speak. Alcala drew out a pencil-case which he chanced to have on his person, but he carried with him no paper, and he would not return to the unhappy Inez her own epistle; that token of her affection he would bear with him to the last. The muleteer guessed from his gesture that the cavalier wished to write, and saw that he had no writing materials save the pencil-case in his hand. The man supplied the want, in his own rough way, by stooping and picking up from the road a dusty fragment of paper which happened to be lying upon it. There was no opportunity of procuring a more suitable sheet; Alcala scarcely even noticed that the paper was part of a leaf torn from a printed book. There was room on the margin for a few words; and resting the paper on his saddle, after giving the muleteer charge of his spear, Alcala hastily scrawled the brief note which was soon afterwards received by his sister. How many bitter tears were to be shed over that leaf!

[Pg 81]

"It is I who am blighting her young life; it is I who am riveting chains upon her whose only fault is that of loving an ungrateful brother too well," muttered Alcala to himself, as he saw his messenger speed on before him.

The painful task of answering the letter of Inez being over, Alcala thrust it under his scarf, gently shook his rein, and rode on. No prisoner condemned to suffer at an auto-da-fé had ever gone to the stake erected in the Plaza more hopeless of deliverance than Alcala felt at that moment. His embroidered vestments were to him as the san-benito worn by the doomed; the horrible ordeal from which nature shrank was before him, and he had no enthusiasm of zeal, no joy of hope, to bear him through it.

[Pg 82]

Some stragglers, bound for the sport at the Coliseo, were overtaken by Aguilera. They recognized him as a picador by his peculiar dress, turned eagerly to look at him, and in loud tones made their remarks on the horseman as he passed them.

"Brave caballero! how splendid he looks!" cried an Andalusian maiden.

"But scarcely strong enough to drive his spear deep into the tough hide of a bull," remarked her more experienced companion.

"Tush, Tomaso, it's all skill," laughed the girl. "I warrant you the picador knows how to manage his horse in the ring, and avoid the thrust of the horns—"

The conclusion of the sentence did not reach the ears of Alcala; he had urged his steed to a quicker pace, in order to get beyond hearing.

CHAPTER X.

[Pg 83]

STRUCK DOWN.



Lucius endeavoured so to time the hour of his return to Seville that he might re-enter the town when the result of the bull-fight might be known. He proposed calling at the mansion in the Calle de San José on his way back to his lodging, with the hope, if not of seeing Alcala, at least of hearing tidings of his safety.

The sun was still some height above the western horizon when Lucius entered the deserted street. The glare reflected back from the high dead wall was oppressive.

"I am too early; I have been too impatient," thought the young Englishman, as he laid his hand on the bell which hung in the shadow of the archway. He marked that the grating of the patio was ajar. Inez had forgotten to lock it after receiving from the muleteer the note from Alcala which crushed her last hope. The unprotected state of the house mattered, however, little; there was no great danger of thieves invading a place in which they would find no plunder.

[Pg 84]

Lucius rang softly, as one who would by no loud summons disturb a house of mourning; but the bell was instantly answered. The grating at the end of the vestibule was thrown hastily back, and the trembling Inez herself hurried through the opening, and along the arched passage. Her dark eyes were dilated with fear, her pale lips trembled. She knew not whom she was addressing, but her whole soul appeared to flow forth in the question, "Bring you tidings from the Plaza de Toros?"

"I come to ask for them, señorita," began Lucius. But the eyes of Inez rested on him no longer, they were turned wistfully in another direction. Her ear, quickened by fear, had caught a sound which Lucius had heard not, and breathless with expectation she gazed up the street. In another moment a crowd of persons appeared emerging from the entrance of a lane which crossed the Calle de San José. They came not with shout or mirth, as if escorting a victor home, but slowly, like a throng who follow a funeral procession. There was no noise, save the tramping of feet, and ever and anon the wail of a woman. Lucius glanced at Inez, and read despair in her face. An icy numbness was creeping over her frame; she had no power to go forward to meet the corpse of her brother. Soon the crowd reached the entrance of the dwelling of Aguilera; in the midst of the throng was seen a litter borne by men. On that litter lay stretched a motionless form. Pale and ghastly, with garments blood-stained and torn, Alcala de Aguilera was borne back to the home of

[Pg 85]

his fathers.

Lucius intuitively took the place of a brother. "Back—back!" he exclaimed in a tone of authority to the crowd who pressed round the litter,—"none but the bearers shall enter. Who will go for a surgeon?"

"I—I," replied several voices, and the crowd dispersed in various directions, whilst the litter was borne through the arched passage.

"Show the way to his room," said Lucius to Teresa, whom he recognized, as she followed her master closely, crying and wringing her hands.

The litter was carried across the patio, and through a long spacious corridor, at the end of which lay the cavalier's apartment. Alcala's wound had already been roughly bound up at the circus, the flowing blood had been stanchied. He was, with the help of Lucius and Inez, gently lifted from the litter and placed on his bed, to await the surgeon's arrival.

"Water—bring water!" cried Lucius. Teresa hurried to obey the command, but her young mistress had forestalled her. In this emergency the energy of Inez had returned. But not a word had she uttered, not a tear had she shed; her anguish had sealed her lips, her terror had dried up her tears. Kneeling beside her brother's low bed, Inez sprinkled with water his corpse-like face; Lucius, gently supporting his head, put a cup to his lips.

[Pg 86]

"Oh, Heaven be praised!—he drinks! there is life in him still!" exclaimed Inez.

"He's dying—he's dying—last of his race! Oh, woe's me! woe's me!" moaned Teresa.

Lucius dismissed the bearers, satisfying their demands with the coin—it was but little—that he chanced to have on his person. They had scarcely left the place ere the anxiously expected surgeon arrived.

The surgeon removed the bandages from the insensible Alcala, and examined his ghastly wound. There was a deep gash in the left shoulder, from which there had been a great effusion of blood. The full extent of the injury sustained by the unfortunate cavalier could not be ascertained at once.

"He was crushed up against the barrier,—I saw it with my own eyes,—oh that I should have lived to see it!" cried Teresa, with passionate gestures. "The bull charged, and in a moment man and horse were down in the dust. Campeador never rose again, the horns of the savage—"

[Pg 87]

"Be silent, woman!" said Lucius sternly; "does not your lady already suffer enough?"

Teresa stared in angry surprise at this unexpected rebuke from the stranger, who had assumed a post of command in the house of his friend by the tacit consent of its mistress; for Inez felt as if, in her sorest need, a helper and supporter had been sent to her by Heaven. The old woman dared not reply, but muttering something between her teeth about "insolent heretic," busied herself with the bandages required for the wound.

When the surgeon had finished his work, Lucius accompanied him out of the room, that his question, "Do you think that there is hope?" might not be heard by Inez.

"It is impossible to give any decided opinion as yet, señor," answered the surgeon. "Fever will probably ensue; let some one sit up with the caballero during the night."

As the surgeon crossed the patio, it was entered by a priest. In this stout personage, swathed in long black robe with rosary and crucifix dependent; with plump, dark, close-shaven face, and tonsured head from which the huge flapped hat was now removed, Lucius recognized the priest who had touched him on the shoulder on the previous evening.

[Pg 88]

There was no word spoken between the two men; the family confessor needed no guide to the room of Alcala. But the eyes of the Spaniard and the Englishman met, and each read in the glance of the other, "I shall find an opponent in you."

From motives of delicacy, Lucius did not follow the priest into Alcala's apartment, but remained waiting in the lofty corridor. He would not by his presence disturb the visit of a spiritual director. The door was closed between them; no ordinary conversation could therefore be heard by one standing outside, who had no wish or intention to listen. The priest, however, probably purposely, spoke loudly enough in the chamber of sickness for a word or two occasionally to reach the ear of Lucius.

"Not at confession for the last year,—bad influence—heretic—Protestant," such were the words which the raised tone in which they were spoken rendered audible,—though an indistinct murmur was all that was otherwise heard of the voice of the ecclesiastic through the closed door.

"Would that I had better deserved the priest's suspicions!" thought Lucius, with some self-reproach.

When the priest left Alcala's apartment he was followed by Inez and Teresa, though the former went but a few steps beyond the door. Her hands were clasped; a look of entreaty was on her pale face.

[Pg 89]

"You will not refuse my brother the last rites of the Church?" she said faintly.

"I will come again to-morrow, and hear his confession, if Don Alcala be then able and willing to confess," was the sternly uttered reply. "I hope that I shall find him a true son of the Church;" the hope was expressed in a tone that was more suggestive of doubt. Inez bowed low with submissive reverence, and returned to her post.

As Father Bonifacio—such was the name of the priest—passed Lucius, again his eyes rested on the young Englishman with an expression of dislike and suspicion. The glance was calmly returned.

Teresa accompanied the priest to the outer arch, while Lucius went back to the room of his friend.

"I knew that there was something wrong," muttered Teresa, when Bonifacio had passed out into the street. "Don Alcala has been too much with those vile blasphemers of the saints and the blessed Virgin. If all the bulls that graze on the Sierra Nevada had come against him, the arm of an Aguilera would have prevailed, had his lance but been sprinkled with holy water. Had the caballero been to mass and confession in the morning, he would never have rolled in the dust at noon. If I had my will, that English heretic should never come near or look at him again!"

[Pg 90]

But Teresa had not her will, at least on the night which followed that anxious day. Lucius shared with Inez the long sad watch by the sufferer's pillow. As his presence certainly did not seem to be unwelcome to the sister of his friend, he remained at his post until dawn.

How often the scene in that sick-room afterwards returned to the recollection of Lucius, its most trifling accessories imprinted indelibly on his mind! The large and lofty but scantily-furnished apartment, so dimly lighted by one small lamp that its further corners were left in almost absolute darkness; the walls, on which the plaster was cracked and peeling; while square-shaped marks and projecting nails showed that pictures had once been hung where they no longer remained to bear witness to the wealth and taste of their late possessors. One family portrait alone was left, evidently painted by the hand of a master; but it had apparently served as a pistol target in the time when the French were quartered in Seville, as it was drilled with several holes. The ceiling had once been richly painted and gilded; but the gold had long since lost all trace of brightness, and the faded painting showed in the dull light like mere undefined stains of various hues. There was no carpet on the floor; this was not necessarily a sign of poverty in a climate so warm as that of Andalusia, but the boards themselves were time-worn, and in some places seemed going to decay.

[Pg 91]

The part of the scene on which interest centred was that where Alcala lay, on his bed of pain, with countenance so pale that it looked as if it belonged to a monumental recumbent figure chiselled out of marble. Almost as pale and as still, his sister sat watching beside him, scarcely ever raising her long dark lashes, so fixed was her gaze on the face of Alcala. Inez seemed scarcely to be aware of the presence of a stranger, save when Lucius helped her to change the position of the sufferer, or placed the fever-draught in her hand. Inez would then thank him by a mute and scarcely perceptible gesture.

Hour after hour passed away, whilst the only sounds that broke the stillness were the rustle of Teresa's dress, or the crack of one of the old boards under her heavy tread. The old servant flitted about uneasily, like a bird whose nest is invaded. It was against all the duenna's ideas of propriety, as well as the devotee's prejudiced views of religion, that the English heretic should remain in the sick-room, which nothing would persuade Donna Inez to quit. But Teresa dared not speak out her mind in the presence of Lucius Lepine, above all in that still and solemn apartment. Even Teresa could hardly help seeing, though she would not have openly acknowledged the fact, that the services of the young stranger could not, on that night, have been well dispensed with. No one would ever have introduced Chico into a sick-room; and before the long night was over, Teresa's own eyelids were closed in sleep. The old servant was worn out with the fatigue, excitement, and distress of the day.

[Pg 92]

Alcala gave few signs of life during the long weary hours of darkness. Occasionally he clutched his hand, sometimes his lips slightly moved and his brow was contracted with pain. Once a few scarcely articulate words escaped him: "Not a convent—no, not a convent!" Towards morning, however, the wounded man sank into quiet sleep; and Lucius felt that he could now leave him with a more easy mind.

"It is dawn—you had better depart; thanks, thanks for your kindness to him," murmured Inez, as a slight sound of movement made her aware that Lucius had risen from his seat. The Englishman bent his head to whisper a word of comfort to the poor watcher before he quitted her side.

"Señorita, trust in the mercy of God, and hope. I believe that your brother will be spared to you yet."

CHAPTER XI.

[Pg 93]

FAILURE.

Lucius was dizzy from want of sleep when he left the mansion of the Aguileras and went forth into



the fresh morning air. But he had no time for repose. He could but partake of a simple breakfast at his lodging before beginning the week's work in the Calle San Francisco. Lepine's presence in the counting-house and factory was now more indispensable than usual, as he would, at least till a substitute could be found for Alcala, have to do the young Spaniard's work in addition to his own.

The mind of Lucius Lepine was very full of his friend. What he had seen of the interior of the fine old house in the Calle de San José had made Lucius sure of what he had long suspected, that Alcala de Aguilera, though of high lineage and aristocratic bearing, was yet exceedingly poor. Lucius doubted that the wounded man's family would be able to procure for him even the common comforts which his exhausted state required. Never had Lepine been more tempted to wish himself rich. He could give no further pecuniary help; he had cut down already to a very narrow limit his own personal expenses; his savings had been lately forwarded to England to pay for a brother's schooling. Lucius saw no way of supplying the need of Alcala, unless he could interest his employer in the behalf of his friend. Mr. Passmore had a well-filled purse, his business profits were large, and the disbursement of twenty, thirty, or fifty doubloons would not alter his style of living, or cause the absence of one dainty from his luxurious table.

[Pg 94]

But Peter Passmore was not a man from whom it was pleasant to ask a favour, or easy to draw a donation. Lucius, when he made up his mind to plead for assistance for Alcala, was doing for his friend a thing which nothing short of starvation would have induced him to do for himself.

Lepine had been for two hours in the counting-house before he heard the heavy step and puffing breathing of Mr. Passmore.

"So your friend, the picador, was yesterday carried home dead," was the first sentence with which the master of the iron-works greeted his clerk.

[Pg 95]

"Not dead, sir, I am thankful to say, but gored and sorely injured," was the reply.

"How he escaped with life is a miracle," said the manufacturer; "but of course the chulos went to his help. It was indeed a sight to make one hold one's breath! The bull, a magnificent brute, rushed on with the force of a steam-engine. The horse received the goring thrust full in his chest, so was put at once out of pain, more lucky than the wretched hacks usually are. Of all barbarous sports invented by man or by demon, bull-fighting is to my mind the most atrocious."

"The sufferings which I witnessed last night," said Lucius, "make me more ready than ever to subscribe to that opinion;" and he gave a graphic description of what he had seen in the Calle de San José, but as briefly as possible, for Passmore was never a patient listener, at least to the tale of other's woe. But the glimpse given by Lucius of the poverty of Alcala's home made the manufacturer more indignant than ever.

"Not the means of getting comforts!" he exclaimed, striking his flabby hand on the desk; "then why, in the name of common sense, did the madman, when in the receipt of a handsome salary—punctually paid—choose to ruin not only himself but his family, in order to gratify some fantastic, most incomprehensible whim of his own?"

[Pg 96]

"I understand that De Aguilera had some mistaken idea of honour," began Lucius; but his employer would not suffer him to finish the sentence.

"Honour! fiddlestick and nonsense!" exclaimed Mr. Passmore. "What has a clerk in an ironware factory to do with honour? Nay, you need not fire up, young man; the blow does not hit you. My notion of true honour is for a man to pay his way and earn his pay; and I'm satisfied that you do both. But for this wretched Spanish pride I've no patience! It is anything but honourable in a man to take the bread from the mouths of his family by squandering all his money on finery only fit for the stage; it is anything but honourable to cheat his employer by spending on bull-sticking the time which should have been given to book-keeping—a much wiser, safer, and, to any man with an atom of sense, a far more agreeable employment!"

Lucius saw that it was utterly useless to attempt to draw a single dollar from Mr. Passmore for the relief of the Aguileras. He was disappointed, but scarcely surprised. It was impossible to refute what the manufacturer had said, however unpalatable truth might be, conveyed in a manner so coarse.

Another disappointment awaited Lucius Lepine. After a day of unusual toil, rendered more irksome by the heat of the weather acting on a frame wearied by a long night of watching, Lucius, as soon as his work was done, set out for the Calle de San José. He was anxious to know the state of his friend, and again to take his place by his bedside. Should the improvement in Alcala's state continue—and Lucius, who was hopeful by nature, regarded recovery as probable—what opportunities there would be during his convalescence for quiet religious converse! Lucius felt that he could and would say by the bedside what he could not say in the counting-house or the Prado. Aguilera would have to pass many long weary hours of confinement in his apartment, and then his mind would be free to receive the good seed of the Word.

[Pg 97]

"Into how rich a soil," thought the young Englishman, "that seed will be dropped; and who can estimate what may be the result, not only to Alcala, but to others whom he may influence! The man who dared face a horrible death for love or honour, must become a Christian hero if once he embrace evangelical truth."

It was with a feeling of triumph, that made him forget for awhile personal weariness and anxiety

for his friend, that Lucius glanced again at the placard-covered boarding which had arrested his attention on the Saturday night preceding the bull-fight. The invitation to the Plaza de Toros had either been torn down as out of date, or covered with more recent advertisements; the charge from the Bishop of Cadiz, in all the clearness of its black type, remained there still. Lucius smiled at the thought that he himself was about to join the band of those who were attacking Rome in her stronghold; his second attempt to strike at superstitious error was, he trusted, not likely to end like his first.

[Pg 98]

Lucius soon found himself at the entrance of the Aguilera mansion. The grating at the end of the arched passage was shut, which it had not been on the occasions of his two previous visits.

The Englishman rang gently, but his summons remained unanswered. He rang again rather more loudly, and then walked up to the grating. He heard a heavy step crossing the patio, and through the perforated iron screen which divided them saw the bent form of Teresa approaching towards him.

"How fares the señor?" inquired Lucius.

"Better, thanks to the blessed Santa Veronica, a lock of whose holy hair has been under the caballero's pillow," was the old woman's reply.

"Pray open the gate; I have come to nurse your master to-night," said Lucius.

"The caballero wants none of your nursing," exclaimed Teresa, in her harshest tone; "and if you wait till I open the gate for you, why, you may stand there till the Guadalquivir runs dry! Away with you and your white Judaism!^[12] To have the like of you prowling about sick men's beds is enough to make the bones of good old Torquemada^[13] shake in the grave!"

[Pg 99]

Teresa's form vanished from behind the grating, and Lucius, not a little annoyed at this unexpected obstacle to his intercourse with Alcala, returned to his cheerless lodging.

Evening after evening the young Englishman renewed his attempt to gain admission into the mansion of De Aguilera, but always with a similar result. In vain he hoped for a sight of the señorita; she at least, he believed, would not shut out the friend of her brother. Lucius saw no one during repeated visits but the bandy-legged, ill-favoured Chico, or the fanatic Teresa. The latter as jealously guarded the entrance to forbidden ground as ever did fabled dragon of old. As regarded Chico, the case was different. Lucius more than suspected that when this servant answered his summons, the grating might have been unlocked by means of a silver key. But Lucius was too poor to give bribes, and the disappointed Chico became almost as rude as Teresa herself. The young foreigner only exposed himself to insult and abuse by his attempts to visit Alcala.

[Pg 100]

"This is my just punishment for former neglect of a clear duty," said Lucius to himself one evening, as he turned from the Moorish archway. "There was a time when an open gate was before me, but now the gate is shut."

FOOTNOTES:

[12] "White Judaism, which includes all kinds of heresy, such as Lutheranism, Freemasonry, and the like." See the Spanish priest's definition of the term, in the seventeenth chapter of Borrow's "Bible in Spain."

[13] A celebrated Spanish inquisitor.

CHAPTER XII.

[Pg 101]

DARKNESS AND LIGHT.



It is not the tongue of man alone that can speak to the soul of man; God's rod hath often a solemn voice, and the conscience cannot but hear it. Much was passing through the mind of Alcala of which those around him knew nothing, as he lay with closed eyes and silent lips upon his couch of pain. He was often supposed to be sleeping, when thoughts on the deepest subjects were absorbing his mind.

The horror of the bull-fight had been to Alcala what the earthquake was to the jailer of Philippi; it had startled his soul into uttering the cry, "What must I do to be saved?" Not that any dark deed of guilt lay on the young Spaniard's conscience. In a place where the standard of morality is low, De Aguilera had led a life comparatively blameless; the picture of maidenly purity ever before him in the sister whom he tenderly loved, had kept him from many an error. Alcala had little to reproach himself with as regarded man, but he had become conscious that he had offended his Maker, and had never yet made his peace with his God.

[Pg 102]

Alcala's ideas in regard to the Supreme Being were vague, as might be expected in a man who had never studied the Scriptures. The Spaniard did not know God, and therefore did not love

Him. Alcala regarded the Almighty as a Being awful in purity and terrible in justice, who required an unhesitating obedience, an absorbing devotion, which the young man knew had never been rendered by himself. If the horn of the bull had gone a little deeper, if it had sent the sinner to the dread tribunal above, how would the disembodied soul have endured the searching scrutiny of an Omniscient Judge, and what would His awful verdict have been? Such was the question which Alcala asked of his conscience, and conscience gave no answer of peace.

The wounded man rather submitted to than sought the ministrations of Bonifacio; they satisfied neither his heart nor his reason. Alcala heard of the sanctity of the (so-called) Catholic Church, the efficacy of her sacraments, the power of her priests, the intercession of martyrs, the wonders to be wrought by fragment of wood or morsel of bone,—he heard of all these things with weariness and distaste. Alcala was as a man perishing of thirst to whom is held out an elaborately chased cup, within which there is not a single drop of life-giving water.

[Pg 103]

Bonifacio's rebukes were even more trying to the sufferer than were the priest's exhortations. The confessor tried to probe his penitent's conscience, but never laid his finger on the real wound. Alcala's remorse was not for having read some books that did not increase his reverence for the hierarchy of Rome, nor for not having more frequently laid bare his inmost thoughts to a tonsured fellow-sinner. He could not be argued into believing it to be a crime to have had a Protestant friend. It was not recollection of such transgressions that was troubling the cavalier's soul with the yet unanswered question, "What must I do to be saved?"

Though Alcala never spoke to his sister of his mental struggles, she perceived, with the quick instinct of affection, that his mind was not at ease. Inez saw also that Bonifacio was by no means satisfied with her brother's spiritual state. This was distressing to the gentle Inez. "The pious father," she said to herself, "cannot know how good is Alcala; I do not think that there is a cavalier to be compared to him in all Andalusia."

Inez was, indeed, aware that Alcala was not quite so strict a Catholic as if he had been brought up in a cloister. She remembered that when Queen Isabella (whom the most loyal of her subjects could not regard as a saint) had presented to the black image of our Lady of Atocha a robe crusted with jewels said to be worth thirty thousand pounds,^[14] Alcala had not admired her devotion. He had even said that the queen might have pleased Heaven better by feeding her starving people with the money spent on that gift. Was such a thought very profane? If so, Inez feared that she shared the sin of her brother.

[Pg 104]

In the desire to do something that might bring solace to the spirit of Alcala, Inez, on the following Sabbath morn, softly laid beside him, while he was sleeping, a Romish manual of devotion, containing prayers or invocations to half the saints in the calendar of her Church. Inez had herself made much use of the book in the time of her overwhelming anxiety, though she had found no great relief from such prayers. The maiden was alone at the time by her brother's sick-bed, and was so wearied by nearly a week of nursing, that, now that her worst fears were removed, exhausted nature claimed her due, and Inez fell fast asleep on her chair.

Alcala awoke while Inez slumbered, and gazed with grateful affection on his devoted sister. His eyes then fell on the book which she had placed near his pillow, and his emaciated hand took it up. Alcala opened the volume less from expectation of finding comfort in its contents, than from a wish to please her who had put it beside him, he guessed with what intention. As Alcala unclosed the book, a small piece of paper fell out. It was something that Inez had dearly treasured, for it held what she had feared might be her brother's last message. She had kept it in her manual of devotion, as the safest and the holiest place.

[Pg 105]

Alcala dropped the book, and took up the leaf; he recognized the scrap of paper on which he had written in the bitterest moment of his life. Strange and painful associations were connected with the torn, soiled fragment which had been picked up from the road. Alcala gazed, read—not his own pencilled words, but the printed part of the paper—and in a moment all merely personal associations were forgotten. The Spaniard's whole attention was concentrated on the first verse of Scripture on which his eyes rested—"Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. v. 1).

Here was something that might satisfy the soul's deep longings; it was as if a voice from heaven, in tones that pierced the inmost heart, had replied to that question to which earth had given no answer. The first sensation to the Spaniard resembled that of one dazzled by sudden overpowering light. Then came the thought, "Can this be truth? Whence comes this torn leaf; of what book has it formed a portion?"

[Pg 106]

Alcala scarcely doubted that words so sublime in their simplicity, and so utterly at variance with the teachings of Rome, must be part of the Book the reading of which his priest had denounced as a crime; that Book which the Protestants call the WORD OF GOD. This conviction became stronger in the mind of De Aguilera, as again and again—till he knew it by heart—he perused that verse from which he was drinking in life, and hope, and joy.

"Justified,—what is that? Is it to be pronounced 'not guilty' at the very tribunal of Heaven? Is it to have no transgression punished, no sin imputed; to be saved from all the terrors of the world unknown? *Justified by faith.* Can it be by simply believing? Not by penance here, or purgatorial fires hereafter; not by the work of the hands or the anguish of the soul, the alms or the sacrifice, but *justified by faith.* Oh! could I but believe this, then indeed should I *have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ!*

"And with what is that *therefore*, that golden link, connected?" Alcala asked himself, as he eagerly glanced at the context, the verse which concludes the fourth chapter of Romans—"Who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification." All pointed to the Redeemer, and to Him *only*, the One Source of Salvation and Justification. The doctrine was clear as the light of day which was streaming in at the window; but could it be true? was it not too good to be true? Dared the poor sinner believe it, and trust the safety of his soul simply and unreservedly to Him who died to redeem it?

[Pg 107]

"I must see Lucius Lepine," murmured Alcala; "I must show him this paper. I marvel that he has never come near me since the first night, when I have a dim recollection of hearing his voice." The cavalier hid the precious leaf under his pillow; for he heard the heavy step of Teresa, and her entrance with some cooling drink for the patient wakened Inez out of her sleep.

FOOTNOTES:

[14] *Vide* "Daybreak in Spain."

CHAPTER XIII.

[Pg 108]

NEW LIFE.



Was the English señor never called to see me?" was Alcala's abrupt question to Teresa as she came into his room.

The duenna was taken by surprise, and Alcala read assent in her look of confusion.

"Why was my friend not admitted at once?" cried the cavalier, in tones so angry and loud that his astonished hearers could scarcely believe that they came from lips which, but a day before, had seemed scarcely able to speak above a whisper.

"The Inglesito was not wanted here," muttered Teresa, who scarcely knew whether to be pleased at the improvement in her patient, or vexed at the way in which that improvement was manifested.

"It was for me to judge whether my visitor's presence was wanted or not," said Alcala de Aguilera. "I will write to him,—no, I have not strength to write"—(not even the feverish energy which possessed his spirit could give steadiness to his hand)—"send Chico directly, without one minute's delay, to pray the señor to come hither. Is it not Sunday?" added Alcala more gently, turning his head towards Inez; "Lepine has no business to do upon Sundays, so his time will be free."

[Pg 109]

Teresa dared not disobey the hest of her master; she saw the fever-flush rising on his cheek, and could not risk the consequences of thwarting his will. Wishing in her heart that the vile foreign heretic were at the bottom of his own British Channel, Teresa went in search of Chico. There was, however, no need to find him, for the duenna had scarcely passed through the corridor before she heard the sound of Lepine's ring at the bell.

As for six successive evenings Lucius had been turned away from the house of the Aguileras, he had almost resolved to give up for a time all attempts to visit Alcala. On that very morning the young man had said to himself, "I will try my chance but once more;" and it was with very faint expectation of gaining admission that he came up to the grating which he had never but once been suffered to pass. It was a pleasant surprise to Lucius when Teresa, slowly and sullenly, drew back the bolt, and let him enter the patio. The old woman did not choose to usher the heretic herself into the presence of her master, but with her wrinkled finger pointed towards the corridor which led to Alcala's apartment.

[Pg 110]

Lucius needed no more distinct invitation. He crossed the court, and entered the corridor with a heart that throbbed with expectation. Here was the opportunity which he had desired, sought, and prayed for, of conversing with his wounded friend on the most important of subjects. Lucius felt that he must not again let such an opportunity slip. But what should he say,—how should he enter on a topic which might be unwelcome? Lucius felt that extreme difficulty of entering on spiritual themes which so often fetters the lips even of experienced Christians.

But how often man's whole difficulty lies in forming a firm resolution to do what conscience commands. No sooner does he begin to put that resolution into practice than the apprehended difficulty vanishes away! Such was to be the young Englishman's experience on the present occasion.

Lucius found Alcala alone, for Inez had glided out of the room by another door when she heard the visitor's approach. The wounded cavalier welcomed his friend with eyes that sparkled with animation, and an eagerness of manner for which Lucius was by no means prepared. He had expected to find Alcala in a state of suffering, languor, and depression, and never before had he seen the Spaniard's usually melancholy face wear an expression so bright.

[Pg 111]

"You are welcome; you are the one whom I most desired to see!" cried Alcala, holding out a thin hand which trembled with excitement as well as with weakness. "I pray you to take a seat by my side."

Lucius did so, and watched as De Aguilera feebly searched for something under his pillow, and then drew out carefully from its hiding-place a little fragment of paper.

"Tell me," said Alcala earnestly, as he held out the leaf to his companion—"tell me, Lepine, what is this?"

With emotions which cannot be described, Lucius first examined the little torn scrap, and then met the gaze of the eager dark eyes that seemed to be reading him through and through.

"This is a leaf that has been torn from a Bible," said Lucius.

"And do you believe its contents—are they truth?" asked Alcala, his eyes riveted still on the face of his friend.

"This is the Word of the Eternal God of Truth," replied the young man with reverence. "But," he added in a different tone, "it is to me a strange, an unaccountable thing, how this paper should ever have come into your possession, if—as I cannot but think—it belongs to a book which I have on my person at this moment."

[Pg 112]

The Englishman drew his New Testament out of his breast-pocket, and opened it at the Epistle to the Romans, Alcala watching his movements with lively curiosity. Several leaves from that part of the volume had evidently been torn out, and afterwards neatly replaced with paper and gum; but of one leaf there remained but a portion. Lucius fitted the fragment given to him by Alcala to the torn edge of this leaf, and smiled to observe that the two portions fitted each other exactly.

The surprise of Alcala was quite as great as his own. "How can this be?" exclaimed the Spaniard; "when was that fragment torn from that book?"

"Last Sunday morning," replied Lepine. "It was torn by the first of your countrymen to whom I ever offered a religious book. He was a peasant, following a herd."

"A herd of fighting bulls—on the way to the Plaza de Toros?" asked Alcala with interest.

"Yes," replied Lucius Lepine. "The drover was angry; he mutilated and flung back my book. You must have picked up the leaf by chance."

"Not by chance; no, not by chance!" exclaimed De Aguilera, his lip quivering as he spoke. "Mark you, Lepine, the pencilling on the margin?—Perhaps not, the faint lines are almost effaced by the tears of her who read them. Let them be effaced!" continued the cavalier with passionate fervour; "let all be effaced that is a record of the guilt and misery of man,—God's Word is legible still,—and it is the Word of Life."

[Pg 113]

I shall not attempt to give in full length the conversation that followed. Many were the questions on doctrinal points eagerly asked by Alcala, questions which showed that the speaker was one thirsting indeed for the waters of life. The Testament was searched and studied, Lucius preferring to answer the queries of his friend in God's words instead of his own. The Englishman turned from gospel to epistle, comparing this chapter with that, explaining scripture by scripture, and proving with an ease and clearness which surprised himself the truth of that grand central doctrine on which the Christian's hope is rooted, the doctrine of *justification by faith in a crucified Saviour*.

Lucius remained by the bedside of Alcala during the whole of that day; he was scarcely suffered to quit it even when night was far advanced. The friends partook together of a simple repast; their spirits were enjoying together the richest spiritual feast. Lucius, who had been brought up by pious and enlightened parents, could not remember a time when he had doubted God's pardoning grace, or been ignorant of the first principles of evangelical religion. It had not been so with the Spaniard, and his friend was much struck by the rapturous surprise, the intense thankfulness with which the glad tidings of great joy were received by one from whose eyes truth had hitherto been hidden beneath a mass of vain superstitions. Alcala welcomed that truth as one who has suddenly found a priceless treasure, and gratefully received the gift of the New Testament from his friend.

[Pg 114]

"This shall be my study, my guide, my joy!" said the cavalier, pressing the book to his lips. "I will never part with it but with life; it has given me more than life!"

Lucius left Alcala physically much exhausted, but full of joy and peace in believing. A night of deep sweet sleep followed the day of excitement. Alcala's soul was at rest; he had found what he long had sought. God was to him no longer the terrible Judge, but the reconciled Father; death was regarded no more as the dark angel who would summon the soul to trial and condemnation, but as the seraph that would call that soul to the presence of a glorified Saviour.

[Pg 115]

Has he whose eye now glances over these pages known experimentally anything of the fears of one conscious of sin,—or the intense joy of him who has heard in his heart, "*Go in peace, thy sins are forgiven thee.*"

AN UNPARDONABLE WRONG.



he visits of Lucius to the house of Alcala were repeated on many successive evenings, to the great annoyance of Teresa, who both suspected and feared the stranger. Inez did not share the old servant's displeasure. She saw that the society of the Englishman made her brother strangely happy, as they studied together that marvellous Book, of which Alcala spoke to her so often. Inez rather regretted when she found that there would be a break in intercourse which was so greatly enjoyed, Lucius having to go to Madrid on some mercantile business in the latter part of September.

"Here, I have spent all, to the last maravedi,"^[15] muttered old Teresa, as she returned one Friday from market, laden with a basket heavy with various provisions for the household: some bread, a flask of oil (indispensable in a Spanish kitchen), a string of onions, saffron for soup, a melon, chestnuts, oranges, and olives. Meat was a luxury rarely tasted in the palace of the Aguileras. Wearily the old woman set down the basket on the kitchen table, on which Inez, with her delicate hands, was preparing her grandmother's cup of chocolate.

[Pg 117]

"I have satisfied the surgeon, as you desired, señorita," said Teresa, "and have bought these things with what remained of the twenty dollars which you gave me."

"You have laid out the dollars well, Teresa," said the maiden graciously to her ungracious retainer; "I knew that you would do the best that you could with the money."

"I wish that I knew where that money came from," said Teresa, her sharp eyes surveying her young mistress with a keen look of suspicion. As Inez never quitted the house unescorted by her duenna, and Teresa had not once been asked to attend the señorita—except to mass—since Alcala had received his wound, it had been a matter of curious speculation to the old servant how the lady had suddenly become possessed of twenty dollars, which seemed to her a very large sum.

Inez made no reply to the observation, but went on with her occupation. This only served to intensify the curiosity of Teresa.

[Pg 118]

"I hope that those dollars were not given to the señorita by that heretic Inglesito," hissed forth the old woman, as she rested her bony knuckles on the table, and leant forward to peer more closely into the face of Inez.

"You know well that Spanish ladies accept no money from cavaliers," replied Inez, with a heightened colour on her cheek and some displeasure in her tone. "I had the dollars from Donna Maria de Rivas; she was here yesterday, as you are perfectly aware."

Teresa did not look by any means satisfied with the reply; perhaps she was too well acquainted with the family friend to deem her capable of an act of free liberality. The old woman still sharply surveyed her mistress as she observed, "I cannot abide that Donna Maria; she speaks the thing which is false."

"Teresa!" Inez began reprovingly; but the old domestic tyrant would have out her say.

"I heard this very morning that Donna Maria boasts that she possesses a silver reliquary holding a lock of the blessed Santa Veronica's hair" (here Teresa crossed herself devoutly), "a reliquary once belonging to Philip the Second, our most Catholic king,—the saints have his soul in their keeping!"

[Pg 119]

Inez moved from the table; the flush on her cheek had deepened to crimson. The duenna presumed to lay her hand on her young lady's arm to detain her.

"You know, señorita, that there is not a lock of that saint's hair to be found in all Spain, from Navarre to Andalusia, save that one which King Philip himself gave to your noble ancestor, Señor Don Amadeo de Aguilera."

Inez tried to release her arm, but the pressure of the old woman's hand had tightened into a gripe as she continued, after a pause: "You would not have me imagine that a descendant of that illustrious caballero, that a daughter of the house of Aguilera, has sold the priceless relic for twenty dollars?" The question could not have been asked with more pious horror, had it regarded the tombs containing the bones of all the maiden's noble ancestors.

Inez, in her position of helpless poverty, could not throw off that most intolerable yoke, the tyranny of an ill-tempered old duenna, who knew herself to be indispensable, because her place could not be supplied by another. Teresa considered that years of almost unpaid service had given her the privilege of being as insolent as she pleased to her gentle young mistress. On the present occasion Teresa used—or abused—that privilege to the utmost.

[Pg 120]

"I would not have exchanged that precious relic," she cried, "for the Golden Rose which his Holiness the Pope has sent to our queen! I'd have begged—starved—thrown myself into the river

—before I'd have sold it for money! The glory of the house of De Aguilera is gone for ever! The curse of the saints is upon us!" And Teresa, relaxing her hold on Inez, burst into a flood of passionate tears.

Inez was not herself sufficiently free from a superstitious regard for relics, not to be distressed and even somewhat alarmed at seeing the light in which her act was viewed by the old duenna.

"We were in debt—in need," she said softly; "I hope that the blessed saint herself would forgive what I did for the sake of a brother."

"The saint may—but I cannot!" exclaimed Teresa, hastily drying her eyes, and then bursting out of the kitchen. Her anger, if the truth must be told, sprang quite as much from her pride as from her devotion. To have it noised about in the market-place of Seville that the reliquary of King Philip, the heirloom of the Aguileras, had actually been sold to purchase food,—this was even worse to the old retainer of the family than the fear of offending Santa Veronica.

[Pg 121]

Inez stood for some moments with drooping head and downcast eyes. Had she indeed, the poor girl asked herself, done something that might draw down on herself and her family the wrath of the saints?

"Perhaps I should first have consulted my brother," thought Inez; "though the reliquary was my own, the gift of my father. I should have done so, had not most of the money which I received been required to pay the surgeon to whose skill we owe so much. But I should not have trusted my own judgment; I am but a weak, foolish girl. As soon as I have carried this chocolate to my grandmother, I will go and confess the truth to Alcala. He may condemn my act, but I am sure that he at least will forgive it."

FOOTNOTES:

[15] A coin of less than a farthing's value.

CHAPTER XV.

[Pg 122]

CONFESSION.



There are those who have asserted that the doctrine of Justification by Faith will lead to neglect of good works; that he who believes that Christ has done all, will be content himself to do nothing. How false is the assertion has been constantly proved by the lives of those who have most simply and unreservedly thrown themselves on the free mercy of Him who died for sinners! Love for the Saviour and the indulgence of wilful sin can no more exist together than fire and water unite. Where the Heavenly Guest enters, a halo of light shines around Him which reveals impurities which have hitherto, perhaps, altogether escaped the notice of conscience. Wheresoever the Saviour goes, holiness is the print left by His footsteps.

Thus was it with Alcala. Having received the gospel with joy, he intuitively began to consider what return of grateful obedience he could make for unmerited mercy. Having cheerfully resolved to run the race set before him, he felt that he must speed towards his glorious goal disencumbered of the weight of the sin which most easily beset him. Alcala had little difficulty in discovering what that sin was. Turning from contemplation of Christian doctrine to that of Christian duties, the Spaniard was struck by the very first sentence uttered by Divine lips in the Sermon on the Mount—"Blessed are the poor in spirit."

[Pg 123]

Alcala paused long, with his finger on that verse. He was a Spaniard, and a Spaniard of noble birth. He had been, as it were, cradled in pride; taught to regard pride as a lofty virtue. Was it needful, and even if needful, was it possible, to overcome what seemed woven into his very nature? Could the high-spirited cavalier ever become the meek and lowly believer?

Alcala felt that, in the struggle against pride in its various forms, he was now entering his spiritual Plaza de Toros; that his own strength was as weakness compared with that of the mighty enemy before him. He must ask for strength greater than his own, he must seek for the aid of that Holy Spirit who could enable him to overthrow and trample even upon pride. Alcala reflected deeply on the numerous passages in Scripture which represent humility as essential to the character of a believer. It was difficult indeed to throw aside prejudices that had become as a part of himself, to recognize the truth that nothing is really degrading but sin, and that the highest and noblest have nothing whereof to boast. Alcala's reflections, however, brought him to a conviction which was once simply and beautifully expressed by a believer, whose life proved that she spoke from the heart:^[16]—"What is the position of a Christian? To wash the disciples' feet, to sit at the Saviour's feet,—this is the position of a Christian!"

[Pg 124]

"I shall bear on my person to the end of my days a scar to remind me that God abhors pride," thought Alcala; "and the lesson will be enforced by new privations, in which, alas! my family must share. Who has more reason than I to know that pride is a fiend who, under the name of high

spirit, lures us on to destruction? But for unmerited grace, I should have sacrificed to him both body and soul. His voice was more strong in this guilty heart than the appeals of reason, conscience, and affection. I preferred dying like a madman, to owning that I had boasted like a fool!"

Alcala was thus pondering over the subject, when his sister entered his apartment, knelt by his side, and timidly took his hand in her own. [Pg 125]

"Something has grieved my sweet one," said Alcala, reading trouble in the face of his sister.

"Alcala, I must hide nothing from you," murmured Inez, with the meekness of a child confessing a fault. "I fear that I may have done wrong, but you will judge when you know the whole truth. Donna Maria was here yester-evening, while the English señor was with you. I could not help speaking to her of my troubles; I could not help telling her of our—our difficulties," continued Inez, drooping her head. "I thought that she had the means to help us, and—we are so poor, Alcala!"

"Poverty is no disgrace, my Inez," said Alcala; "except," he added gravely, "poverty brought on by such an act of criminal folly and pride as that which has laid me here."

"I told our mother's friend that I had parted with all,—everything that could be turned into money,—even your guitar, Alcala," continued Inez with a sigh. "'What, child!' replied Donna Maria, 'even with King Philip's reliquary, which holds the hair of Santa Veronica, the heirloom of which your family is so proud? I would give you twenty dollars for that!'"

"A liberal offer!" cried Alcala, with irony. "Our fathers would not have sold the relic for twenty thousand!" The cavalier felt that the little hand which he held was trembling, and reproached himself for the unguarded exclamation. [Pg 126]

"So you let the señora have the reliquary," he said, kindly sparing the poor girl the pain of continuing her story.

"Did I do very wrong?" murmured Inez. "Must I tell Father Bonifacio, when next I go to confession, that I have sold Santa Veronica's hair?"

"No; you did right," replied Alcala. And he added cheerfully, "One verse from the Bible is worth more than all the relics in the Cathedral of Seville; and as for confession, I would fain that you, like myself, should resolve never again to confess to a Romish priest."

"Renegade! infidel! apostate!" exclaimed a furious voice. Inez started in terror to her feet. Bonifacio stood in the doorway, with raised arm and clenched hand, as if he were launching a thunderbolt of vengeance at the devoted head of her brother. Teresa, horror-struck, stood behind the priest, whom she had been on the point of ushering into the apartment, when he had paused upon the threshold to hear Alcala's concluding sentence. "Wretch! abandoned by Heaven, lost to every sentiment of religion!" continued the furious ecclesiastic, "think not that you can with impunity defy the power of the Church! We have a pious Queen, who has faithful counsellors in her confessor Claret and the saintly Patrocinio.^[17] The arm of the law is yet mighty enough to strike—to crush the apostates who renounce their holy faith to join the enemies of all true religion!" And after a gesture expressing that he shook from his sandalled feet the polluted dust of the heretic's dwelling, Bonifacio turned his back on Alcala, and strode rapidly through the long corridor, followed to the entrance by Teresa, who was wringing her hands. [Pg 127]

"O Alcala! all is lost!" exclaimed Inez.

"Fear nothing, beloved," said Alcala, with a serene composure which astonished his sister, "mere words have no power to hurt. Though Bonifacio may have the spirit of old Torquemada, these are not days when men can be sent to the stake for confessing the truth."

"But there may be persecution,—sharp, dreadful persecution," faltered Inez.

"If so, my God will enable me to bear it," said Alcala, with a countenance that brightened at the thought of enduring suffering and shame for the sake of his Lord. "Inez, my heart's sister, be not troubled. Think not of what your brother has lost, but what he has found;" and Alcala laid his hand on the sacred Volume. "If you knew more of the contents of this Book, you would fear no longer what man can do unto those who have grasped the hope of eternal life. But you shall know more of it, Inez. This evening you and our servants shall hear me read the words of truth. My wound is almost healed, my strength is gradually returning, and I would fain devote that strength to the service of my Heavenly Master. It is meet that my first audience should be those who form our own household. Lepine would have explained evangelical doctrines better than I can, to whom they are as a new revelation; yet I regret not that he is absent at Madrid, since, if the rumour of even so small a meeting were noised abroad, it might bring my friend into trouble. Let Teresa and Chico come to my room after sunset; would that our dear grandmother's mind had power to receive the glad tidings of free salvation!" [Pg 128]

Insolent as Teresa often showed herself to her gentle mistress, the old retainer stood in awe of her master; and though she might murmur to herself at his commands, she never dared openly to dispute them. Both she and Chico were therefore present at the first meeting for Bible reading and family worship ever held in the stately old mansion. Alcala, who for the first time since his illness had quitted his couch, sat propped up with cushions. He looked pale and fragile, but serenely happy, as he read aloud a portion from one of the Gospels. The portion was necessarily [Pg 129]

short, for the reader was still very weak. Small as was the audience—for no stranger was present—it yet represented a variety of hearers. Inez, with her hands clasped, and her soft eyes fixed on the reader, listened to the words of Holy Writ with reverential attention; Teresa, with scarcely concealed repugnance; Chico could hardly be said to listen at all. The uncouth attendant's thoughts were distracted by the strange novelty of his being permitted, nay, ordered, to be seated in the presence of the caballero, Don Alcala de Aguilera,—a novelty which disgusted Teresa more than anything else in the service.

"A low fellow like that to be treated as if his wretched soul were worth as much as that of a grandee of Spain!" thought Teresa. "My master's illness must have affected his brain, or he would sooner have made a footstool of Chico than have bidden him sit down in his presence!" To her mind such an extraordinary breach of etiquette on the part of a hidalgo of Andalusia was much more strange and unaccountable than his late exposure of his life to satisfy a wild notion of honour.

[Pg 130]

Alcala was thankful that he had been strengthened to take the first decided step in the course of service which he hoped through life to pursue. He closed his Bible reading with a brief extempore prayer, of which the fervour touched the spirit of Inez, and the humility astonished that of Teresa. What cavalier had ever before prayed so earnestly to be delivered from the power of pride!

With gloomy forebodings the duenna retired from Alcala's apartment after family worship was ended. Often during the following night, as she uneasily turned on her pallet-bed, Teresa moaned her complaint that times were evil indeed, when noble pride could be deemed a sin in the heir of the honours of the Aguileras!

Happy were the slumbers of Alcala. He dreamed that night that he was again mounted on his steed in the Plaza de Toros, in the centre of the circus, and surrounded by gazing thousands. But when the door of the circus was flung open by the black-robed alguazil to whom that service belongs, it was no fierce animal that rushed forth to encounter the point of Alcala's lance. There came into the arena a procession of priests, monks, and devotees, bearing aloft graven images of saints, and swinging censers of incense, as they slowly approached him. Then, in his dream, Alcala glanced around, and, lo! instead of the usual spectators who were wont to throng the seats in the Coliseo of Seville, the places were filled by thousands of martyrs who, in that city, had passed through the ordeal of fire. They wore no longer the yellow san-benito, the garb of shame, but robes compared to whose whiteness dim were the diamond and dark the new-fallen snow. The martyrs were "a cloud of witnesses," a cloud sparkling in the light of the countenance of Him for whom they had suffered,—a cloud reflecting His ineffable glory.

[Pg 131]

When the hour of persecution and trial arrived, Alcala drew courage and hope from the recollection of that glorious dream.

FOOTNOTES:

[16] F. Tucker.

[17] Isabella's confessor, and a nun who had great influence with the queen.

CHAPTER XVI.

[Pg 132]

A MIRAGE.



Inez de Aguilera always shared the sleeping-room of her grandmother, and had often to minister during the night to the aged and imbecile lady. It had never occurred to the Spanish girl to regard this duty as a hardship, but she had never felt such sweet pleasure in its performance as she did after listening to the words of her Heavenly Master which had been read aloud by Alcala. He who had said, "*Love one another as I have loved you,*" would, Inez hoped, be pleased with her care of the aged relative whom He had intrusted to her charge.

A trial to those who attended on Donna Benita was the poor old lady's inability to understand the change in the circumstances of her family; she who had come as a wealthy bride to a wealthy hidalgo, sorely missed, and never ceased to expect, the luxuries connected with the possession of riches. If Donna Benita desired to breathe the air in the Prado, how was it that carriages with splendid horses were not ready at her command? Where was the train of attendants that should wait on the lady of a Spanish grandee? What had become of her jewels, her bracelets of diamonds, her chaplet of pearls? Old Teresa lost patience when she had to repeat for the hundredth time to her imbecile mistress that her treasures had all been carried off, nearly fifty years before, by the infidel French soldiers, who had dared to eat their puchero and smoke their cigarillos in the patio of the palace of the Aguileras.

[Pg 133]

Inez never lost her patience with the feeble invalid, but she was pained when, on the morning following Alcala's first meeting for family devotion, Donna Benita more fretfully than usual complained of the want of the luxuries which her grandchildren had not the means of providing.

"How I am neglected by all of you!" murmured the aged lady. "Have I not told you these many times to bring me my goblet of chased gold, filled with good Xeres wine? Where is it—why do you keep it from me? There is no one to do my bidding,—no one cares to bring me the delicate panada which is, as you know, my favourite dish. I am tired of chocolate, and toast, and watery puchero! Every day seems a fast-day here!"

[Pg 134]

"You shall have something nice, very nice, to-day, dear grandmother," said Inez, respectfully kissing the old lady's hand. "Teresa yesterday brought home from the market a splendid basketful of good things." And Inez glided out of the room, asking herself as she did so, "When shall we find means of so filling that basket again?"

The kitchen, which was situated at the remotest part of the mansion of the Aguileras, was very spacious, and from its emptiness now appeared very dreary. There were scarcely as many utensils left in the place as would have supplied the tent of a wandering Gitano. And yet in that kitchen, in former days, banquets had been prepared to furnish a table at which a hundred guests had sat down.

Teresa's bent, withered form was stooping over the fire, which, like the inmates of the mansion, was very scantily fed. The step of Inez was so light that the old woman did not hear it, and she was not aware that the señorita was at her side, when she flung on the fagots a small bound volume. Inez darted forward, with an exclamation of indignation, just in time to snatch unharmed from the fire the New Testament of her brother.

"Why do you presume to burn the treasured book of Don Alcalá?" exclaimed the maiden, pressing the volume to her breast.

[Pg 135]

"To save Don Alcalá's life!" replied Teresa, raising her head with angry surprise. "Did you not hear the threats of Father Bonifacio; have you not been told of the warning sent out by our priests against those who 'infest Catholic Seville with Bibles and *other pernicious books*'?^[18] Are you so ignorant, señorita, as to suppose that Scripture readings can be safely carried on in a Christian country like this?" Each question was asked in a tone more loud and shrill than the last. "Every hour I am expecting the alguazils^[19] to search this house, this house polluted with heresy. Woe to Don Alcalá de Aguilera if that fatal book be found within it! He will be dragged out of his bed, thrust into some loathsome prison which he will never quit till his carcass be thrust forth to be flung like carrion into some ditch! I'll not see it—I'll not see it," continued the old retainer with a gesture of passionate grief; "Teresa's hand shall not be the one to open the gate of this palace to those who come to arrest its master! There's a *gran foncion* to-day in honour of my patroness, Santa Teresa; I will go and join the procession, and try if my prayers cannot move the saint to save Don Alcalá from the ruin which he is bringing on himself and his house!"

Away hurried Teresa, leaving her young lady to do her work and think over her warning.

[Pg 136]

The first occupation was easy enough: Inez had often prepared her grandmother's meals. But while her slender fingers did their office, the mind of the poor girl was painfully revolving the words of Teresa. Might they not be only too true—might not Alcalá have actually placed himself within reach of the grasp of the law? Inez was constantly turning in terror to listen for sounds that might announce the coming of alguazils to seize on her brother, and search the house. The horrors of a Spanish prison to a gentleman of refinement, who had not yet recovered from the effects of a wound, and who was too poor to bribe his jailers, might actually realize the picture drawn by Teresa. The heart of Inez sank within her.

While Donna Benita was partaking of food so delicately prepared by her grand-daughter, that not even the old lady's weak, fretful mind could find in it subject for complaint, Inez was planning a little scheme for Alcalá's safety, in case a search-warrant should be issued.

"The Book must not be found in this house, at least not in my brother's possession," thought Inez. "I will not destroy, but I will conceal it. I will carefully wrap up the volume, and then bury it deep, very deep, in the earth under the orange-trees which grow round the fountain; no one will look for it there, and I will take it up again when the danger is over. Alcalá will spare it for a few days when I tell him why I have buried the Book. He will miss it the less since he knows, I believe, half of its contents by heart already."

[Pg 137]

It seemed a long time to Inez before Donna Benita concluded her tedious repast; a long time before her grand-daughter could beat up her pillow, shut out the daylight, and leave the old lady to enjoy the siesta which always followed her morning meal.

Inez then hurriedly proceeded to the patio, and took, from a recess in which she kept her few garden utensils, a spud with which she was wont to weed her parterre. She noticed that her plants looked less flourishing than they had done before her brother's illness; no one had cared to water or tend them, and many a shrivelled leaf showed the lack of a mistress's care. "Alcalá must not find them thus," thought Inez; "my chief joy in my garden comes from knowing that it gives pleasure to him."

In haste to accomplish the work of burying the volume during the absence of Teresa, Inez knelt down, and with her imperfect instrument began to dig a hole in the earth which surrounded the fountain. The maiden found the task more difficult than she had expected. The sod was dry and hard; Inez had to bring water to saturate the earth before she could make much impression upon it.

[Pg 138]

"A little deeper,—it will be safer to make the hole a little deeper," said Inez to herself, when she paused to take breath after labour which the heat of the day made oppressive. The lady took up her garden utensil again, and struck it, not down into deeper earth, but against something hard which returned a metallic clink to the stroke.

"What can be here?" exclaimed the maiden. She removed more of the earth, till a small pile of it was deposited on either side of the hole which she had been digging. A little more scraping then revealed to her view, as she bent over the opening, something like a wooden box with a handle of metal. Stooping yet lower,—she was still on her knees,—Inez took hold of the handle, and with an effort of her utmost strength attempted to draw out the box; but she was unable even to stir it.

"Can I help the señorita?" said Chico, who had been attracted to the patio by the slight but unusual noise made by Inez when digging out the earth. Since the death of poor Campeador, the bandy-legged groom had found more time for idling about.

[Pg 139]

Inez started at the unexpected voice, threw back the long hair which had fallen over her brow as she had stooped and laboured, and rose from her kneeling position. Her first feeling was that of annoyance at the intrusion of Chico; but as she was unable to accomplish her object without assistance, she accepted the offer of his aid. The young lady stood on the marble pavement watching while Chico, with considerable labour and difficulty, disengaged the box from the earth in which it had lain embedded, and, lifting it out of the hole, laid it heavily down at her feet.

The box was not so large as an ordinary desk, but exceedingly heavy in proportion to its size. It appeared to be made of walnut wood, with hinges, lock, and handle of steel, and it was clamped with broad bands of the same metal. But for many, many years that box had lain under the earth, and now the steel was rusted, the wood was rotten. The lock, indeed, was a good one still, but the hinges were eaten away with rust, and had no power to resist the strong wrench with which Chico, ere Inez could prevent him, tore off the lid of the box.

The sight of its contents, thus laid bare to the view, made Inez open wide her dark eyes with surprise. The box was a little treasury in itself, holding wealth packed up in the most portable shape. Rouleaus of gold pieces, cases of jewels, a golden goblet filled with chains, coins, snuff-boxes, all of the same precious metal, appeared before the eyes of the wondering girl.

[Pg 140]

"Move nothing—touch nothing!" cried Inez to Chico, who, on his knees, was gloating open-mouthed over the treasure, and about to lift the goblet out of the box to explore what lay beneath it. "The Señor Don Alcalá must be the first to examine what is within."

Chico took out a piece of parchment and held it up to Inez, who read on it the following words:—"*I, Don Pedro de Aguilera, before leaving Seville to join the army, being apprehensive that the French may one day possibly occupy this city, do bury this casket containing my wife's most valuable jewels, and a portion of my family plate, 1810.*"

"Heaven has sent help to us in our utmost need!" exclaimed Inez, clasping her hands, and looking upwards with grateful joy.

But wealth is wont to bring care, and Inez had no sooner obtained possession of the family treasure than she began uneasily to revolve in her mind how she could best secure it. Her first impulse was to bid Chico carry it at once to her brother's apartment, and place it under the care of Alcalá. But a moment's reflection made Inez doubt the expediency of this course.

[Pg 141]

"Alcalá is in peril already," thought Inez; "should I not greatly add to his danger by placing in his room, which has not even a key to its lock, a treasure like this? If the discovery of these rich jewels and pieces of gold were bruited abroad in Seville, it would arouse the cupidity of all the ruffians with whom this city abounds! My Alcalá might be murdered as well as robbed! Would I not act more wisely if I buried the treasure again, only taking out, time by time, a few pieces of money to supply our immediate need?"

Inez glanced down at Chico, who, in spite of her prohibition, seemed unable to resist the temptation of fingering the gold with his coarse, dirty hands. "I dare not trust Chico," thought Inez, in sore perplexity; "if the treasure were buried, he at least would know the secret, and there would be nothing to hinder him from abstracting whatever he pleased from the box. I hope, I think that he is honest; but the temptation might prove too great. The gold must be kept under lock and key,—where can I place it in safety?" Inez raised her hand to her brow, and reflected for several moments. It was so new a thing to the maiden to be burdened with the care of riches! Presently an expression of satisfaction came to the anxious young face.

[Pg 142]

"There is the armoury," thought Inez; "the door is strong, and the lock is good. We will shut up the box within it, and give Alcalá the key."

The place which was called the armoury, from weapons and ammunition having once been kept there, was little more than a deep recess in the wall which enclosed the patio, closed in by a low strong door, which had been so constructed as to attract little notice from without. A stranger might have resided for months in the house of the Aguileras, and have spent hours every day in the patio, without ever observing that there was a door near to the ornamental grating—indeed, under its shadow whenever the grating was thrown back. The small key of the armoury had been left in the lock, for there had been no need to use it, the place had been for many years empty of all but dust and rubbish. There could be no better place in which to secure the treasure.

"Chico," said Inez to her servant, who was still on his knees, fumbling the gold, "mention to no

one—not even to Teresa—the finding of this box. You shall be well rewarded for your fidelity and your silence. Now bear the box to the armoury yonder; I will first lock it up there, and then take the key to Don Alcala, and tell him what I have done."

[Pg 143]

Inez glided across the patio, glad that the grating was closed, so that no stranger from the street could possibly see what was passing within. Followed by Chico carrying the box, the lady reached the armoury, opened the door, and tried the lock.

"Place the box there," said the maiden, pointing to the inmost corner of the recess, close to the door of which she was standing.

Chico, instead of obeying, set down the heavy box on the pavement, and then, by a movement so sudden that it took Inez completely by surprise, he pushed the lady into the armoury, shut the door, and locked it upon her!

Inez cried out aloud in her alarm, when she thus unexpectedly found herself in darkness, a prisoner in her own home. With mingled threats, entreaties, and promises she conjured the false Chico to open the door. The traitor, however, thought time far too precious to wait either to listen or to reply. He could not, indeed, pass through the grating, of which Teresa had taken the key; but he easily made his way out by the same passage as that through which he had entered, one which communicated with the now empty stable.

Inez now exerted all her strength in the endeavour to force open the door, but it resisted her utmost efforts. The air in the armoury was close and confined. Inez could hardly breathe; she was faint with exhaustion and terror. Her cries for help were not heard, though she tried to call out loud enough for her voice to reach some passer-by in the street. Inez at last, finding all her exertions vain, could only await in discomfort and misery the return of Teresa, who would liberate her from her prison.

[Pg 144]

How long, how intolerably wearisome was the time of waiting! What painful companions to poor Inez in her solitude were her own reflections! She could not doubt that the family had been robbed by the worthless Chico,—robbed of their all at the very time when its possession was most sorely needed. The short-lived hopes which the sight of the treasure had raised in the mind of Inez, had vanished from her view like some mirage in the desert before the thirsty traveller's eyes. Poverty—destitution—appeared all the more dreadful from contrast with abundance beheld, but not enjoyed.

The minor cares of the moment lent their weight to add to the pressure of greater. Inez was uneasy at the thought of Donna Benita awaking from her siesta, and being frightened at finding no one beside her. Alcala, too, must need his lemonade, and would miss his Book,—the precious volume which Inez had still in her bosom. Add to all this the physical distress, the sense of suffocation consequent on confinement in a place in which there was no circulation of air, and some idea may be formed of the misery endured by Alcala's sister.

[Pg 145]

The impatience of Inez had risen to the point of agony long before, to her intense relief, she heard in the vaulted passage the heavy step of Teresa, wearily returning from her visit to the shrine of her patron saint.

"Release me—oh, release me!" cried out Inez from her place of confinement.

Teresa was so much astonished by hearing the cry for help, muffled as it came through the closed door of the armoury, that she dropped the key of the grating, which she was just about to open.

"Make haste—or I die!" gasped poor Inez.

Teresa made what haste her infirmities and her amazement would permit; but she had to stoop and pick up the key, fit it into the hole, and then push open the grating, and every moment thus employed was a moment of torture to Inez. At length, guided by the voice of her mistress, the old servant entered the patio, and turned round where the armoury door stood close behind the grating. In another second Inez, trembling and gasping for breath, was released from her terrible prison.

[Pg 146]

"In the name of all the saints, how came you to be locked up here?" exclaimed the wondering duenna.

"Chico has robbed us—I can say no more now!" faltered Inez, scarcely able to speak. "Go quickly to Donna Benita,—she may want help,—while I—" The sentence was never ended; for Inez, exhausted and faint as she felt, was already on her way to her brother's apartment.

"Chico has robbed us!" echoed the bewildered Teresa, lifting up her hands in amazement. "Robbed the house, and shut up the lady! I know not what there was in the place that the poorest thief in Seville would think it worth his while to take!"

Glancing around her, Teresa soon perceived the disordered state of the patio; the marble round the parterre encumbered with heaps of dust and earth, and in the ground under the bushes a hole large enough for an infant's grave. Something had surely been dug out, something had been carried away. Teresa was puzzling her brain to divine what could have occurred during her absence, when she was alarmed by sounds,—but the cause of these sounds must be reserved for the ensuing chapter.

FOOTNOTES:

[18] *Vide* "Daybreak in Spain."

[19] A kind of police.

CHAPTER XVII.

[Pg 147]

ARRESTED.



nez!—truant! I have lost you all the morning!" cried Alcala, as he heard the approach of his sister. Inez was surprised on entering the room to see that the wounded man had managed to rise and dress himself without assistance. "I waited for you till I had no patience for longer waiting," continued Alcala cheerfully; "you have carried away my Book, and have been so buried in its contents that you have quite forgotten your brother."

The playful rebuke was given with a smile, which, however, vanished from the face of Alcala as soon as he turned and looked on that of his sister.

"What has happened?" exclaimed Aguilera, alarmed at the appearance of Inez, who stood with pale lips apart, as if still gasping for breath; her hair, usually smooth as satin, disordered, and pushed carelessly back from a face that bore the impress of terror and suffering.

[Pg 148]

The poor girl, exhausted both by the strain on her physical endurance and the alarm which she had undergone, came forward, sank on her knees at her brother's feet, and burst into tears. Inez did not, however, long give vent to her emotions. Struggling to speak through her sobs, she gave an account of all that had happened,—the discovery of the treasure, the treachery of Chico, and the cruel means which he had taken to secure his own flight with the gold.

Alcala listened with breathless attention and burning indignation. The fiery young Spaniard bit his nether lip hard to keep himself from uttering the vow of deep vengeance which, a few weeks before, would have been, under lighter provocation, sternly spoken and ruthlessly kept. It was no easy task to Aguilera to wrestle down and keep under control the passion which he now felt to be unbecoming a Christian. Alcala, however, said not a word until Inez had finished her story. Then he spoke in a tone of suppressed indignation.

"This false—Chico must be tracked at once, and forced to yield up his ill-gotten spoil. Would that Lepine had not yesterday started for Madrid,—his intelligence, his English energy, would have been invaluable now. Give me my writing materials, Inez. If I had but strength to go myself to the minister of justice,—surely I have strength," added Alcala, rising and supporting himself by the table, "I shall be given strength to rescue my family from want, and win back the property of my grandmother. The alguazils must at once be set on the scent of the thief."

[Pg 149]

"The alguazils!" faltered Inez, who was still in her crouching position at the feet of her brother; "O Alcala, have we no reason to dread them ourselves?"

A heavy tramping in the corridor without was as an answer to the question. Inez sprang to her feet with an exclamation of terror, as the door was opened and the room entered by a body of the Spanish police.

The flush which indignation had lately brought to Alcala's pale face passed away. Still leaning on the table for support, he drew himself up to his full height, and in a calm voice demanded of the alcalde who headed the party what errand had brought him to the house of a cavalier.

"I come under a warrant from the corregidor, illustrious señor," said the alcalde, advancing towards his prisoner, and bowing low with the punctilious courtesy peculiar to Spaniards. "It is my painful duty to arrest the noble caballero."

[Pg 150]

"Upon what charge?" demanded Alcala.

"The charge of having held an unlawful meeting for the purpose of reading a forbidden Book, señor," was the answer.

"And who has preferred the charge?" asked Alcala.

"Your own servant, señor, by name Tomaso Chico, who was one of the party assembled at the meeting, and who engages to bring many other witnesses to support his accusation against you."

"Many witnesses!" murmured Inez.

"This Chico is a false villain, who has just robbed me, and who has doubtless brought the charge against his injured master to incapacitate him from pursuing the traitor, and giving him up to justice," said the indignant Alcala.

"Of that, illustrious señor, it is not my part to judge," replied the alcalde. "I have but to perform

my duty, which is to search this house for any prohibited writings or books, and to bear you off—pardon me, señor—to the prison."

Resistance or expostulation would have been utterly useless. Alcala, with quiet dignity, resumed his seat, and motioned to his sister to take one beside him, while the alguazils commenced their search. It was more rigid than it probably would have been had the cavalier slipped a few dollars into the officer's hands. Aguilera might, perhaps, in that case, have been spared the personal search which made the wounded hidalgo colour both from a sense of violated dignity and actual physical pain. But the thought, "O my Lord, this humiliation is for Thy sake!" took all bitterness from the trial, and Alcala's only care was to calm and reassure his terrified sister.

[Pg 151]

The search was continued for some time, and extended all over the mansion. Even the apartment of the imbecile old lady was invaded, and Donna Benita was thrown into hysterics by the strange sight of alguazils throwing open her drawers and presses, and dragging forth and flinging on the floor even her articles of dress, notwithstanding the loud indignant remonstrances of Teresa. Every place was explored, every corner searched for the forbidden Book, which, unsuspected by the alguazils, lay under the folds of the mantle of the young señorita.

Foiled in their search for Bibles, it now only remained for the alguazils to bear off their prisoner. A close conveyance was waiting at the entrance, surrounded by a little mob that had gathered to see the officers of the law bring out their captive. Inez still clung to her brother, helping to support his feeble steps, as, with guards before and behind, Alcala traversed the long lofty corridor, and entered the patio. The cavalier paused when he reached the fountain, where he wished to bid his sister farewell. He would not expose Inez to the view of the rabble, the sound of whose voices he now heard without in the street.

[Pg 152]

"Allow me a moment, señor," he said, addressing the alcalde, who bowed assent to the trifling delay. Then bending down, Alcala imprinted one kiss on the marble-cold brow of his sister.

"Be of good courage, my Inez; all will be well," whispered Alcala. "You know not the peace and joy that is given to those who suffer for *Him*." There was no time to speak more, but with a smile which said more than his words—for it was as the reflection of Heaven's sunshine upon him—Alcala pressed the hand of Inez, and so they parted. A prisoner for conscience' sake, the Spaniard quitted the home of his fathers, and passed over the threshold which he was conscious that he was not likely ever to cross again.

Inez was almost stunned at first by the suddenness of the blow which had fallen upon her. She could hardly realize that she was not in a horrible dream. Was it true—could it be true—that her brother, that Don Alcala de Aguilera had been arrested as if he were a felon, and marched off to endure, in his enfeebled state, the miseries of a Spanish prison? Alcala's danger so entirely absorbed the mind of Inez that it left no room for a thought of self; in her desolation and poverty the Spanish girl did not even ask herself, "What will become of me?"

[Pg 153]

Inez was roused from her state of half-stupefaction by Teresa, who, beating her breast, and tearing her gray hair, came up to her young mistress.

"Ah, Donna Inez! Donna Inez!" she exclaimed, "all this disgrace and misery would never have befallen the house of Aguilera had you not sold the hair of Santa Veronica!"

"Teresa, this is no time for reproaches," said Inez faintly; "we must act, we must do all in our power to aid my brother. Oh that the English señor were not absent at Madrid!"

Teresa ground her teeth at the mention of Lucius Lepine, whom she regarded as the original author of all these calamities, the villain who had corrupted the faith of her master.

"I can think of no friend to consult save Donna Maria," continued Inez, after a pause for anxious reflection. "Her husband may have some little influence with the Governor, Don Rivadeo; and she will at least give sympathy and advice. Teresa, let us go to Donna Maria at once."

"We cannot both leave the house," said Teresa sharply. "There's Donna Benita almost in fits. The wretches dared to enter the presence of a lady of the house of Aguilera, and terrify her out of her senses."

[Pg 154]

"Hasten to my grandmother,—do not leave her!" cried Inez. "How could I be so thoughtless as to forget her helpless state for a moment!" And as Teresa turned away to seek the room of Benita, Inez murmured to herself, "I will go alone to the friend of my mother."

CHAPTER XVIII.

[Pg 155]

TURNUED AWAY.



In an apartment of a dwelling far less spacious and picturesque in appearance than the home of the Aguileras, but much better furnished with modern comforts, sits Donna Maria de Rivas. She is engaged in serious and interesting conversation with a priest, who, as Father Bonifacio, is already known to the reader.

"I can hardly yet believe it, father!" exclaimed the lady, vibrating her large black fan as she spoke. "Don Alcala de Aguilera, one of so ancient and honourable a house, to be arrested, and on so pitiful a charge! If the caballero had been tempted by need to rob the mail (he is so desperately poor), or in a fit of passion had stabbed an enemy to the heart, it would have been quite a different thing,—one could have understood such acts; but to get himself locked up for holding a meeting for reading the Bible, such a piece of folly cannot be accounted for,—such madness exceeds all belief!"

[Pg 156]

"It is a madness, my daughter, I grieve to say it, that is by no means confined to this unhappy apostate," observed the priest. "The disease is infectious, the corruption is spreading. Unless strong and sharp measures are speedily taken, this cancer of heresy will eat deep into the very heart of society even in Seville."

"Impossible!" exclaimed Donna Maria. "I have heard, indeed, of Matamoros, and other misguided fanatics, who have happily been arrested by justice in their most wicked course; but surely the number of these wretches is few, and their example is little likely to be followed by those who see the punishment which it brings."

"Daughter, you little know the strength of this fanaticism, or the subtilty with which the poison of heresy is diffused throughout the length and breadth of our Catholic Spain!" exclaimed the ecclesiastic, warming with his subject. "So long as the vile English heretics hold Gibraltar,—would that its rock would fall and crush them!—so long will there be an open door through which all that is evil can enter our land! Secret agents of I know not how many societies distribute blasphemous tracts against the worship of the blessed Virgin, Purgatory, Intercession of Saints, and the reverence due by all the world to our holy Father the Pope!"

[Pg 157]

Donna Maria crossed herself in pious horror; and Bonifacio, with increasing vehemence, went on with his oration.

"Colporteurs hawk Bibles in the by-roads and lanes of Andalusia; copies are smuggled into rural parishes; English travellers instil the venom of their heretical doctrines even into the minds of unsuspecting *curés*! The wild mountaineers of the Sierra Nevada and Morena are, in their rude huts, poring over portions of the prohibited Book, and drinking in heresy from every line in its pages!"^[20]

"But Claret will not suffer such things to go on. Are not the authorities on the watch?" asked Donna Maria.

"They are on the watch," said the vehement priest. "Have you not seen the charge of the Lord Bishop of Cadiz? Does he not piously command and exhort his clergy to exert vigilance, warning them that 'the authors and propagators of evil doctrines aim at attacking religion and society at one and the same time, making use of *books* as their artillery for battering down, if it were possible, both of these solid edifices'? Has he not commanded the faithful to 'detest these bad books, and collect them that they may be burned'? And does not the Government of Her Catholic Majesty nobly second the efforts of bishops and priests? Vessels are watched in our ports, lest Bibles should lie smuggled in their cargoes; boxes and packages are searched on our frontiers: but all in vain. If a Spaniard, merely bent on amusement, visit Paris (the last place in the world, one would think, for Protestant propagandism), he cannot so much as look round at the wonders of art in the Great Exhibition, without seeing before him copies of the Scriptures, in every language spoken under the sun, and having a portion thrust into his hand, to carry back with him into this country. The very air that we breathe is tainted with heresy. I sometimes think," added the priest with a sigh, for he was not of a cruel nature, "that nothing will clear it unless we could light again those fires with which Torquemada, the stanch champion of our faith, burnt out the evil for awhile, consuming bodies in the pious attempt to rescue perishing souls."

[Pg 158]

"I should be sorry for such dreadful punishment to overtake poor Aguilera," said Donna Maria. "He is young, and noble, and brave."

"And therefore the more dangerous, señora," observed the stern ecclesiastic. "I pity the misguided young man from the bottom of my heart. I pity both him and his sister. I have known Aguilera from his youth: I knew his father before him. But were the cavalier my own brother, I would give him up without a scruple, though not without a sigh, to the utmost rigour of justice."

[Pg 159]

A servant now entered the apartment, and announced to his mistress that Donna Inez de Aguilera was waiting without, and desired to see the señora.

Donna Maria glanced at her confessor before making any reply. The priest frowned significantly, and shook slightly his shaven head.

"Tell Donna Inez that I am sorry that I cannot see her to-day; say that I am particularly engaged," said the lady.

The servant appeared unwilling to bear the ungracious message. "The señorita seems in trouble," said the kind-hearted Spaniard; "she has come on foot; she has no attendant with her," he added, in a hesitating tone.

"On foot—without an attendant! to think of a daughter of the house of Aguilera sinking so low!" exclaimed Donna Maria, much shocked; and again she glanced almost appealingly at her confessor.

The sterner frown and more decidedly negative gesture of the head were the priest's only reply. Donna Maria reluctantly repeated her orders to the servant, who left the room to obey them.

[Pg 160]

"May I not even see the poor child?" said the lady, as soon as the man had departed.

"Better not, far better not, my daughter. You know not into what difficulties, what errors, nay, into what dangers you might be drawn by intercourse with any member of the family of the apostate De Aguilera."

The servant soon returned, his looks expressing compassion.

"The señorita entreats to be admitted to enter; she says that her business is most urgent, and cannot be delayed."

Donna Maria coloured, bit her lip, and looked down at her open fan, as if she were counting the spangles upon it.

"I cannot see Donna Inez de Aguilera," she replied, with a decision of manner which cost her an effort. The señora was a selfish, worldly woman; but she must have been utterly destitute of natural feeling if she could have unconcernedly driven from her door the friendless, destitute orphan girl, who, as the señora well knew, had come to plead the cause of a brother, and seek a friend's counsel and help in the hour of her deepest distress.

FOOTNOTES:

[20] *Vide* "Daybreak in Spain."

CHAPTER XIX.

[Pg 161]

WANDERING ALONE.



My mother's friend then deserts me, all earthly help fails me," thought Inez, as she turned away from the house of Donna Maria de Rivas. "And yet I am not forsaken." Inez glanced upwards where the deep blue sky of Andalusia spread its sapphire dome above the white glaring buildings around her. Inez marvelled at her own calmness under circumstances so trying. She had been wandering alone through the streets of Seville, protected from the stare of passers-by only by the thick folds of the veil which the maiden drew closely around both form and face. Inez was painfully aware that she was committing a breach of Spanish etiquette, amounting almost to impropriety. In her country it is deemed unseemly, even for a girl of the humble classes, to walk abroad unaccompanied by a matron; the young sister of De Aguilera knew, therefore, that she was but too likely to meet with insult; and her modest, sensitive nature rendered such an ordeal to her peculiarly distressing. Inez could more boldly have made her way through a thicket, where the wolf might lurk or the adder coil, than down those bright, busy streets. But not even the rude Spanish *gamins* had uttered a jest as the lady glided timidly along; the beggars, wrapped in their mantles of rags, had not held out their hats to solicit alms. Idle cigarette-smoking loungers had courteously moved aside to let the maiden go by. It almost appeared to Inez as if she were guarded by invisible spirits, borne up by a strength not her own.

[Pg 162]

The maiden was indeed supported by comfort derived from a heavenly source. Inez, before starting on her walk, had opened the Book which was so dear to her brother, and which had so happily escaped the search of the police. The first words which she saw in it were enough for Inez; she closed the volume, kissed and replaced it in her bosom, repeating over and over to herself the promise, "*I will never leave nor forsake thee.*" Inez uttered no prayer to Virgin or to saint: had not Alcalá told her that all such prayers were useless? Alcalá trusted in God alone, and so should his sister trust. Inez went forth, feeding, as it were, on the strong, sustaining nourishment afforded to her soul by a few sweet words from the Holy Scriptures. She was not so wretched, not nearly so wretched, as she had been when Alcalá had ridden to the Plaza de Toros. Though Inez had, as yet, only a glimmer of gospel light, she had a comforting persuasion that Alcalá was now suffering in a cause in which it was an honour to suffer: no selfish pride, no mere spirit of romance, had brought him to his present condition of peril. His Lord would be with Alcalá, even in his prison, as with holy martyrs of old. Desolate as she was, as regarded human help, well might Inez look up to heaven and say, "I am not forsaken."

[Pg 163]

But where was the maiden now to turn her steps? Must she return to her home without making any further effort to find some protector for Aguilera? An almost unconscious prayer for guidance burst from the pallid lips of Inez. Then came the suggestion to her mind, "Wherefore should I not seek help from Antonia, the governor's daughter? Her father is all-powerful in Seville, and she—oh! if she be not harder than this pavement that I tread on, surely Antonia must interest herself in the fate of Alcalá!"

If there were one being in the world who was an object of aversion to the gentle Inez, that being was the wealthy beauty of Seville, whose pride had so nearly cost the life of Aguilera. It had been

[Pg 164]

a subject of no small thankfulness to Inez, that her brother, since receiving his wound, had never once mentioned Antonia's name. There was no misfortune more dreaded by Inez than that of having to embrace as a sister the heartless Antonia. But when Alcala lay ill of his wound, inquiries had been made regarding his state by a messenger wearing the governor's livery. Inez could scarcely believe it possible that Antonia could reflect without grief and remorse on the pain which she had caused to one whom, in the judgment of his young sister, no one could know and not love.

Inez had herself but slight personal acquaintance with Donna Antonia; they had met at the house of Donna Maria, and had there exchanged a few words. This slight acquaintance had by no means inclined Inez to wish for closer intimacy with the governor's daughter. Don Lopez de Rivadeo was himself a proud insolent upstart, who owed his place to his relationship to Claret, the confessor of Queen Isabella. No man in Seville was more unpopular than Don Lopez. The governor only used his power to fill his coffers. His was the hand to close on the bribe; he sold offices to the highest bidder; he oppressed the poor, he fleeced the rich; he was ready at all times, and in all ways, to do the bidding of one of the most unscrupulous governments that had ever afflicted even unhappy Spain. It was not willingly that Inez de Aguilera would ever have sought either mercy or justice from such a man as Lopez de Rivadeo; she had not the power, even had she the will, to work on his cupidity; she could only hope to influence him through the medium of Donna Antonia. The governor's only child was the pride of her father's heart, as well as the heiress of all his fortune; and gossip had whispered that the easiest way to climb to the great man's favour was by a chain of gold or rope of pearl round the neck of his beautiful daughter.

[Pg 165]

On, therefore, towards the governor's house went Inez, treading with weary feet over rough stones, sun-baked pavements, across glaring plazas. Thankful was the poor wanderer when trees bordering some paseo (promenade) afforded her temporary shade. Full as was the maiden's mind of anxiety and sorrow, nature at last would make its wants felt. Inez had had no refreshment that day since partaking of an early and slender breakfast, and it was now many hours past noon. Inez had had much to exhaust a frame not naturally strong, and had never before walked so far in the heat of the day. The poor girl's mouth was parched and dry with feverish thirst; weariness oppressed her; she felt that she could scarcely go further unless she slaked that thirst.

[Pg 166]

Happily, Seville offers her sparkling fountains to weary wayfarers like Inez. The maiden, however, shrank from approaching any of the larger fountains which ornamented the plazas, fearful of being noticed, perhaps recognized, by some of the gay idlers who congregated around them. There was a fountain in a more quiet corner of a street, where a tiny rill of water trickled from the mouth of a stone dolphin into a basin below. Towards this place Inez now moved her languid feet.

A man in a high-coned Andalusian hat, and wearing the long cloak which Spaniards think a needful article of dress even in the warmth of September, was filling for himself a little tin vessel attached to the fountain. Very near him squatted on the ground a vendor of fruit, the large basket before him piled with tempting oranges, citrons, melons, and figs, and bunches of grapes from Malaga vines. The fruit-seller was conversing with a third person—a peasant—who was making a simple meal off roasted chestnuts, while he chatted with his companion. Inez stood a few paces distant from the group, waiting till the man in the high hat should have quenched his thirst, that she might satisfy her own. The maiden thus could not avoid hearing some of the conversation passing between the three.

[Pg 167]

"But what was the caballero's crime, eh?" were the first words, spoken by the peasant, which arrested the attention of Inez.

"White Judaism, folk say," was the reply uttered by the vendor of fruit.

"White Judaism! what may that be?"

The question was apparently more easily asked than answered, for it was not till after sundry shrugs, expressive of perplexity, that the fruit-seller replied: "As far as I can make out, it's plotting to burn all the churches, knock down the convents, and hang all the friars."

"You've not hit the right mark, my friend," said the man in the high-peaked hat who was filling the tin. "I should know all about the matter, for I've travelled as courier to English caballeros; and White Judaism is their religion, when they've any at all. It's saying that the holy apostles were Jews, every one of the twelve, and the blessed Virgin herself only a Jewess!"

The peasant uttered an exclamation of surprise, the fruit-man crossed himself devoutly. "*Misericordia!*" he cried; "I never knew that White Judaism was half so bad as that comes to."

[Pg 168]

"You thought it mere burning and hanging," laughed he in the Andalusian hat: there was irony in his laughter.

"One don't see many in this Catholic land as hold such notions," observed the peasant.

"You don't see the seeds in yon melon; but they are there for all that," was the significant rejoinder.

"Ay, it only needs the sharp knife to cut open the melon, and there are the seeds sure enough," said the peasant.

"The governor is ready enough with the knife, and he whets it sharp enough," gloomily observed

the vendor of fruit. "To think of his ordering off to prison a caballero like Don Alcala de Aguilera!"

"Was it not he who was nearly killed by the bull?" inquired the man who had just emptied the tin in Spanish fashion—not touching the vessel with his lips, but throwing back his head, and pouring the contents into his mouth. The place at the fountain was now left free for Inez, but she had forgotten her thirst.

"Ay, ay; it's pity for him, I take it, that the bull did not kill him outright," said the fruit-man.

"Why, what will they do with him, if he is found guilty of Judaism, black or white?" asked the peasant.

[Pg 169]

The man who had just left the fountain took on himself to answer the question, while he made his bargain with the vendor of fruit.

"I'll tell you, friend, what they'll do. (What do you ask now for those figs?) The judge will find the caballero guilty, of course—for the folk at the court want such as he out of the way; then he'll be shipped off to Cuba to work on the plantations. (You may give me a bunch of those grapes.) At Cuba they chain each Spaniard to a woolly-headed nigger, two and two; (that's refreshing in weather like this!) and if the poor convict lag in his work, down comes the whip of the driver, who lays it smartly on his bare back, till perhaps the poor wretch drops down dead where he stands!"

The Andalusian went on, enjoying his luscious fruit, quite unconscious of the keen pang which his idle words had inflicted on a youthful and tender heart.

CHAPTER XX.

[Pg 170]

AN IDOL ON ITS PEDESTAL.



In the spacious garden attached to the governor's house were gathered together some of the gayest and most fashionable of those who moved in the higher circles of Seville. A party had been invited to celebrate with dance, song, and feasting, the birthday of the governor's only daughter. The garden was a little paradise, in which nature and art seemed to outvie each other in offering attractions to eye, ear, and taste. Lopez, who, with his daughter, had visited the Great Exhibition in Paris, had brought back ideas of French magnificence to add new adornments to a place which, for beauty and elegance, had before been unrivalled in Seville. Exotics from various countries blended with the splendid plants indigenous to Andalusia, making the parterres one flush of brilliant hues. Italian statues adorned gilded fountains that threw up scented waters to sparkle in the sun. Here, under the shade of orange-trees, ladies listened to the strains of some manly voice, accompanied by the tinkling guitar. There the fandango was danced on the velvet turf, while clattering castanets kept time. Servants in gorgeous liveries carried about ices shaped into the forms of fruits, or costly luxuries brought from the most distant parts of the world. Others followed with wines such as were to be found in no cellars in Seville save those of the wealthy governor, who was as lavish in expending his money as he was unscrupulous in acquiring it.

[Pg 171]

The centre of the brilliant circle, the observed of all observers, the magnet which drew to itself the admiration of every cavalier present—Donna Antonia stood like the queen of beauty, surrounded by satellites that only shone in the light of her smile. Antonia concentrated in herself the charms for which the women of Andalusia are famed. Hers were the lustrous almond-shaped eyes, the luxuriant hair, the exquisite form whose every movement is the perfection of grace. Perhaps to the eye of an artist Antonia would have appeared more to advantage in the picturesque long white robe and lace veil of the Spanish costume, than in the dress of the newest Parisian fashion with which she had chosen to replace them. But let her wear what she might, Antonia in any garb must have been acknowledged to be the most beautiful woman in Seville; and no one was more aware of the fact than herself. No expense had been spared in showing off her beauty; the arms and neck of the governor's daughter were loaded with splendid jewels, and a circlet of brilliants sparkled round her brow.

[Pg 172]

It was to be expected that such a subject of interest as the arrest of Don Alcala de Aguilera should afford a topic for gossip amongst members of fashionable circles, as well as amongst the poorer inhabitants of Seville. Even the cavalier's late adventure in the bull-ring had scarcely been a more exciting, and therefore delightful, theme. There was not a group in the gay garden of Lopez de Rivadeo where Alcala's imprisonment did not form a thread in the web of light converse, a thread variously coloured, according to the temper of the speakers, by disapproval, contempt, or pity. The appearance, at least, of the noble hidalgo was familiar to all the guests of Antonia, and every one, more or less, took some interest in his fate.

"I always declared my conviction that De Aguilera would sink lower and lower after he degraded himself by stooping to serve an English mechanic," observed a stiff-backed don, who had himself not been above begging a place in the customs and enforcing his plea by a bribe.

[Pg 173]

"I'd have blown out my brains before I'd have done that!" exclaimed a young Spanish officer, twirling the end of his slender mustache.

"De Aguilera took almost as short a method of cutting the life-knot when he rode spear in hand into the Plaza de Toros," observed a stately duenna.

"I admired his daring," lisped her pretty young charge. "One likes to see the knightly spirit flash forth; and if Don Alcala had been slain in the arena, one could only have said that it was a pity that so brave and handsome a caballero should come to such an untimely end. But only think of a Spanish hidalgo being carried off to a common prison on such a charge as might be preferred against some book-hawking pedlar!"

"Or a wretched heretic, whom Torquemada—rest his soul!—would have sent to the stake," joined in her stern-faced duenna.

"Heresy must be put down," observed the don who had first spoken, with a frown which might have beseemed the Grand Inquisitor himself. This Spanish gentleman, who so strongly condemned what he termed heresy, had himself no faith in any religion whatever.

"One pities Don Alcala's sister," said the younger lady. "I rather liked her looks, though she never carried herself with the dignity of an Aguilera; and as for her dress, she, for one, seemed to think that Spanish ladies were born in the frightful mantilla, veil, and high comb worn by their mothers, and must carry them, as birds do their feathers, to the end of their lives!" It need scarcely be mentioned that the fair speaker, like Antonia, had adopted a fashionable Parisian costume, and wore her hair in the *Impératrice* style.

[Pg 174]

A cavalier, with obsequious reverence, such as he might have shown to Queen Isabella herself, was presenting to Donna Antonia the fan which she had dropped, when one of her servants approached her, and in a low tone informed his mistress that a lady who called herself Donna Inez de Aguilera asked a few minutes of private audience with the señorita.

"Donna Inez de Aguilera!" exclaimed Antonia, in a tone that expressed curiosity rather than pity; "is she waiting in her carriage without?"

"The señorita is on foot, and unattended," said the lackey, hardly suppressing a smile.

Antonia laughed—such a light, gay laugh—and the sycophants around her echoed the tones of her mirth. "Donna Inez doubtless comes to entreat my intercession for the caballero her brother," said the governor's daughter. "Would it not be like a scene out of some French romance, if we were to see this *demoiselle-errante* humbling herself to play the supplicant here!" And forgetting, or rather disregarding Inez's request that the audience might be private, Antonia bade her servant introduce the señorita into the crowded garden.

[Pg 175]

Purposely or not, Antonia moved a few steps to a place where a slight elevation of the ground gave her a raised position, such as might have been afforded by a dais, and her flatterers formed behind her a semicircle which might have graced the court of a queen. There was a smile of conscious triumph on the lips of the governor's daughter. The house of Aguilera was older by three centuries than that of Rivadeo, and to see a descendant of one of the conquerors of the Moors reduced to implore a boon in the presence of so many spectators was a gratification to the mean ungenerous pride of Antonia.

There mingled also with that pride a spirit of petty revenge. Inez had once been invited to a party at the governor's house, and the invitation had not been accepted. There had been various reasons for the refusal of Inez to appear in the gay assembly,—one of the most potent amongst them being the lack of a suitable dress,—but Antonia imagined but one. The heiress of De Rivadeo thought herself slighted by a proud descendant of heroes, and deeply resented the slight.

[Pg 176]

"Inez de Aguilera is the only woman in Seville who would not have thought herself honoured by my invitation," Antonia had observed to one of her numerous sycophants; and the haughty girl had added the bitter remark, "She may live to repent her folly." Antonia now deemed that the time for such repentance had come.

Inez, whose natural timidity had been increased by habits of seclusion, felt as if she would fain have sunk into the earth, when, on being conducted into the garden, she saw what an ordeal was before her. After all that she had suffered during that terrible day, might she not have been spared the mental torment of facing alone such a crowd of spectators! But still the weak and weary one felt that mysterious sustaining power which led her gently on, like the support of a father's arm. Inez lifted up her heart in that short ejaculatory prayer which has been beautifully described as the golden link between earth and heaven. Then Inez remembered her brother, and self was almost forgotten. With the meek dignity of sorrow the lady followed the servant, and feelings of compassion for her were awakened even in worldly hearts. An elderly Castilian cavalier came forward, and with the profoundest respect offered his escort to the desolate girl. Antonia was annoyed on witnessing this little act of courtesy, and more especially so as the Castilian's rank made him one of the stars of her party.

[Pg 177]

"We are much flattered by the appearance at our festival of Donna Inez de Aguilera," said Antonia, with ironical politeness, as Inez approached the raised place where the governor's daughter stood to receive her. "To what happy chance may we owe this somewhat unexpected gratification?"

All the courtly throng kept silence so profound that Inez's low answer was heard distinctly.

"I come, Donna Antonia, to entreat you to procure some—some alleviation for the trials of my brother. He has been accused by his own false servant, a servant who has lately robbed him, and who, by this cruel means, hopes to shield himself from the pursuit of his master."

"And what would you have me do in this matter?" interrupted Antonia. "Would you expect me to hunt out the robber, who was doubtless tempted by the hoards of wealth possessed, as we all know well, by the family of De Aguilera? I am neither corregidor nor alguazil, and must beg to make over the quest to the officers of the law."

Inez resumed her pleading as if the insolent taunt were unnoticed by her.

"My brother Don Alcala is still very weak from the effects of a wound received in the Plaza de Toros,"—the cavalier's sister laid an emphatic stress on the name of the place. "This day my brother was carried off to a prison; the hardships and sufferings to which he will there be exposed may cost him his life. I only ask for your intercession that Don Alcala may be suffered to return to his house, and remain, if need be, a prisoner there on parole, till the strictest search be made into his conduct. I am certain"—the sister unconsciously warmed as she spoke—"I am certain that such search will only prove that Don Alcala has acted nobly."

[Pg 178]

"Donna Inez comes to plead rather like one demanding a due than suing for a favour," said the sarcastic Antonia. "An Aguilera must needs have a claim to our utmost exertions; even to hint that our intercession would be acceptable must seem unnecessary to the pride of his sister."

"Pride!" echoed the wondering Inez, to whom her own position appeared to exclude such an idea: "pride!" she repeated passionately, "when I would go on my knees to obtain the liberty of Alcala!"

"Scarcely, I suspect, even to save his life," said the governor's daughter.

As if by a sudden impulse Inez sank on her knees; if that humiliation would win a protectress for Alcala, even to that would she stoop. Antonia glanced with a proud smile first down at Inez, then round at her guests. This was a crowning triumph indeed!

[Pg 179]

"Rise, Donna Inez de Aguilera," said the governor's daughter after a pause; "I am sorry that I cannot, even in your behalf, break the vow which I have made, under no circumstances whatever to interfere with my father's administration of justice."

Some of the spectators could hardly suppress the exclamation of "Shame!" as Inez rose from her knees, deadly pale, but perfectly calm. The screen had, as it were, been withdrawn from before the idol they had worshipped, and they had had a glimpse of the moral hideousness which may lie under the veil of outward beauty.

"May you, Donna Antonia, never know what it is to ask for mercy in vain!" murmured Inez; and without uttering another word she turned to depart. Many of those present would willingly have shown the poor maiden sympathy and done her service, but dared not come forward to do so under the eyes of their tyrant. The Castilian alone, with lofty courtesy, accompanied the young lady to the gate, and beyond it. His escort was no small comfort to Inez; she had not to pass alone through the gazing throng of servants who were without the garden enclosure awaiting the departure of the guests of the governor's daughter.

[Pg 180]

"May I have the honour of summoning the carriage of the Donna Inez de Aguilera?" asked her courteous protector, bowing low as he spoke.

"No, señor; I will return as I came," murmured Inez faintly; "and thanks—thanks!" She could not add more, but turned from her pitying conductor and went on her lonely way.

But Inez could not walk far. The excitement of hope sustained her no longer, no strength for further effort remained. Weights of lead seemed to cling to the poor girl's feet, there was a rushing sound in her ears as if the ocean were near. Mist gathered before the eyes of Inez, dimming the brilliant sunshine which yet flooded the city. The Spanish maiden had painful difficulty in breathing, and to get air intuitively threw back her veil. As she did so the voice of one who was about to pass her in the street uttered her name in a tone of surprise. The fainting girl was only able to recognize the speaker ere her powers completely gave way, and she would have fallen to the ground in a swoon but for the supporting arms of Lucius Lepine.

CHAPTER XXI.

[Pg 181]

TWO ANGELS.



He will now return to Alcala, whom we left on his way to the prison.

Slowly the conveyance in which the cavalier was seated, guarded by several alguazils, rolled through the streets of Seville. Alcala sat as far back in the vehicle as he could, to avoid the gaze of curious eyes; for many of the populace were eager to get a sight of a hidalgo sent to prison for White Judaism, that mysterious crime. Once only did Alcala lean forward in his seat, and that was to catch a glimpse of the outer wall of the huge Coliseo of Seville, the Plaza de Toros.

What a gush of thankfulness came into the breast of Alcala at the sight of that place, the scene of his rash, ungodly venture! Had he been left to expire in that arena which it had been a crime to enter, where would his soul now have been! But the heavenly Father, whom he had so deeply offended, would not suffer the sinner to perish in his sin. Mercy had not only snatched him from destruction both of body and soul, but had made the rebel a son, had granted to the transgressor the privilege of suffering for the sake of the gospel. The realization of the freeness of God's grace, the depth of His love, excluded for the time from the spirit of the Spaniard all less powerful emotions.

[Pg 182]

It may be said that there are two heaven-sent guides appointed to lead through life's pilgrimage all those who in faith seek a heritage above. THE FEAR OF GOD and THE LOVE OF GOD are these two guiding angels. The former, in somewhat austere beauty, appears in garments of spotless white; for *the fear of the Lord is clean*, and on his snowy pinions is inscribed the word "obedience." Blessed are they who are led by this spirit of reverence, as a poet has nobly expressed the thought,—"Fearing God, they have no other fear."^[21]

It is this angel who is wont to meet pilgrims on the outset of their career, to guide their first feeble steps in the narrow path of duty; but oftentimes he yields place to another spirit even more glorious than he. Not that the fear of God can ever be far removed from the Christian, but his form is half hidden by the radiance of his twin-brother, the second guide of the pilgrim. Holy fear is fair indeed, but who can describe the seraphic beauty of holy love! He shines with the glory reflected from the smile of a reconciled God; all the tints of heaven's rainbow glitter in his quivering wings, their motion is light, and their inscription is "joy." The fear of God leads us onward, the love of God bears us upward. Blessed, thrice blessed, those over whom the second angel waves his pinions of joy!

[Pg 183]

Often, very often, has this spirit been sent on a special mission to those who suffer for conscience' sake. When he is near, earthly griefs seem to have lost their power to pain; his soft whisper drowns with its music the scoff of the persecutor, the yell of the furious mob. Cheered by that whisper, the martyr has gone with light step and joyous countenance to meet the king of terrors. He has felt, though man could not see, the waving of the bright wings, and has, with cheerful courage, embraced the cross or the stake.

It is this angel of light who has come into many a sick-room, and turned it into a chamber of peace. He has gently smoothed the pillow, touched the pain-wrinkled brow, and its furrows have disappeared; there has been such happiness imparted by the presence of the love of God that weeping, wondering friends have owned that the last enemy himself has lost all his sting.



THE ENTRANCE TO THE PRISON

Page 185.

"No smile is like the smile of death,
When all good musings past
Rise wafted on the parting breath,
The sweetest thought the last!"

[Pg 184]

Alcala, on his way to his prison, was accompanied by this invisible angel, and, in the strength imparted by the love of God, could make an apostle's words his own. He could say, "*We rejoice in the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope. And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts!*"

FOOTNOTES:

[21] "Je crains Dieu, cher Abner, et je n'ai d'autre crainte."—RACINE.

CHAPTER XXII.

[Pg 185]

STRANGE COMPANY.



he vehicle which conveyed Alcala to his destination stopped at the entrance of a dark and gloomy building, situated in a narrow street. Through a vaulted passage, dimly lighted, Alcala was conducted to a door in which was a grating formed of thick iron bars. At this door one of the alguazils who escorted the prisoner knocked. The face of a jailer was dimly visible through the grating, and then there was the sound of withdrawal of bolt and turning of key; the heavy door was slowly swung back, and Alcala entered the prison.

Through a vestibule the cavalier was then conducted to an office-room, in which, seated at a high desk, appeared the alcalde of the prison, a hollow-eyed, melancholy man. He glanced at the warrant which was formally presented to him by one of the alguazils, then rose, and with gloomy ceremony welcomed his involuntary guest.

[Pg 186]

"Señor," said the alcalde, with a low inclination of the head, "may your residence here be a brief one. Permit me to have the honour of myself introducing you into your temporary abode. I regret to see that the health of the illustrious caballero appears to be impaired."

After a ceremonious exchange of courtesies with the alcalde who had arrested him, and who retired after delivering up his charge to the prison authorities, Alcala followed his jailer to a huge grated door, which was guarded by a couple of turnkeys. This barrier also was passed, and with a heavy, echoing clang the massive door closed on the prisoner. Alcala and his jailer were now in a corridor, lighted by narrow barred windows, looking on a patio, in which a number of prisoners were taking what air and exercise its confined space permitted.

"Most noble caballero," said the jailer, who now walked by the side of Alcala, "in this melancholy abode there is preserved a due distinction of ranks. We have a few apartments reserved for illustrious señors like yourself, whom misfortune may have led to visit our retreat for awhile."

As Alcala only replied by a slight inclination of the head, the alcalde thought that his hint had not been understood by his captive.

"Cavaliers are permitted to furnish their apartments according to their good pleasure, señor; and they are waited on by the attendants with the distinction becoming their rank. But, of course, this alleviation of the trial of detention within these walls belongs only to those who—" The alcalde hesitated, so Alcala relieved him from the difficulty of further explaining his meaning.

[Pg 187]

"I suppose that the private apartments are reserved for those who have the means of paying for them," said Alcala. "This, señor, I have not."

"I regret that on the present occasion every one of these rooms is occupied, illustrious caballero," observed the jailer, still—though disappointed of his expected gains—preserving his ceremonious politeness, as he ushered Alcala into the large vaulted gloomy dungeon which the cavalier was to share with the fifty or sixty criminals who crowded the place.

The sight, the scent of the den in which he was to pass, perhaps, the remainder of a brief life, were enough to try the fortitude of any one who had, like Alcala, been gently nurtured. The place was dirty to a disgusting degree, and utterly unfurnished. The brick floor, on which some of the inmates were squatting and others reclining, served at once for chair, table, and bed. Offensive odours poisoned the air; the aspect of the place was revolting.

[Pg 188]

To an artist, indeed, the scene, as beheld by light struggling through grated windows coated with dust, might not have appeared devoid of picturesque effect. There was no clipped hair to be seen, no prison-dress common to all the inmates; each criminal wore what he would, and a curious variety of costumes appeared before the eyes of Alcala. There were here and there dashes of bright colour from waistcoats of green or blue silk, worn, uncovered by coat or jacket, over shirts with large flowing sleeves. These gaudy articles of costume marked the bandit race, who had probably been committed to prison for robbery or murder on the highway. On other criminals appeared the sheep-skin of the peasant, or the mantero of the citizen; one man was seen in buff jerkin, with jack-boots reaching half-way up his thigh. Most of the prisoners wore the faja, or waist-belt, so characteristic a part of Spanish costume,—being a very long piece of cloth, usually black or red, twisted round the middle of the person, and forming a receptacle for the purse, and sometimes the dagger.

Of course the entrance of a new companion in misfortune awakened curiosity, and attracted the attention of all the motley groups. A murmur of "'Tis a caballero!" was heard from the dark recesses of the place of confinement.

[Pg 189]

But though the den was mostly filled with miscreants who had broken every one of the ten commandments, an Englishman must have been struck by the absence of brutal coarseness, whether of manner or conversation, which he would have expected amongst the lowest class of criminals thus promiscuously thrown together. Men who had preserved no sense of honour, no

scruple of conscience, men who might have robbed a church or murdered a brother, demeaned themselves as though they preserved some self-respect still. It is a peculiarity of the Spanish race that, to a certain extent, even the poorest appear to be gentlemen born. The beggar has his dignity; the picker of pockets his grace. Alcala had to encounter no insolent banter, no brutal jests, when he found himself amongst the scum of Spanish society in the common prison of Seville.

The cavalier's first feeling was one of utter disgust and repulsion, and an intense longing for solitude, were it even only to be sought in the darkest and most narrow of cells. Alcala had been brought up in aristocratic seclusiveness, and his besetting sin was pride. He reproached himself now for the selfish haughtiness which would fain have raised an impenetrable wall between himself and his companions in suffering.

[Pg 190]

"How is it that I, myself rescued from depths of guilt, dare to despise my fellow-sinners?" mused Alcala. "Who hath made me to differ from them? Wherefore should I desire to be secluded from all opportunities of serving my kind, because my pride shrinks from contact with those whom I deem beneath me? Here is the post which my Lord has assigned me. May He give me strength to bear witness for Him even in the prison, and deliver His message to some who, if they had heard it before, might never have entered this horrible den."

Alcala had scarcely had time for these reflections, when he was accosted by a lithe, active-looking man of very dark complexion, who had come from the further end of the dungeon on seeing him enter.

"Most illustrious caballero, Don Alcala de Aguilera, we have met before," said the man.

"And where, my friend?" asked Alcala.

"In the Plaza de Toros, señor. My name is Diego. I was one of the chulos who planted a banderilla in the neck of the bull which your worthiness met so bravely."

"I am engaged in a different contest now," said Alcala, who was resolved not to let either the weariness of his frame, or the repugnance of his spirit, prevent his entering into conversation with the companions whom he hoped to influence for their good. The cavalier seated himself on the floor, supporting his back against the wall; and the chulo, who was inclined to be sociable, stretched himself, resting on his elbow, beside the señor.

[Pg 191]

"Your worship finds yourself in strange company," observed this self-constituted cicerone of the prison, lowering his tone so as not to be overheard by the ruffians around him. "Yonder, jabbering their Egyptian gibberish, is a party of Zingali: the worst punishment to them is to have a roof over their heads; the Gitano would rather lie in a ditch than a palace, boil his kettle under a hedge than feast at the governor's table. To the left there, señor, are smugglers from Cadiz; many a contraband bale has galled the backs of their mules as they moved over the sierra by moonlight. He in the red faja behind them is a highly respectable man; he merely hacked a rival to death in a combat with knives: it is strange that the alguazils should have thought it worth while to arrest the poor fellow for a simple affair like that. But yon gentleman with the bright blue jacket has earned his lodging at Her Majesty's expense; he is a brigand from the Sierra Morena, and has, I trow, cut more throats than he has fingers upon his two hands."

Alcala wondered silently for what crime his communicative companion had himself been committed to prison. Diego did not long leave him in ignorance of the cause.

[Pg 192]

"It is a shame to put me with such as these," said the talkative chulo; "I am a political offender," he added, with something like pride. "Not a Carlist, mind you, señor; I am locked up in this kennel merely for saying what all the world thinks, though not all have the courage to speak out their minds. I did but say that it is a disgrace that such a wretch as he whom the Queen has always at her elbow should be suffered to ride rough-shod over the necks of the Spanish nation, and that I wished that the nun Patrocinio would keep to her cell and leave politics alone. I did add—and I care not who knows it," continued the chulo, "that we shall never see good days till we have our exiled General Prim back again! Prim is the man to make Spain once more what she was in the glorious old times!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

[Pg 193]

PREACHING IN PRISON.



Diego was not suffered long to monopolize conversation with the new-comer. One of the smugglers drew near, and addressed himself to Alcala.

"I trow, caballero, that you've not seen the inside of a prison quite so often as I have; you are new to this kind of lodging. Maybe you've been sent hither for some little duelling affair; you've run some rival through the body, and, to judge by your looks, he has returned the compliment by giving you a taste of his steel."

There was a general hush in the conversation which had been going on amongst the various groups of prisoners, all listening to hear Alcala's reply.

"No," answered De Aguilera, "I have injured no man."

"You're a Carlist?" suggested the brigand, who stood near, with his brawny arms folded across his broad chest. [Pg 194]

"I have taken no part in politics," was the reply.

"What then have you done?" asked Diego; "gentlemen are not given free quarters for nothing."

"I have been placed under confinement," answered Alcala, "for the crime of reading a book aloud in my own private dwelling."

This reply excited a good deal of surprise amongst the assemblage of gipsies, foot-pads, smugglers, and thieves. They were acquainted with most kinds of crimes; the novelty of this one whetted their curiosity.

"What was the book, señor?" was asked by half-a-dozen voices at once.

"The Bible," replied Alcala.

"Ah! that's what the friars are mad against," said one.

"What the monks want to burn," muttered another.

"What is to Claret and the rest of 'em what the red flag is to the bull," observed Diego the chulo.

Alcala remarked that not one of the speakers appeared inclined to make common cause with the priests.

"I wonder what there is in that Bible to make men fear it as if a stiletto were hidden between its two boards!" said the robber. [Pg 195]

"Have you the book with you, caballero?" asked the smuggler who had before addressed Aguilera.

"Unfortunately I have not," said Alcala; "but I have committed to memory many portions of its contents. If it would be any gratification to the gentlemen present,"—Alcala glanced around him as he spoke,—"I would willingly let them judge for themselves whether or not it is wise and right in the priests to try to put the Bible beyond the reach of the people."

"Let's hear, let's hear," resounded from every side, and the groups at the further end of the dungeon drew nearer to listen. Curiosity, the love of novelty, and eagerness to hear anything that would break on the wretched monotony of prison life, were powerful incentives with all.

That was a strange audience indeed! Villains stained with various crimes thus brought together to hear for the first time in their lives the gospel message of mercy. Alcala silently prayed for wisdom and the bodily strength which he so sorely needed; for what with the heat and the scent of the place, the fatigue which his weakened frame had undergone, and the reaction after excitement, the cavalier doubted whether his physical powers would hold out under the strain. Diego noticed the deadly pallor of the prisoner's face, and stretching out his hand where he lay, the chulo drew towards him a jar partly filled with water, which had been left near the wall. [Pg 196]

"Let the señor drink first," said Diego. "Pity 'tis that we cannot offer him the good wine of Xeres; but water is better than nothing."

"It is the gift of God," thought Alcala, as he first drank eagerly of the contents of the jar, and then pouring some into his hand, moistened with it his feverish brow and aching temples. The refreshment was great, and Alcala's strong will could now for a time master the weakness of nature. Diego, who seemed to think that the fact of their having attacked the same bull formed a kind of link between himself and Alcala, now helped the cavalier to rise to his feet. It was only in a standing posture that Aguilera could make himself heard by his numerous auditors, but he still leaned for support against the friendly wall of the prison.

"I will repeat to you," began Alcala, "the Bible account of the imprisonment, after severe scourging, of the Apostle Paul and Silas his friend and companion. You shall hear how they endured their sufferings, how they prayed and received such an answer from Heaven, that their jailer himself, struck with terror, came trembling and fell at their feet." [Pg 197]

This preface commanded the silent attention of those who were themselves inmates of a prison.

Simply, but impressively, Alcala repeated the narrative contained in the sixteenth chapter of Acts; but when he came to the jailer's all-important question, "*What must I do to be saved?*" the speaker made a solemn pause, and gazed earnestly on the wild dark faces before him.

"*What must I do to be saved?* is not that question echoed by each one here?" said Alcala, every word welling up from the depths of a soul filled with that love to the Saviour which overflows in love to the souls which His life-blood bought. "Can reason answer that question?" The speaker paused; no voice made reply. "How does the Church of Rome try to answer it? She bids us trust the safety of our undying souls to confession to man, and absolution pronounced by man, to the penance which man may prescribe, to forms and rites and Latin prayers, and the intercessions of those who were themselves but men in need of salvation. In the Romanist Church man comes between the sinner and the Saviour. But what was the answer to the cry, 'What must I do to be saved?' given by the holy apostle whom the Spirit of God inspired?" The prisoner for conscience' [Pg 198]

sake forgot all but the glorious truth which he uttered when repeating another prisoner's words, "*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved!*"

"Is that message for us too?" asked Diego, whose voice was the first to break the silence which ensued.

"It is for all," cried Alcalá; "the offer of mercy embraces all. Will you hear in how singular a manner it was brought home to me?"

The time had not been long past when it would have been impossible to the proud young Spaniard to have owned a weakness, or confessed an error, before such an audience as this. The cavalier would sooner have died than have stooped to place himself on a level with such outcasts as those now before him. But pride, a strong man armed, had been overcome by a stronger than he. Alcalá told how his own soul had been darkened by the shadow of death, how the future had seemed a terrible blank, and how life and light and joy had been brought by a single verse from that Book which the Church of Rome would shut out from the people. The cavalier told of the strange coincidence, which to some of his hearers appeared a miracle, by which the torn leaf once flung to the dust, then written upon by himself, had reappeared at the moment when most he needed its message of peace. Then, leaving all personal themes, Alcalá spoke of justification by faith, of free pardon offered to rebels, but not that they should continue in their rebellion against a merciful God. Alcalá spoke of what that pardon had cost,—of the cross and passion, the agony and bloody sweat, and of the return of love which the redeemed must make for such unutterable love! Scripture truths in Scripture words flowed spontaneously from the lips of Alcalá; and while the fervour of the spirit overcame the weakness of the suffering flesh, the Spaniard was indeed as "a dying man preaching to dying men."

[Pg 199]

The effort could not last long; the address was a brief one, and all the more forcible because it was brief. When Alcalá, faint and exhausted, stretched himself on the hard floor of his dungeon, and closed his eyes, he experienced that sweet rest which has been described as "a sense of duty performed." The captive had borne witness for his Master, he had glorified God in the fires, he had been permitted to scatter seeds of life where no sower had ever laboured before. Alcalá left the result in the hand of Him who once from a cross spoke the word of grace to a thief.

"Is he sleeping—or dead?" said one of the robbers to Diego, who was nearest to the now prostrate form of Alcalá.

[Pg 200]

"I trow that he sleeps,—but he looks as if the sleep would be his last," was the softly-uttered reply. The chulo took off his own mantle, and laid it gently over the young cavalier.

"No marvel that the Bishop of Cadiz calls the Bible contraband," observed a smuggler; "if it were carried through Spain by such men as this caballero, I trow that it would spoil the business of friar and monk."

"And ours too," muttered the robber.

CHAPTER XXIV.

[Pg 201]

A FRIEND.



he cause of Lucius Lepine's unexpected reappearance at Seville must be briefly explained. While on his journey towards Madrid, to which city Mr. Passmore had sent his clerk to transact some business, Lucius had accidentally heard that the merchant to whom he was going had actually passed him on the road, having made up his mind to travel to Seville in order to have a personal interview with the manufacturer. As there would consequently be no use in Lepine's prosecuting his journey, he returned at once to Seville, in time, as we have seen, to meet Inez a few minutes after she had quitted the governor's gate.

As Inez had almost swooned, the first care of Lucius was to stop an empty vehicle which chanced to be passing, in order that the young lady might be at once conveyed to her home. Lucius would not have so violated Spanish decorum as to have accompanied Inez in the carriage, had not her state of utter prostration made his presence needful. The poor girl was scarcely sensible of anything that was passing around her when Lucius gently lifted her into the carriage. He bade the driver stop at the nearest fountain, and brought from it water to revive the fainting maiden. Before the Calle de San José was reached, Inez had so far recovered herself as to recognize her brother's friend, and to catch a gleam of hope from his opportune return to the city.

[Pg 202]

"You will not desert Alcalá? you will at least try to see him?" faltered Inez de Aguilera.

"You may trust me," was the Englishman's reply.

And Inez did trust young Lepine. It was with the confidence that a sister might have felt in a brother's protecting care that she leant on his strong arm to stay her feeble steps when she re-entered her home. Necessity and a common sorrow had to a great degree broken down the barrier of reserve between Alcalá's sister and his English friend. Inez found the patio empty; Teresa was in attendance on her mistress in a different part of the mansion.

Inez and Lepine seated themselves near the fountain, and there, in trembling tones, Inez gave a full account to her companion of much that had passed on that, to her, most eventful day. The maiden told of the discovery of the treasure, and pointed, as she did so, to the spot whence it had been dug out by herself and Chico. Inez did not dwell long on her own imprisonment; she did not care to fix the attention of her indignant hearer on what only concerned herself. Of Alcalá's subsequent arrest his sister could only speak through tears. Inez lightly glanced at her own unsuccessful efforts to obtain the help of friends for Alcalá, and would hardly have mentioned them at all, had she not, from maidenly instinct, wished to account for her own solitary wanderings so far from her home.

[Pg 203]

"And now that you know all, señor," said Inez, raising for a moment her dark tearful eyes to the face of Lepine, "can you—will you aid us?"

"If I do not, most assuredly it will not be will but power that is wanting," replied Lucius, who had been deeply interested both by the narrative and by the grief of the artless narrator.

"Will you not visit Alcalá in his prison? will you not stir up your English friends to save him?"

Lucius was silent for a few seconds, revolving the difficulties before him, ere he returned an answer. The young man knew how utterly useless it would be to attempt to enlist the aid of Mr. Passmore, even were that aid of any value. It was more than doubtful whether any interference on the part of Englishmen would avail even to mitigate punishment inflicted on one who was not a British subject. Spanish jealousy might even resent a foreigner's intervention. Lucius could hardly bear to quench the hope which his presence had kindled, but it would have been more cruel to raise expectations which must end in keen disappointment. England might reprobate the way in which the Spanish government dealt with the Spanish people; she might view with indignation the cruelty of the oppressor; but when his arm was raised to strike an innocent victim, she had no right to cry, "Hold! hold!" Lucius felt that he could do nothing to free Alcalá from his prison; it was doubtful whether he would even be permitted to see him there.

[Pg 204]

"I do not think that any stranger would be suffered to visit your brother to-day, señorita," said Lucius at last; "the evening is now coming on, and it is too late for me to obtain an order of admission. I shall certainly do my utmost to procure one ere long. But it seems to me," Lucius continued, "that it is of the utmost importance to your brother that he should be furnished with the means of securing good legal advice, and that fair play which, I fear, is not always shown to those whose purses are empty."

[Pg 205]

There was something almost reproachful in the sad tone of Inez as she replied, "Think you, señor, that gold would be spared—if we had it to give?"

"There is, as you have told me just now, señorita, a considerable amount of valuable property of which you have been basely robbed. It appears to me that our first efforts must be directed to recovering that property."

"I fear that its recovery is impossible—at least to us, señor," replied Inez. "No one cares to take up our cause. I suspect that the alguazils themselves have been bribed. How can we, poor helpless ladies, track out a robber, as Alcalá, if free, might have done?"

"Think you that this Chico will remain in Seville to bear witness against your brother?" asked Lucius.

"I should doubt it," replied Inez. "I believe that Chico only accused Alcalá in order to prevent his being able to take any measures to recover the jewels and gold."

"This is the conclusion to which I also have come," said Lepine. "Chico is not likely to stop long in Seville, where he could not, without awaking suspicion, dispose of such gems as you have described. He will doubtless be leaving this city; but he was in it but a few hours ago, and cannot as yet be far off. Men cannot travel in Spain with the railroad speed that they do in my country. Have you any idea, señorita, whether Chico has any friends or connections in Seville, in whose house he might be likely to lurk for awhile with his ill-gotten spoil?"

[Pg 206]

Inez reflected for a brief space. "A cousin of Chico keeps the Posada de Quesada," she said; "it is in the entrance of the Dehesa, about a mile beyond the city."

"I know it—I know it!" cried Lepine, who had often in his Sunday rambles noticed the lone picturesque little inn; "it is in a lane that opens on the highroad to Xeres."

"My brother once passed a night there," continued the maiden; "from that inn he rode forth to the dreadful Plaza de Toros. Chico had mentioned the posada to Alcalá, on account of having a relative there. But Alcalá has told me that he would never set foot in that place again, for that it had seemed to him like a haunt of robbers."

"Which makes it all the more likely that the villain Chico may at this moment be lying concealed there!" cried Lucius eagerly. "Señorita, I will sleep in that posada to-night!"

The face of Inez expressed anxiety and alarm. "There might be danger, señor, in your doing so; you know not what things happen in Spain," she said, lowering her voice.

[Pg 207]

Lucius smiled, the free joyous smile of a light-hearted youth to whom anything would be welcome that might come in the shape of adventure. He was one to whom

"If a path be dangerous known,
The danger's self is lure alone."

What an attractive episode in a life given to dull counting-house drudgery would be some exploit performed in a romantic Spanish posada! Consideration for his widowed mother, of whom he was the earthly stay, would have kept Lucius from wantonly risking his safety for mere amusement; but to run some risk for the sake of a friend was quite a different thing. Even conscience made no protest, so inclination might be gratified without violation of duty.

Lucius now rose and took his leave of the young desolate being to whom he was more than ever anxious to act the part of a brother. It cannot be denied that the pleasure of serving Inez was a great additional stimulus to the Englishman's efforts to help his friend. As Lucius quitted the patio on the one side, it was entered on the other by Teresa, who caught sight of the visitor's form ere it disappeared under the archway.

[Pg 208]

"Donna Inez!" exclaimed the old duenna, almost choking with indignation, "how dare that Inglesito presume to enter a house of sorrow like this! How can you—the grand-daughter of Don Pedro de Aguilera—you, a high-born lady of Andalusia, brought up as becomes your rank—suffer the shadow of that foreign heretic to darken this threshold! We have had nothing but misery since that young man came near us with his deceiving words and his dangerous book! If I'd my will"—the duenna clenched her hands and stretched forth her skinny arms as she spoke—"I'd fling both the heretic and his book into the Guadalquivir!"

"Oh! hush! hush!" exclaimed Inez de Aguilera; "would you speak thus of the only protector whom we have found in Seville, the only being who comes forward to help us when all the rest of the world stand back?"

Teresa's passion was cooling a little, but her Spanish pride recoiled from the idea that the family whom she served should need either help or protection from an English clerk in the employ of Messrs. Passmore and Perkins.

"The house of De Aguilera has many friends in Seville," said the ancient retainer.

"Where are these friends?" exclaimed Inez with emotion. "I have been to Donna Maria—to her who was my mother's playmate in childhood, and companion in youth. She refused even to see me!"

[Pg 209]

Teresa lifted up her hands, and uttered an exclamation of indignant surprise.

"I went then to Donna Antonia," continued Inez, while Teresa bent eagerly forward to listen, for the duenna's chief hopes for Alcala lay in that quarter; "Antonia mocked my misery, rejected my prayer, though I asked for her aid on my knees!"

"On your knees!" echoed Teresa in the shrillest of tones; "an Aguilera kneel to a daughter of the upstart, money-making, time-serving, poor-grinding Lopez de Rivadeo! Donna Inez! Donna Inez! how could you have stooped so low?"

"I forgot that I was an Aguilera—I only felt that I was a woman," said Inez. "O Teresa, what has a broken-hearted girl like me to do with pride? May it not be our pride that has drawn Heaven's displeasure upon us? Nay, you must hear me, Teresa. Alcala has shown to me in his Book the words of our heavenly Master, '*Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly.*' If He spake thus, He who is Lord of heaven and earth, shall we, poor children of dust, be proud of title or birth? Is not such pride a grievous sin in His sight?"

"Do you quote to me out of the Protestant's book?" said Teresa bitterly.

[Pg 210]

"It is God's book," returned Inez; "I have felt certain of that since its blessed words have sounded in my heart as they have sounded to-day! These words have been my comfort, my strength, my support under trials which, without them, would have utterly crushed me. And now it is one who is guided by that book who stands by us when every other mortal deserts us. Don Lucius has promised to do all in his power to aid us; he will try his utmost to track out the man who has robbed us."

"Robbed us!" repeated Teresa, her intense curiosity getting the better of every other feeling; "you have spoken before of Chico's stealing property, but you have never fully explained what that property was."

"The treasure which my grandfather had buried under the orange-trees yonder,—a treasure accidentally discovered by me," answered Inez.

An expression of eager hope and pleasure flashed across the face of Teresa. "The golden goblet?" she hurriedly asked.

"That, and money, and my grandmother's jewels besides."

Teresa clasped her hands, and uttered a cry of delight.

"But all are gone—Chico has carried all away," said Inez sadly; "our only hope of recovering anything is through the generous exertions of my brother's English friend; Don Lucius will try to find out and restore the lost treasure."

[Pg 211]

"Ah! if the Inglesito do *that*," exclaimed the duenna, "never again will Teresa speak a word

against him or his book! Restore the treasure—the pearls which I myself have clasped round the señora's neck, the brilliants which she wore at her bridal, the goblet out of which I've seen Don Pedro de Aguilera so often quaff the red wine! Oh! that goblet of chased gold," continued the old retainer, kindling into enthusiasm as she recalled the days of wealth and splendour with thought of which that cup was connected—"I'd rather have that inestimable treasure restored to the family than—than even the lock of Santa Veronica's hair!"



A STREET IN SEVILLE.
Page 212.

CHAPTER XXV.

[Pg 212]

WARNINGS.



must report my return to Mr. Passmore, and procure a few necessaries from my lodgings, before I start for the Posada de Quesada," said Lucius to himself, as he emerged from the richly sculptured gateway of the house of the Aguileras.

Making this detour necessarily occupied a considerable time, and took the young Englishman through some of the most thickly populated parts of Seville. It seemed to Lucius as if all the world were abroad,—except, perhaps, the priests and monks, who were rather conspicuous by their absence. Lucius had sometimes difficulty in making his way along the narrow crowded streets. In many places knots of people were collected together, conversing in subdued tones, but with more animation of gesture than is common with the stately and solemn Spaniard. The beggar seemed to forget to beg; the muleteer let the heavily-laden beast on which he was mounted pick his own way, unguided, over the large rough stones which paved the road, while the rider eagerly listened to words exchanged between men who to him were strangers. Had not the mind of Lepine been preoccupied with forming plans, and revolving his chances of success in his coming adventure, he must have noticed that on that Saturday afternoon in September one topic of common interest engaged the attention of the inhabitants of Seville, whether of high or low degree. It might be a bull-fight announced for the morrow, or some grand ceremonial of the Romish Church which was to come off on the following day.

[Pg 213]

The air was still sultry, though the greatest heat of the afternoon was over. Lucius, feeling thirsty, stopped to buy a few oranges of an old woman who sat with her basket before her at the corner of one of the streets. Another old crone who crouched close to her neighbour, with a covered basket on her knee, watched the Englishman, as he made his trifling purchase, with keen black eyes which glittered like beads from a face bronzed by sun and wind to almost African

darkness.

"Will you not buy my wares too, señor?" she said in deep guttural tones, raising the cover of her basket, in which Lucius saw several knives. The appearance of the scimitar-shaped clasp-knife, so commonly used among Spaniards whether for purposes peaceful or warlike, was of course familiar to Lucius; but the knives in the basket were of a size which he had never seen before. They were nearly a foot in length, making allowance for the curve, and such a knife when unclasped looked a truly formidable weapon.

[Pg 214]

"Thanks; I need not such wares," said Lucius.

"You will need one, my goodly youth, and that ere twenty-four hours be over," muttered the dark-visaged woman, whose appearance and voice reminded Lucius of those of the witches who met Macbeth on the blasted heath. "Better the sharp than the sweet; better the steel at the side than the fruit at the lip! There is wild work before thee."

The words of the old crone sounded like a prophecy of evil to come; but Lucius, who was no Spaniard, and little troubled with superstition, only smiled and passed on.

"Perhaps, after all, I might as well have taken the old gipsy's advice," thought Lucius, "and had something sharper and stronger than a pencil-case upon me before going to pass the night in that lone Spanish posada." The young man was half disposed to retrace his steps and make the purchase; he might have done so, had not the state of his funds been so low that it would have inconvenienced him to expend even a few dollars on a long Spanish knife.

[Pg 215]

Lepine found Mr. Passmore at his private residence, his business hours closing earlier on Saturdays than on other days of the week.

"Glad to see you back, Lepine," said the manufacturer, extending to Lucius a thick flabby hand, which never closed with a kindly pressure.

"I have returned earlier—"

"Oh, you need not explain; I know why you are at Seville instead of Madrid," interrupted Mr. Passmore. "Tasco has been with me for an hour, and all that affair is settled. I have never been so bothered with business in all my life as during these two days of your absence. As for that Miguel, whom I've got in place of the bull-fighting don, what with his bad Spanish" (that was to say, Spanish unintelligible to his English employer), "his stupidity, and his laziness, he has almost driven me crazy. I don't know whether Miguel is most ignorant, superstitious, or idle. I had determined not to have a hidalgo again as a clerk, so was content to try the son of a barber; but I soon found out my mistake. Don Alcala de Aguilera, though he might wear his sombrero with the air of a prince, had at least brains under the brim. I've half a mind," continued Passmore, lolling back in his easy-chair, "I've half a mind to ascertain whether the don is likely soon to get over the effects of his poke from the bull, and would like to come back to his desk. His fall may have brought down his pride a bit, and made him more willing to do my work and pocket my pay, like a sensible man. I'd sooner take Aguilera back to my office than endure longer this oily-fingered, garlic-scented mule of a Miguel."

[Pg 216]

"You are not aware then," said Lucius, "that Don Alcala has unhappily been arrested and taken to prison."

Passmore received the intelligence with a whistle of surprise. "Arrested for debt?" he inquired.

"No; not for debt," replied Lucius.

"If not for debt, what then?" cried Passmore. "What new prank of folly has the don managed to play when one thought him safe on a sick-bed? I bet Aguilera has been meddling with politics and burning his fingers, as every one must do who tries to fish raisins out of such a seething caldron as is always fizzing and boiling over in Spain. What was Aguilera's offence? Was it drinking in physic a health to Prim?"

"No, sir," replied the clerk; "my friend was arrested in his sick-room for merely reading the Scriptures to his household!"

[Pg 217]

I will not say that Peter Passmore sprang to his feet, for the manufacturer's bulky frame was never very quick in its movements, but he rose from his easy-chair with an exclamation by no means reverential. "He's insane, utterly insane!" cried the irritated man, "and may as well be shut up in prison as in a lunatic asylum. Was it not enough for this Spaniard narrowly to escape throwing away life by acting the picador, that he must throw away liberty also by acting the preacher?"

"I hope, sir, that you do not compare the two acts," said Lucius, with spirit.

"Both have the same root, I warrant you; both spring out of pride, the desire to be talked of," said Passmore. "Reading the Scriptures indeed! Don Alcala may make a fine clerk, he may make a superb picador (though an unlucky one, by the way), but nothing can persuade me that he can ever make a quiet, sober, matter-of-fact Protestant, like myself;" and Passmore subsided into his chair.

No; assuredly nothing could have transformed Alcala into the self-complacent worshipper of Mammon, who assumed to himself the title of a Protestant Christian.

"I cannot see why Spaniards should not be again what their fathers were," said Lepine. "This land has had many martyrs."

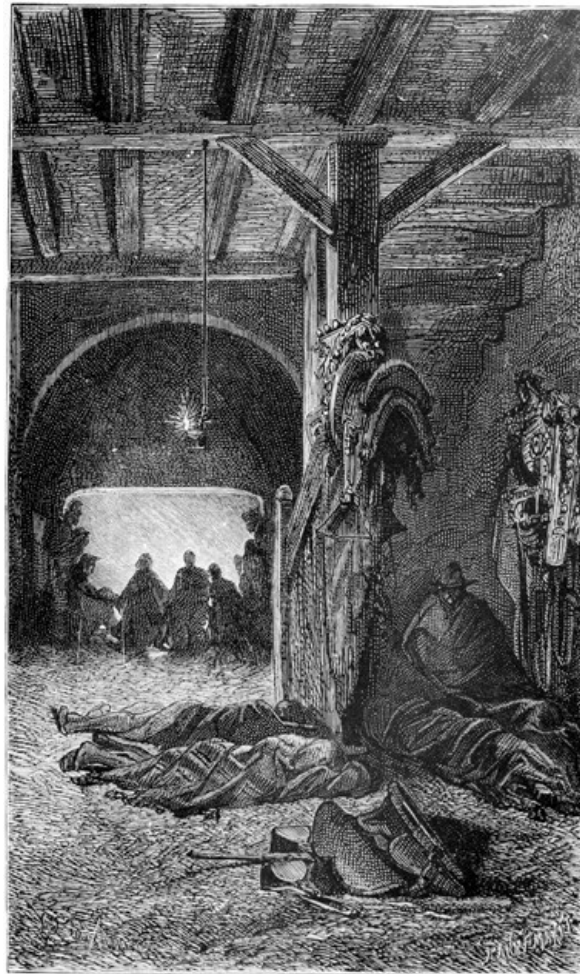
[Pg 218]

"I've no doubt of it, no doubt of it, my lad. Martyrs presuppose murderers, and Spain has never been lacking in them. I'm a Briton, and have no fancy to be either murderer or martyr. That reminds me," continued Passmore, "of what Tasco has been telling me of the state of affairs in Madrid. Clouds are gathering there pretty thick, and wise men will get under shelter when they hear the thunder rumbling. If I were not tied to a business like this, I'd be off to old England; but an ironware manufactory is a pretty heavy anchor to drag. It's just as well to be armed, however; I've to-day bought a brace of revolvers. The proverb says that an Englishman's house is his castle, so I'll have artillery for mine. Ho, ho, ho! And while I think of it, Lepine, you can have my old pistol if you like, as I am provided with others." Here Passmore opened a drawer in his table, and took out rather a rusty-looking weapon, with gunpowder-flask, and bag of bullets. "You go to and fro day and night through these streets of Seville, where ruffians think no more of sticking a knife into a man than of paring a turnip; it's just as well to have with you a friend who can speak for you, if need be, in a language even Spaniards can understand. Take the pistol; you may need it before twenty-four hours are over."

[Pg 219]

Lepine could not help noting as a curious coincidence that the warning of the dark woman should be repeated in almost the same words by his English employer. The young man, bound on a dangerous mission, gladly accepted the proffered weapon.

"Now mind that you neither blow out your own brains nor those of any one else without necessity," said Peter Passmore, as he handed the pistol to Lepine. "I'd not have made such a present," he added, with his explosive laugh, "to Don Alcala de Aguilera."



INTERIOR OF A SPANISH POSADA

Page 221

CHAPTER XXVI.

[Pg 220]

THE LONELY POSADA.



Light had come on before Lucius, on foot, and carrying a small carpet-bag, entered the lane in which stood the lonely posada. The night was dark, for the sky was unusually cloudy, and the moon had not yet risen. Lucius was guided by the lights which gleamed from the window of the inn to which he was bound.

"What shall be my plan of operations?" thought the young Englishman, as he groped

his way along the dark road, not infrequently stumbling against the large stones which lay in his path. "I must conceal my object, or I am likely to defeat it. I must make no inquiries regarding Chico, but keep both my eyes and ears open to receive whatever information may come in my way. Heaven speed my efforts, and keep me from stumbling blindly on the difficult and possibly dangerous course on which I have entered!"

[Pg 221]

Lucius reached the posada, of which the entrance, as usual, was open. There was neither porter nor hostler visible, and the Englishman, unquestioned, crossed the threshold, and found himself in a large stone-paved apartment which, from its scent, he judged to be a stable. This communicated through an open archway with another similarly paved apartment, which from the same organ of smell was easily recognized as the kitchen of the posada.

It was a strange and wild-looking place, that Spanish hostelry, as the interior was seen by the light of a single iron lamp suspended from the bare rafters, and a fire in the kitchen, round which a group of dark figures appeared, engaged in smoking. Several other forms, enwrapped in mantles, and apparently sleeping, encumbered the floor of the stable. Its recesses were probably occupied by mules,—at least so thought Lucius, from the occasional sound of a snort, or the click of a hoof striking the stones; but the place was too dark for him to take in at a glance all that its depths might contain.

Lucius, taking care not to brush against the sleepers as he passed them, walked through the stable into the kitchen, the atmosphere of which was heavy with mingled odours of stale tobacco, puchero, rancid oil, and garlic.

"I wish you good evening, gentlemen," said Lucius, raising his hat to the smokers before the fire, who scarcely turned their heads as he entered. "Where is the landlord of the posada?"

[Pg 222]

The question was answered by a heavy, dark-featured man slowly rising from the cane-bottomed chair which he had occupied, and taking a cigarillo from his mouth. The landlord, for it was he, turned and surveyed the stranger with a scrutinizing stare which was not expressive of welcome.

"Can I lodge here to-night?" asked Lepine.

"A caballero and Inglesito," muttered the landlord gruffly, after his survey of his guest. "He must have a room to himself, I trow."

"Presently," replied young Lepine; "but I should now prefer joining these gentlemen at the fire." He hoped that something might be dropped in conversation that might serve as a clue to guide him in his search for Chico.

No one, not even the surly landlord, gave up his place to the stranger; the courtesy so natural to Spaniards was not shown on the present occasion. There being no unoccupied seat, Lucius set down his bag on the floor, folded his arms, and stood near enough to the huge fireplace to scrutinize by the red glare the features of those who formed a semicircle before it. An ill-favoured set they mostly were, but Chico was not amongst them.

[Pg 223]

Politics appeared to be the favourite topic of conversation amongst these Spaniards. Lucius made several not very successful attempts to turn it into the channel which would have better suited his views. The Englishman spoke of the arrest of De Aguilera; some of the smokers had heard of it, but merely shrugged their shoulders and went on puffing their cigarillos, as if the affair were one in which they felt no deep concern.

"Is reading the Scriptures an offence against the law?" inquired Lucius.

"The law!" mockingly repeated one of the Spaniards, who wore his peaked hat with a suspiciously brigand-like air. "The law is a net that spreads its meshes far and wide to catch the flies and mosquitoes; but the big wasps, with their rings of gold, break through it easily enough."

"So the net wants mending," growled a comrade at his side.

"Or tearing to bits," laughed another of the guests; and the laugh was echoed by his companions.

Lucius perseveringly renewed his inquiries as soon as the rude mirth had subsided.

"Is the report true," he demanded, "that Don Alcala's own servant is his accuser?" The Englishman purposely addressed the question to the landlord.

[Pg 224]

"Who knows? I do not trouble myself about the matter," was the careless reply. There was nothing in the hard, stolid countenance, though Lucius surveyed it keenly, to betray the slightest intelligence on the subject. Lucius was unable to draw the smallest information from either the landlord or his guests.

The conversation reverted to politics. Some of the sentiments of the speaker were expressed in language so enigmatical as to be almost unintelligible to a stranger. Lucius noticed that one of the men sharpened his huge knife against the sole of his boot; and that he who looked like a brigand examined the priming of his pistol.

After about an hour had been spent in smoking and talking, one after another the Spaniards rose from their seats; each wrapped himself in his mantero, and without further toilet stretched himself to rest on the floor. Lucius then asked the landlord to show him his room.

The Spaniard lighted a torch, and with slow deliberate steps led the way up a rude staircase,

which might more properly be termed a ladder. When he had reached the top, he ushered his guest into an attic-room, sufficiently spacious, but so low that the head of the Englishman almost touched the smoke-blackened rafters, for ceiling there was none.

[Pg 225]

The landlord stuck the torch into an iron ring which projected from the wall, but ere he did so, held it near to Lucius, so that the light might flash on the Englishman's face.

"I take it you're the Inglesito who brought the Book to the house of Don Alcala," said he.

"How know you that an Englishman ever visited that house?" asked the young man quickly. He half repented that he had put the question, such an expression of dark suspicion and threatening insolence passed across the visage of the Spaniard. That look was the landlord's only reply; as soon as he had fitted the torch into the iron ring, he left the chamber without even the common courtesy of bidding his guest "good-night."

Lucius examined his lodging-place carefully as soon as he found himself alone. There was scarcely an article of furniture within the room, save a three-legged stool and a bed. The latter was so disgustingly filthy, that for a resting-place Lucius would have preferred even the unswept, dirt-stained floor. There was no ornament in the apartment, unless a little plaster image of some saint in a niche could be called by that name. Almost all the panes in the window had been broken away, and the night-breeze, finding free passage, made the torch flicker and flare. This dreary guest-chamber in the lonely posada was just one which imagination might picture as the scene of a midnight murder.

[Pg 226]

Lucius was on his guard; he had no intention of sleeping that night; he made no attempt to undress; ablutions were out of the question, for the room contained neither basin nor water. The young man looked to the priming of his pistol, then seated himself near the window, and gave himself up to reflection.

"I am as certain as I am of my own existence that yon landlord knows of the robbery committed by Chico, and that he is the villain's accomplice. The thief is probably at this moment concealed in the house, for he is scarcely likely, encumbered with his booty, to have travelled far from Seville by daylight. That Chico should willingly stay to appeal at the trial of his deeply-wronged master I cannot for a moment believe. The robber's one object will be to get clear off with the jewels and plate, for it would be ruin to him were it to be known that such treasure is in his possession. But how could I—even should I succeed in discovering the lurking-place of this Chico—rescue that treasure from his grasp, and restore it to its rightful owner? I am not in England, where I should have the power of the law to back me. Unless report do them injustice, some of the alguazils are as much robbers as are the brigands whom they affect to pursue; nay, the very magistrates themselves, it is said, can scarcely be trusted. A foreigner like myself, destitute of interest or money, would have as much chance of wrenching the property of Aguilera out of the clutch of thieves, licensed or unlicensed, as of moving the rock of Gibraltar. I am far more likely to get myself into trouble, than Aguilera out of it, by any appeal to Spanish justice. It seems probable enough that I shall never have the opportunity even of making such appeal; I do not now hold the safest of positions, if I have read the look of that landlord aright. I may have unwelcome visitors to-night, and may as well look to the fastenings of the door."

[Pg 227]

Lucius rose from his seat and went up to the door; there was neither bolt nor bar on its inner side, nothing but a rusty latch; the occupant of the room had no means whatever of shutting out an intruder. This confirmed the suspicions of Lucius: he lifted the latch, and tried to pull open the door, but it resisted all his attempts. The door had been locked on the outside, and the young Englishman started to find himself indeed a prisoner in his attic. To add to his alarm, at the same moment the flame of the torch suddenly went out, and the room was left in total darkness, save for a faint white light through the window which told that the moon was rising.

[Pg 228]

The position of the young man was one to try the mettle of a hero. Lucius found himself, for the first time, confronted with serious danger, and that danger of a kind from which the boldest might shrink. The idea of possible assassination in a lonely inn, under the cover of darkness, and in a country where deeds of blood were too common to make it likely that there would be any strict search for his body, made a creeping sensation of horror thrill through the Englishman's frame. But the spirit of Lucius struggled against and overmastered the feeling of fear. He ejaculated a prayer to One who can see in darkness, and protect in danger, and braced himself with firm resolution to encounter the worst that might happen.

"They shall find me no easy victim, if it come to a struggle," said the young man to himself; "with God and a good cause I will not fear the villany of man."

There being no means of exit by the door, the captive naturally turned to the window. Like the rest of the building, the casement had been very roughly constructed, and had never been made to open. The dry-rot had, however, got into the wood, and the whole framework was much decayed.

"I think that this might give way under the strong wrench of the arm of a desperate man," muttered Lucius to himself; and he forthwith made an energetic attempt to force out some of the bars. A few violent shakes did the work, and the Englishman had soon broken away enough of the frame to make an aperture sufficiently wide to admit of the passage of his body. Gasping from the physical effort, Lucius paused to listen whether the noise which he had made had roused any of the inmates of the posada. The attic was not over the kitchen; apparently no one had heard him, for the dead silence was only broken by the wail of the wind.

[Pg 229]

Lucius leaned out of the window and glanced down, to judge if escape were practicable. The room was at the back side of the posada, and the casement opened on a waste bit of ground which, as far as could be seen in the dim light, appeared to be a mere receptacle for rubbish, and not fenced in by any paling or wall. The height of the casement from the ground was not so considerable that an active man, holding by the window-sill, might not drop down without any very great risk of breaking a limb. Had the iron ring fixed in the wall been near enough to the window to have been available for a fastening, Lucius might have torn the sheet into strips, and by means of such an improvised rope have let himself down to the ground. But the ring was at the further corner of the room, and there were such difficulties in the way of making such a rope that Lucius dismissed from his mind a scheme which must have involved considerable delay, when every minute was precious.

[Pg 230]

The young man was cool enough to take every needful precaution to avoid crippling himself by a fall. The cloak, which would have impeded his motions, he flung out at the window, and the bedclothes followed, to lessen the chance of his spraining an ankle, or breaking a bone. His pistol the young man replaced in his belt; it must indeed add to the difficulty of passing through a narrow aperture, but Lucius would not leave so trusty a friend behind him.

"They will find the bird flown," said Lucius to himself, as, with as little noise as possible, he passed first one limb, and then another, through the hole in the broken frame. He had no small trouble in trying to avoid cutting himself with the fragments of glass which still, here and there, stuck in the wood. It was a work of time and difficulty to get his whole body free, while he retained a firm grasp on the sill. At last this task was effected; for an instant Lucius hung by his hands—then let go—and with a gasp of relief the late prisoner found himself safe on the ground.

CHAPTER XXVII.

[Pg 231]

FOLLOWING SCENT.



Heaven be praised!" was the intuitive expression of thankfulness which burst from the lips of Lucius Lepine, when he stood, a free man, beneath the window of that posada which he had scarcely hoped to quit alive. He resolved at once to return to Seville, grateful for being permitted to come forth unharmed from an adventure which he now suspected that it had been folly to undertake. The young man was so well pleased with his escape, that he was not at first troubled by the thought that he had failed of success. Chico had not been detected; the chances were as remote as ever of the stolen property being restored.

Lucius had descended, as the reader is aware, on waste ground at the back of the lonely posada; he had now to find his way to the road. As the young man was quietly and cautiously groping along, feeling his way by the wall of the house, he was arrested in his movements by sounds which betrayed that some one was moving in front of the dwelling. Lucius remained perfectly still, and so close to the wall, which lay in partial shadow, that it was scarcely possible that his figure should be seen from the lane. The full orb of the moon was now visible above the broken line of the eastern horizon, and every intervening object cast long shadows upon the ground whitened with silvery light. Lucius saw three forms moving as noiselessly as they could in the direction of the highroad; they had evidently just issued forth from the wayside inn. One, the tallest, carried a carbine,—his outline resembled that of the man who, to the eye of Lucius, had looked like a brigand; the second, who led a loaded mule, was suspiciously like the landlord himself; the third man was short, and in his awkward gait Lepine recognized that of the bandy-legged Chico.

[Pg 232]

"There goes the robber, then, stealing away with his plunder, and little dreaming that he is detected and watched!" said Lucius to himself. "But what now is to be done? Were Chico alone I would at once pursue, and arrest him as soon as he should be far enough from this inn to prevent his shouts bringing any of his accomplices to his assistance. But he has a body-guard of two of them already, one carrying fire-arms, and doubtless all three men have long Spanish knives under their cloaks. To encounter such odds would be simply to throw life away, I having no weapon but one old pistol—and I have never fired one in my life! Shall I return to Seville, and as quickly as possible set the police on the track of the robbers? To follow this plan would take time, and during that time the scent might be lost; the alguazils are not wont to be quick in their movements. Even were the treasure to be recovered by the police of Seville, it is doubtful that any of it would reach the hands of its rightful possessors. Shall I follow these men at a little distance, watch their movements, and be ready, should opportunity occur, to have them taken up as robbers caught in the act of carrying away stolen goods? It is all-important that I should not lose sight of Chico, or of that mule which doubtless carries his spoils."

[Pg 233]

The resolution of Lucius was quickly taken. His was a bold adventurous spirit; and though he had been but a few minutes before congratulating himself on preservation from one great danger, he was ready to throw himself into another. If a doubt crossed the young man's mind, he cast it from him when he thought of the penury of Inez, and the prison of Alcala.

But Lucius had hardly calculated on the extreme difficulty of carrying out his plan of tracking the thieves. At first, indeed, it was comparatively easy to do so, as they pursued a beaten track, and a

[Pg 234]

kind of hedge of prickly pear, which divided the Englishman from the robbers, afforded the former an effectual screen. But the Spaniards soon diverged from the highway and took their course across open country, so that Lucius could scarcely keep them in sight without incurring great risk of himself being seen. It was a strange chase, where the hunter was in greater danger than the quarry whom he was stalking! The moonlight was now only too bright for the safety of Lucius, to whom detection would have been almost certain death. It was well for him that the night was windy, and the sky dotted with many a cloud that was drifted on by the gale. Lucius followed the rifleman's practice when secretly approaching a foe: many times, when the moonlight was clear, the young man lay almost flat on the ground, when the nature of that ground afforded no cover. Then, if a cloud was borne across the face of the moon, Lucius took advantage of the temporary darkness to follow with what speed he might in the direction which the robbers had taken. Since the pursuer could not then trace their dark forms against the horizon, he would listen intently for the slight sound made by the hoofs of their mule. Whenever the brightening edge of the cloud-veil showed that the moon was emerging again to bathe the landscape in light, Lucius would resume his prostrate position, or take advantage of such screen as cactus-bush or lonely aloe, planted here and there, might afford.

[Pg 235]

During the frequent pauses which he thus necessarily made, the pursuer had ample time for reflection.

"How would my poor mother feel could she see me here, creeping onwards stealthily as the wolf on the track of his prey, myself the more probable victim! Shall I ever live to tell by an English fireside the story of my wild moonlight adventure on the Dehesa?" The memories of home which gushed on the mind of Lucius as he made this reflection almost changed his resolution to pursue his perilous chase. Life was so sweet, when viewed in connection with the home delights which he hoped one day to enjoy, to be lightly parted with, even for the sake of a friend.

But when the mind of the Englishman recurred to Aguilera, now suffering affliction for that faith to which Lucius himself had been a means of converting the Spaniard; when Lepine remembered the tears of Inez, he resolved that, come what might, he would persevere in his efforts to redeem his promise, and save a noble family from ruin. Was not the eye of his heavenly Father upon him? was not danger met in the path of duty? It was to gratify no idle craving for excitement, no vain desire for man's applause, that Lucius was acting the part of a detective under circumstances which rendered that part one of peculiar difficulty and peril. The young Englishman, as he crouched low on the ground, prayed for help and protection, firmness not to give up his chase, and such success that he might not find that he had risked his life in vain.

[Pg 236]

Ever and anon the robbers paused and turned to look or to listen, as if, like deer, they scented the hunter. Ha! have they not caught sight of him now, as, while resting his chest on the sod, he has incautiously raised his head a little to gain a clearer view of their retreating forms? The three men have stopped at the skirt of a wood; one, the landlord, retraces his steps; the carbine of the bandit seems to be pointed towards the spot where lies the pursuer. The heart of Lucius throbs fast; tightly he grasps his pistol, his sole defence,—his finger is on the trigger! Shall he fire at the nearest man, then spring from the earth and trust to his speed, and the chance that the robber's bullet may miss its mark? The landlord approaches nearer, glancing cautiously from right to left on the ground; he is now so near that Lucius half closes his eyes, lest their glitter in the moonlight should betray his lurking-place behind the small bush, whose shadow affords so poor a screen! Within a few yards of Lucius the Spaniard stoops and picks up some object, it might be a purse or a cigar-case, that he had dropped on the ground. Then he turns round, and, to the great relief of his hidden pursuer, strides back to rejoin his companions. Then the three, with their mule, enter the covert of the wood, whose dark mass of shade lies before them.

[Pg 237]

Lucius now feared that, unless he should lessen the distance between himself and the robbers, he might, from the intricacies of the wood, lose trace of them altogether. The Englishman therefore rose, and for a time exchanging cautious advance for rapidity of motion, made his way quickly towards the place where the figures of the Spaniards had disappeared in the shadow of the trees. Chico and his comrades had hitherto moved forward in silence; or if they conversed together, it had been in tones too low to reach their pursuer. But the silence was soon to be fearfully broken. Just as Lucius had gained the edge of the wood, a fearful cry, as of one in mortal agony or terror, suddenly thrilled on his ear. The shriek of "Murder!" the cry for help, was repeated again and again, and then came the sharp report of a carbine. There was evidently a death-struggle going on in the wood.

[Pg 238]

Lucius could not hear that cry and stand still. He could not coldly calculate on the probability that crime was only meeting its due reward, nor reflect that when thieves fall out and slay one another, honest men may be gainers. Obeying the generous impulse of his heart, the young Englishman plunged through the crackling brushwood, shouting loudly as he did so to give notice that help was at hand, and for the same purpose firing off the pistol which he held in his grasp. The latter act was perhaps one of imprudence; yet rash daring oftentimes commands more success than calculating caution. The report of fire-arms, the loud crackling of underwood over which Lucius was forcing his way, his shouts which rang through the wood, alarmed the murderers into the belief that a body of alguazils was upon them. The cries suddenly ceased, and were followed by sounds as of men in flight, pushing through bushes and brambles to make their escape from pursuers. When Lucius came up to the spot which had been the scene of a terrible struggle, he only found a dead mule lying on the blood-stained turf, and a dying man beside it.

WANDERINGS.



priest!—for the love of the Virgin, bring a priest!" groaned forth the wretched Chico, for it was he who had fallen under the murderer's steel. Lucius knelt beside him, and raised the head of Chico. Ghastly looked his face in the moonlight, which streamed upon it from an opening between the trees; the stamp of death already was there, seen in the livid hue and the glazing eye. The betrayer had been betrayed, the robber had been robbed, the false servant had been murdered for the sake of the gold to obtain which he had bartered his soul. Yet superstition still retained some hold on the dying wretch. Though his dull ear could not take in the words of Holy Writ uttered by Lucius in the faint hope that even at the last moment the sinner might find grace, Chico's dying breath was expended in calling for a priest to save him from the worst penalty of his crimes! But [Pg 240] conscience was not to be soothed by fatal opiates in the moment of spirit and body's parting; Chico was not to be given that false comfort which has deluded so many at the solemn hour of death. Without a priest near him to hear confession or pronounce absolution, the soul of the murdered man passed forth to its dread account.

Chico was dead,—no one could look on the face of the corpse and doubt that all was over. Lucius gently laid down on the turf the head that he had been supporting, and spread Chico's mantle over his mangled body. The Englishman then rose from his knees, and went up to the mule, which lay stiff and dead. Lucius could but conjecture that, in the struggle between Chico and those who had slain him, the robber's carbine might accidentally have been discharged and have killed the beast of burden, as it seemed to have but one wound, and that from a bullet. Lucius, with a strange sensation, as if he were robbing the dead, examined the load which was still on the back of the mule. He removed the sacking in which it was wrapped, and then, even by the uncertain light of the moon, easily recognized the treasure-box, with its hinges and bands of metal, by the description of it which he had received from Inez. [Pg 241]

"The treasure is then actually in my possession!" thought Lepine, scarcely able at first to realize that success in his difficult search had indeed been obtained. "But my difficulties are by no means over. The robbers may return to this spot—they will not readily abandon so rich a booty." Lucius put down the box on the ground, and took the precaution of reloading his pistol, that, should the murderers come back to seize the fruit of their crime, they at least should not find him unarmed. Conquering a strong feeling of repugnance, Lucius also went to the corpse of Chico, and possessed himself of the large clasp-knife which was stuck in the dead man's belt. It was unopened and unstained; the assailants of the miserable man had given him no time to draw forth his weapon.

Lucius was now at least armed for any encounter; but the more he thought over his position, the more difficulties appeared to surround it.

"I cannot carry so heavy a box as this back to Seville on my shoulder; and even had I the strength to do so, how could I hope to pass unchallenged through the city at night, bearing so suspicious-looking a burden? It is likely enough that I should be arrested as guilty of robbery, perhaps of murder besides, for the blood of that wretched Chico now stains my garments!" Lucius flushed at the mere thought of being thrown into prison as a criminal, and under circumstances which might render it difficult—nay, almost impossible—for him, a foreigner, to make his innocence clear. He could produce no witnesses in his defence; he would, he feared, have interested accusers, and prejudiced judges. [Pg 242]

The result of the young man's anxious reflections was a resolve to bury the treasure which he could not remove. Lucius at once began his search for some favourable spot in which the box might be thoroughly hidden from view. It must not be too near the scene of the murder, lest the robbers, recovering from their alarm, should return and find it; and it must be in some locality which Lucius himself should be able to recognize when he should revisit the spot. The young Englishman searched for some time before he could satisfy himself in regard to these necessary points.

Lucius fixed at last on a spot just outside the thicket, where in a rough bank there appeared a hole, probably the burrow of some wild creature. A neighbouring palm, towering high above the other trees of the wood, formed a natural landmark. Lucius, with the knife which he had taken, began to enlarge the hole, that it might be wide and deep enough to conceal the box of treasure. [Pg 243]

Perhaps even the firm nerves of the young man had been somewhat shaken by the horrors of that night, for never before had Lucius found any task so tedious, nor felt such fear from the slightest sound. Often did he interrupt himself to listen, when the wind shook the branches or rustled the leaves, almost certain that he could detect the noise of footsteps, and in constant expectation of being assailed from behind, while his hands were engaged with his work.

"I am ashamed of my weakness. Where is the boasted courage of an Englishman?—I am like a nervous girl!" muttered Lucius, when for the twentieth time he had turned his head to look round, that a foe might not take him unawares. "It is harder to await the approach of danger alone, and in the dead hours of night, with the brain excited by a scene of murder such as I have just witnessed, than it would be to encounter any open danger under the clear light of day. There!—happily my task is over at last!" exclaimed Lepine, as he covered in the entrance of the

hole in which he had buried the box. "The plate and jewels of Alcala are safe, and nothing remains for me to do but to find my way back to the city."

But again difficulties beset the young stranger, who had never before traversed the cross-country way along which his pursuit of the robbers had led him. It would perhaps have been easy to Lucius to have retraced his steps if he had had daylight to guide him, but the beams of the moon were not sufficient to direct his course through that wild and desolate tract. Lucius wearied himself in vain attempts to regain the highroad to Seville. Seen by the uncertain light, one clump of trees so much resembled another that none could serve as a landmark. Of dwellings there seemed to be none. [Pg 244]

Lucius came at last to a stream, on whose sluggish current the moonshine faintly glimmered. He was at least certain that he had crossed no brook when following the track of the thieves, therefore he must have diverged from the way. The weary wanderer was glad to slake his thirst by the stream, and he then, by means of its water, removed as completely as he could the dark red stains from his dress.

"There is no use in my wandering further till day dawn and show me the way," said the youth to himself. "I will lie down and try to sleep. There is little hardship in passing a night on the ground in such a climate as this, and under such a glorious sky."

Before Lucius gave way to the drowsiness which now overpowered him, he repeated, with the simple faith of a child, the prayer which he had first learned at his mother's knee, at the close of it returning fervent thanks for preservation in great danger, and almost unhopd-for success in a difficult quest. With Lucius and Aguilera religion showed its power over the soul in somewhat different ways. Lucius had not the impetuosity of character, the passion which, under the veil of reserve, animated the Spaniard born under more southern skies. Alcala's devotion had all the fervour of a first love. Had he continued to be a Romanist when his deepest feelings were stirred by religion, he would probably have become a missionary or a monk—have been a Dominic in asceticism, or a Xavier in active zeal. Alcala's love for his newly-found Lord was like a glorious stream bursting from mountain snows, springing over every obstacle, throwing up diamond spray, and wearing its own bright rainbow as a jewelled tiara. The religion of Lucius was a current, quiet but deep, which had flowed on through childhood, so that not even his mother could have told where it had first risen to light. Lucius would not, like Alcala, have begun his work of ministering to souls by reading aloud in a sick-room or preaching in a prison, no more than he would, like Alcala when yet unconverted, have dared death in the Plaza de Toros from an overstrained sense of honour. The one man was an Englishman, the other a Spaniard, and each showed national characteristics; but both had given themselves heart and soul to the Saviour, sought to live to His glory, and would have died for His sake. [Pg 245]

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE EARTHQUAKE.



Alcala, in his noisome prison, might well have envied Lucius his couch on the earth, and the pure fresh breezes which fanned the slumberer's brow. Whenever the prisoner awoke, it was with a sensation of stifling suffocation, which made him doubt how long his physical powers could hold out. [Pg 247]

"Perhaps," thought Alcala, "a messenger more speedy than Spanish justice may one day come to release me. In the meantime *let patience have its perfect work*, my heavenly Father will bring a blessing out of all;" and, composed by such reflections, the cavalier would sink into slumber again. It was well that Alcala was able thus to snatch some hours of sleep, for the coming day was to be one of the most eventful and exciting ones of his life.

It has been said, "Happy is the nation that has no history;" the words express wisdom condensed into wit; we read its truth in its converse. In England, during late years, the progress of political events has produced none of those sudden, violent convulsions which shake society to its centre; the movement has rather resembled that of the earth in its orbit, so quiet and regular that the bulk of the people scarcely know that motion goes on. But in unhappy Spain, instead of calm progress, there has ever and anon come a violent shock, as of an earthquake, overturning loftiest houses, throwing down highest pinnacles into the dust; an upheaving of the earth which, while it destroys much that is evil, endangers much that is good. We can only look for settled peace and prosperity in Spain to days when the Bible shall guide the counsels of her Senate, and control the passions of her people. [Pg 248]

Not many hours had passed since the light of morning, forcing its way through gratings into the prison of Seville, had aroused its inmates to commence, as they thought, the dreary monotony of another day, when even the dungeon's depths were stirred by a consciousness that exciting scenes were passing outside the walls. A look of expectation was on every face, every ear was bent to listen.

"Hark to the distant roar! One might deem that we were near the sea!" cried one of the smugglers. [Pg 249]

"It's a sea, I warrant ye, that will send many a proud galley to the bottom ere the sun go down," observed a thief, whom his previous conversation had shown to be also a keen politician.

"It's a sea that won't be stilled by Claret's sprinkling drops of holy oil upon it!" said a gipsy; and what a devout Romanist must have deemed a profane jest, was received with a burst of laughter.

"Let the sea rage as it will," observed Diego the chulo to Aguilera, "so that it bear back to old Spain the noblest man that ever drew breath in her air. I'll drink the health of Prim yet in a bumper of wine, and down with—"

The chulo had not time to conclude his sentence, when the louder, nearer noise of *vivas* from a thousand voices showed that the massive prison door no longer dulled outer sounds, or obstructed the free passage of the mob into the building. In surged the rushing human torrent; in one minute the corridor was, as their voices showed, filled by an excited rabble; the next minute the dividing door was burst open! The mob rushed into the dungeon, its walls resounded with loud *vivas*, re-echoed by most of the prisoners thus suddenly released from confinement, and let loose to swell the numbers of the wild crowd. The noise and confusion which prevailed were so great that it was difficult at the first instant to gain a clear idea of what had occurred; but it was soon as well known in the prison as it was already through every corner of Seville, that great and exciting news had arrived from Madrid during the course of the night. The reins of power had suddenly been wrenched from the hand of Queen Isabella; the sovereign of Spain had fled the kingdom; her minions had barely escaped with their lives; the fabric of government was overthrown, and no one could tell what would replace it. Like the criminals from the dungeon, all the fiercer passions of men were let loose, and who would have power to rule them?

[Pg 250]

If the prison of Seville had been suddenly filled almost to suffocation, it was nearly as suddenly emptied. There was nothing in it to tempt cupidity, nothing to retain the excited mob; and those who had been inmates of the gloomy abode were the most eager of the throng to rush forth into the free air. Robbers and murderers remembered that there might be palaces to plunder, and enemies to pursue. Aguilera found himself almost alone in the dungeon where, but a few minutes before, he had hardly had space wherein to breathe. Diego only remained by him still.

"Shall we follow the rest, señor?" asked the chulo. "There's not a jailer dare draw a bolt on us now. Methinks your prayer last night, like that of St. Paul, has been answered by an earthquake."

[Pg 251]

"I will return to my house, if I have strength to reach it," replied Alcala, making an effort to walk to the door. The cavalier was very desirous that at a time when anarchy and confusion prevailed throughout Seville, he should be in his home to protect the ladies of his family.

"You will scarcely reach the Calle de San José on foot, illustrious caballero," observed the chulo. "If it please you to wait in the corridor for awhile, it will go hard with me if I cannot find a mule, or some kind of conveyance, to bear you back to your home."

"I am greatly indebted to you, my friend," gratefully answered Alcala, who felt that without such aid as that proffered by Diego, it would be hardly possible for him to return to his dwelling.

"The debt is on my side, señor," said the chulo, looking steadily into the pallid face of the young cavalier. "You gave me such a message last night as was never brought to me by shaven monk or friar,—a message that Diego will never forget. Lean on my arm, señor; there's fresher air and a seat near the entrance. Hark! how the people are shouting and yelling now in the streets! They are as mad in their rush after freedom as the bull when the toril is opened, and he bursts into the circus, ready to tear down everything that stands in his way! It is to be hoped," added the chulo, uttering the words under his breath, "that this wild, excited people meet not the same fate as the bull!"

[Pg 252]

CHAPTER XXX.

[Pg 253]

PURSUED.



He will now return to an English acquaintance.

If there was one thing on which Mr. Passmore prided himself more than another, it was on being a steady man of business, one "who stuck to his work, and did not care to take a holiday from the first of January till the thirty-first of December."

But if Peter Passmore regularly gave his week-days to work, he as regularly gave his Sundays to amusement. No idea of devotion was linked with the Sabbath in the mind of the money-making man. Passmore considered time wasted that was spent on anything that brought no immediate return of worldly profit or pleasure.

As surely as Sunday came round, unless Seville offered some peculiar attraction, so surely at Mr. Passmore's door appeared a travelling carriage drawn by two stout horses. This was to bear the manufacturer to some agreeable spot several miles out of the city, where he could, as he expressed it, "get beyond hearing of the din of the bells of Seville, and the smell of its cigarillos." A picnic basket was always carefully placed in the carriage,—a basket well filled with bottles of champagne, *pâtés-de-foie-gras*, or other such portable dainties. For Passmore was not a man to

[Pg 254]

content himself with such fare as he might find in a Spanish posada. "I'll not make my Sunday dinner off puchero or saffron-soup," he would say, "or dishes prepared with oil, the very smell of which would spoil the appetite of a trooper!"

On this eventful Sunday morning Mr. Passmore, like every one else in Seville, had received tidings of the revolution which had taken place in the Spanish capital. But the manufacturer took little interest in politics, save as they might affect trade, especially trade in ironware goods. Whether Isabella or Carlos, prince or republican, Narvaez or Prim bore sway, it mattered nothing to Peter Passmore, so long as his furnaces blazed undisturbed, and he received a high price for his wares.

"Not take my Sunday drive!—why on earth should I not take it?" cried Passmore to the Spanish servant who had come to receive his orders. "The wheels of government may have come off, but my wheels roll steadily enough; Claret and his rascally crew have fallen, but my horses keep on their legs!"

[Pg 255]

But though Passmore found it easy enough to order his carriage, enter his carriage, and set out on his journey, he did not find it so easy on that September forenoon to drive through Seville. The coachman did his utmost to avoid meeting with obstructions from the excited rabble of the town, by driving through little frequented streets, but he had more than once to turn his horses sharply, and hurry them down some lane where, had another vehicle met that which he was guiding, both must have come to a stand-still, as there was not breadth enough of road to admit of their passing each other. More than once Mr. Passmore thrust his bald head and broad shoulders out of the carriage-window to demand, in an angry voice, whither the coachman was driving, and whether he meant to smash the vehicle through a shop-front. The shouts and *vivas* heard on turning every corner; the walls chalked over with political squibs or fierce denunciations against late rulers,—"*muera Claret*," "*muera Rivadeo*,"—gave the Englishman a more intelligible answer to his questions than any which he received from his frightened servant.

"Drive over the bridge to Triana, and through it to the open country!" cried out Passmore to his coachman, in the best Spanish which he could command.

[Pg 256]

The driver did his best to obey, but the bridge itself was crowded with people, and it was no easy matter to make a way through the throng. There was no special enmity, however, at that time entertained against the English by the Spanish mob, and the more ferocious of the population of Seville did not chance to be at the bridge. Bare-legged boys, indeed, climbed up at the back of the carriage, and dark visages were thrust in at the windows; but as Passmore was perfectly ready and willing to shout *viva* from his stentorian lungs for any one and every one whom the mob chose to favour, no serious opposition was made to his onward progress. The bridge was safely although not rapidly passed over, the rabble were left behind, and the coachman, still seeking in the suburb, as he had done in the city, the quietest streets, had soon almost reached the nearer end of the Calle de San José.

Here the onward course of the carriage was again arrested, but in a different way. A voice, which was one of mingled command and entreaty, in tones which could scarcely be resisted, ordered the driver to stop. A hand on the rein of the nearer horse enforced the command. Before Passmore had time to shout out "Drive on!" the door of the vehicle was flung open, and to Peter's amazement a lady, shrouded in a military cloak, was rather thrust than lifted into the carriage. She was instantly followed by a Spaniard whose features were so distorted by fear, so disordered were hair and beard, that Passmore could scarcely recognize in the fugitive the proud governor of Seville, Don Lopez de Rivadeo. The lady, who was his daughter, wore neither mantilla nor veil; she looked as if she had been suddenly dragged away while in the act of performing her morning toilette. A cloak had been hastily thrown over the dress of Antonia; one of her feet was slipperless; her long black tresses streamed down her back; she was mute with horror and fear, and breathless from the rapid pace at which she had been hurried along.

[Pg 257]

"Drive on—drive for your life!" shouted out Rivadeo to the coachman, and the lash which followed the command made the horses bound forward furiously.

The governor was too full of alarm and impatience to get beyond reach of the vengeful people whom he had fleeced, cheated, and oppressed, and who would fain pursue him to the death, even to apologize to Mr. Passmore for so unceremoniously taking possession of his carriage. The manufacturer was revolving in his mind how he could best explain to the Spaniard that he was not a man to be made chivalrous or benevolent against his will, when, with a violent jerk, the coachman again stopped the horses. The carriage had just been turned into the Calle de San José, and the driver saw that the further end of the street was blocked up by a furious mob that, with yells like the howling of wolves, were demanding the blood of Don Lopez.

[Pg 258]

Antonia shrieked aloud in the agony of her terror; Rivadeo started up in the carriage and drew his stiletto, as one to whom no hope was left but that of selling his life dearly.

"What's to be done?" exclaimed Passmore, who retained his presence of mind, and a certain bulldog courage characteristic of his race. "Here's an opening into a house which looks strong enough to resist anything short of cannon. Lift out the girl!" he cried, as he pushed open the carriage door; "be quick, or the ruffians will be upon us before we can get under cover."

There was no need to urge speed; in the twinkling of an eye the carriage was vacated by its terrified occupants. Antonia stumbled in her haste as she rushed under the archway of the house of the Aguileras, and was lifted up by the arm of a stranger who at the same moment was

"Ha, Lepine, you here!" exclaimed Peter Passmore; there was no time for another word. The last of the party had barely cleared the vestibule, and passed through the grating, which was instantly closed behind them, before the mob, bent on slaughter, swarmed into the archway.

"*Muera Rivadeo! muera Rivadeo!*" How horrible sounded that cry for blood yelled from the throats of the savage rabble, mingled with the clash of weapons furiously struck against the iron grating.

Antonia dropped her cloak as she staggered forward into the patio; the once proud queen of beauty, now disrobed and discrowned, with torn dress and dishevelled hair, stood in the presence of Alcala and Inez,—of the admirer whom she had slighted, the woman whom she had insulted! Rivadeo's daughter, who had shown no mercy, must seek for mercy from them!

But no feeling of triumph swelled in the breast of the gentle Inez on beholding the humiliation of one who had treated her with cruelty and scorn. The maiden's heart had in it now only room for tender compassion. With such sympathy as she might have shown to a dear friend in distress, Inez welcomed the fugitive lady, took her by the trembling hand, and drew her away from the patio into an inner apartment, that the horrible sound of voices demanding a father's life might be less audible to the ear of the governor's daughter. Inez made Antonia rest on her own bed, spoke softly and soothingly to her, and then left her to give directions to Teresa to bring wine to revive the spirit of the terrified lady. Inez could not bear to be herself long absent from her newly-recovered brother; she dreaded lest his harbouring Don Lopez should bring Alcala into new peril. But even if it were so, Inez would never regret that her hand had thrown open the grating to receive the hunted fugitives.

[Pg 260]

The delicacy and tenderness of Inez were by no means shared by Teresa. It was very unwillingly indeed that, in obedience to her young lady's orders, the old servant poured out for Antonia the very last glassful of wine from the very last bottle left in the once well-filled cellars. Teresa, her visage looking more grim and ill-tempered than usual, carried the beverage which she grudged to the daughter of Don Lopez de Rivadeo.

"There—take it, Donna Antonia," said Teresa bitterly, as she proffered the glass. "If I were you, it would choke me! Remember Don Alcala de Aguilera—he of whose love you never were worthy—lying bleeding, for your pride, under the horn of a bull!"

[Pg 261]

Antonia's hand shook so violently, that she could scarcely raise the glass to her lips.

"Remember Donna Inez," continued the tormentor, "the descendant of countless generations of heroes, stooping to sue for a boon from you, who were but too much honoured if a lady of the house of Aguilera deigned to enter your gate. Remember—"

"Oh, those yells! O holy Virgin!" shrieked Antonia, dropping the glass, as a louder ebullition of popular fury from without made her start in alarm. "Shut the door, woman! oh, shut it and bolt it! the wretches may rush in even here!"

Teresa turned, and gloomily obeyed, muttering half-aloud as she did so, "An Aguilera would have had no thought of self, when a father was so near to the knives of assassins!"

CHAPTER XXXI.

[Pg 262]

VENGEANCE.



Antonia might well be excused for the excess of her terror. If in one European country more than another an infuriated mob is to be dreaded, that country, perhaps, is Spain. A people accustomed to find delight in seeing bulls tortured, horses gored to death, and men imperilled and often wounded or slain, are not likely, when their passions are roused, to be moved to pity, or to feel horror at deeds of blood. Religion, degraded into superstition or utterly cast aside, has little power to control. The commandment, "*Thou shalt not kill*," has been broken so often, that its breach has almost ceased to be regarded as a crime. The stoutest heart might have quailed at the sound of the savage roar of voices, and that of thundering blows on the ornamental grating which alone divided the mob from their prey.

A little group stood together in the patio, whose marble pavement was likely so soon to be stained with the blood of at least one victim. Lucius Lepine, with the generous spirit which makes the Englishman "strike as soon for a trampled foe as he would for a soul-dear friend," stood by the side of Aguilera, to protect his endangered guest. The Briton grasped his loaded pistol, the Spaniard was quite unarmed. A little behind them appeared Lopez de Rivadeo, a haggard, desperate man, clutching his dagger and clinching his teeth, as he watched the grating, which he every moment expected to give way under the clanging blows which were showered upon it. Near the governor stood Peter Passmore, flushed and snorting with excitement, and heartily wishing himself out of a country where an honest man could not take a morning drive without the risk of being baited like a wild beast. Diego completed the group; the chulo had attached himself

[Pg 263]

to Alcala, and was resolved to stand by the cavalier to the last. Once the pale face of Inez had appeared at a door which led to the interior part of the dwelling, but she had retired at the urgent desire of her brother. "This is no place for ladies!" cried he.

"That bit of wrought iron will not hold out long under such battering," cried Passmore, addressing himself to Lopez; "why do you not hide yourself in some inner apartment?"

[Pg 264]

"Because I would rather make my last stand here, under the open sky, than be killed like a rat in a hole," hoarsely muttered the desperate man.

Cr—cr—cr—ash! down goes the grating, and over it rush the human wolves towards their victim.

"Back, back, ye men of Seville!" exclaimed Alcala, coming forward to meet the mob with that calm dignity which marked one born to command. "How dare ye thus force your way into the dwelling of a cavalier of Andalusia?" Alcala's stern eyes were fixed on the leader of the rioters, in whom he recognized one of the robbers with whom he had passed the previous night in prison. The bandit was taken aback by the unexpected meeting with that strange fellow-prisoner whom he had almost deemed a prophet inspired by Heaven.

"We seek not to harm you or yours, señor, but that wretch—"

"Is my guest, and as such shall be protected with my life!" cried Alcala. "What, my brave countrymen! will ye celebrate the birthday of your liberty with deeds of violence which would disgrace the heathen? When the eyes of Europe are upon them, will Spaniards show themselves unworthy of their freedom? I have heard in your streets the shout of 'Viva la Constitucion!' I hailed it as a sign that my countrymen could distinguish liberty from license, and that in Spain at least revolution meant not robbery and murder!"

[Pg 265]

Alcala had appealed to the self-respect of his hearers—that quality which appears to be inherent in Spaniards, and which, as history proves, can act as a curb even on the rage of their mobs. No one of the intruders rushed violently forward, although the only barrier between them and their prey was the firm will and dauntless courage of one unarmed individual. But a haggard, wild-looking man came a little in front of the rest, to act as the spokesman of all. Fierceness, almost resembling that of insanity, flashed from his sunken eyes, as, glaring on Rivadeo, the Spaniard brandished aloft his huge knife, and then addressed himself to Alcala.

"We must have justice, we must have revenge on a villain who for years has trampled the people under foot as the mire in the streets! Did ye know half his crimes, ye would not protect him. Look at me, señor!" A terrible tale of suffering was written on the speaker's haggard face and almost skeleton frame. "You have been for one night in that den of misery into which robbery, under the mask of justice, thrusts its victims; I have been there for *seven years*! And my crime was that I could not bribe yonder tyrant to give me back my birthright of freedom! *Seven years*!" repeated the man with energy, "rotting in a dungeon worse than the lair of a beast, whilst my wife and children were starving outside!"

[Pg 266]

A deep murmur of indignation rose from the listening crowd. The man went on with increasing fierceness of tone and gesture.

"Seven years! and every day of those years I breathed a deeper vow of vengeance. I am but one of many who have made that vow—"

"Yes, yes!" howled forth many threatening voices.

"And shall we not keep it?" exclaimed the deeply-wronged man.

"Yes, yes!" was more loudly repeated. "The tyrant is before us, shall we not strike! Vengeance is within reach, shall we not grasp it!"

"Hold, men of Seville!" exclaimed Alcala; "hear me but for a moment. There are those amongst you who listened last night in a dungeon to an offer of mercy from Heaven. To whom was that offer made? To all, from the criminal in ermine to the thief on the cross. By whom was that offer made? By Him who had power to crush His enemies—to annihilate or hurl them down into fire that shall never be quenched. Transgressors were before Him; did He strike? Vengeance was within His reach; did He grasp it? Did not the Deity take man's nature, that as Man He might die, not for His friends alone, but for His foes? Did He not purchase, at the price of His own life's blood, the right to extend free forgiveness even to the guiltiest of all?"

[Pg 267]

Again words that glowed with the fervour that warmed the heart of the speaker fell with strange power on men to whom pure and simple gospel truth was as a new revelation. Alcala felt that he was making some impression on his wild audience, and thus went on with his appeal to their nobler feelings:—

"Let me not speak to you in my own words, but in the words of the Lord of Life, who for our sakes underwent agony, shame, and death! It is He who says, even to the most deeply injured, the most cruelly oppressed amongst us all, '*Forgive, as ye have been forgiven.*' The lips of Him who on the cross breathed a prayer for His own murderers, is now saying to our souls, '*Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.*' Is there one man here who needs not that mercy—is there one here who without that mercy dare stand before the tribunal of God?"

There was a deep silence amongst the throng. After a brief pause, Alcala resumed speaking, but in a different tone.

"Return, my brave friends, to your homes, thankful that you have hands unstained with blood, and consciences not burdened by murder. We Spaniards have a nobler and more arduous task before us than that of slaying a defenceless foe. Our glorious land has long groaned under that worst form of bondage—the bondage which fetters the soul. We have been robbed of our noblest heritage—the heritage of the Word of Truth. Let us throw off our chains, and show ourselves men! The Moor was driven from our Andalusia by the prowess of our brave sires; let ours be a greater victory, a more glorious conquest than theirs. Let Spain rise from the dust of ages to be the champion of freedom and faith. Let us not rest till one of the fairest lands upon which the light of heaven shines becomes an example to the nations around her, and a blessing to all the world!"

[Pg 268]

"*Viva Aguilera! viva la Spagna!*" exclaimed Lucius Lepine, with an enthusiasm which was contagious. The mob caught up the words, and re-echoed the shout; the patio resounded with "*Viva la Spagna! viva Aguilera!*"—Diego's voice heard above all. Alcala was too much exhausted to speak more to the crowd, but he smiled and bowed his thanks; and the people, obeying his gesture, slowly and without confusion defiled again through the arched passage, and made their way back into the street.

[Pg 269]

"I never saw anything to equal that!" exclaimed the astonished Passmore, when he saw the last individual of the rabble disappear from the court. "Iron at white heat to be cooled down by a few brave words!"

"To God be the glory!" said Alcala.

CHAPTER XXXII.

[Pg 270]

A LAST FAREWELL.



he agony of suspense which had been suffered by the wretched Don Lopez whilst his life hung trembling in the balance was now shown by his vehement impatience to get out of Seville. The governor could hardly thank his preserver; he would taste no refreshment; he would not so much as sit down, so restless was he in his eager desire to escape. De Rivadeo was furious even at the brief delay which took place ere his daughter obeyed his reiterated call. Lopez would on no account stop to encounter the chance of a repetition of such an attack by the mob as that from which he had so narrowly escaped with life. Mr. Passmore's carriage was still at the entrance, and the manufacturer consented, though with no good grace, to take the fugitives to the nearest town, where they would be likely to get another conveyance to carry them to some port. Lopez de Rivadeo must follow Queen Isabella into exile, as others, worthless as himself, already had done.

[Pg 271]

Diego, who liked adventure, and whose intelligence might further the governor's escape, volunteered to take his seat beside Mr. Passmore's coachman, who had been so much frightened by the events of the morning that he could hardly manage the reins.

Just as these little arrangements had been concluded, Donna Antonia re-entered the patio, leaning on the arm of Inez, and followed by Teresa. The governor's daughter now wore a veil and mantilla; these, to a Spanish lady, needful articles of dress, had been given to Antonia by Inez, notwithstanding the angry expostulations of the old duenna. Teresa was indignant to see her mistress robbed, as she called it, of what she so ill could spare.

"My only comfort," muttered Teresa, as she hobbled after the ladies, "is that the mantilla has been worn till the silk will hardly hold together, and that the veil has more of neat darning on it than of the original lace."

Alcala came forward to hand Donna Antonia to the carriage; oppressed as he was with weakness and languor, the cavalier of Andalusia would not suffer another to take his place in doing the honours of his house to his unfortunate guests. This was the first day on which the proud beauty of Seville had met Don Alcala de Aguilera since that on which he had rashly risked his life for her sake. If any touch of womanly feeling was in Antonia's selfish bosom, that feeling must have been stirred now into remorse as she beheld her father's preserver. Alcala's pale features showed the sufferings which he had lately undergone: he looked like one newly risen from a sick-bed, with sunken cheek, colourless lip, and languid eye. As with graceful courtesy the cavalier proffered his wasted hand to the lady, on the minds of both Alcala and Antonia flashed back memory of the hour when that hand had been deemed unworthy to touch the white kid glove of the heiress—that hour when, like an empress, she had stepped into her galley on the glittering Guadalquivir.

[Pg 272]

Silently Alcala conducted Antonia through the arched way to the carriage which was to bear her from Seville. Not till she had placed her foot on the carriage-step did the cavalier utter a word.

"Farewell, señorita!" said Alcala. Antonia turned towards him, but in silence; the eyes of the two met—it was the last look that was ever to pass between them. Soon the motion of the rolling wheels separated Alcala and Antonia de Rivadeo for ever.

But for the support of Lucius's arm, Alcala could hardly have walked back to the patio. He sank down wearily on the first seat that he reached, too much exhausted to do more than extend his

[Pg 273]

hand, with a faint smile on his lips, to Inez, who knelt by his side.

"Bring wine, Teresa!" cried Inez, looking anxiously at the face of her brother.

"Wine!" exclaimed the old woman, stung into momentary forgetfulness of the presence of the English stranger—"wine!" she repeated bitterly, "when the last drop left in this ruined house was poured out for that proud woman; and there's not a cuarto in the coffer to buy more for the caballero if his life depended upon it! Woe, woe to the Aguileras!"

"Never say so!" cried Lucius Lepine, and the joy of being the bearer of good news seemed to the young man at that moment to outweigh all that he had gone through to procure it. "The Aguileras have a casket of golden plate and rich jewels safely buried near a palm-tree beside a wood, not two miles from Seville; they have only to dig it out and possess it. Donna Inez, the Englishman has kept his word."

"A casket of gold plate and jewels!" almost screamed out Teresa, who scarcely dared to believe her own ears; "you don't say it—you can't mean it!—what! the box with clamps of steel, the old señora's jewel-case, which I've handled many a day!" The wrinkled hand laid on the arm of Lucius was shaking with violent excitement. [Pg 274]

"I do say it—I do mean it," replied Lucius, whose countenance was beaming with pleasure.

"But, my friend, how is this possible?" asked Alcala; "the miserable Chico—"

"Lies murdered by his own accomplices," said Lucius more gravely; "fearful retribution has overtaken the servant who robbed his master."

Lucius then recounted to his deeply interested hearers the tale of his night's adventures, dwelling as lightly as he could on what only related to himself. No one interrupted the narration, save Teresa, who could not refrain ever and anon from uttering some ejaculation, now of indignation, now of delight. When Lucius came to the account of burying the box near the palm-tree, the old duenna could restrain her feelings no longer. To the astonishment of the Englishman she suddenly flung herself at his feet, and clasped his knees in an ecstasy of gratitude, admiration, and joy!

"The blessing of all the saints be upon you, brave, noble Señor Inglesito!" exclaimed old Teresa, while tears streamed down her wrinkled face; "if you were as deep-dyed a heretic as Luther himself, I would bless you a thousand times over! You have saved a noble family from ruin!"

CHAPTER XXXIII.

[Pg 275]

A TREASURE.



Perhaps the proudest and happiest hour of Teresa's life was that in which she saw the treasure, the family heirlooms, in the hands of Alcala de Aguilera, as they were on the following day. Teresa clasped the steel-clamped box as if it had been a living child. Would she not burnish up the rusted metal till every hinge should shine as brightly as Aguilera's honour! The duenna handled the contents of the case with as much reverence as she might have shown to the hair of Santa Veronica! Every article in that jewel-box had its history for Teresa. That bracelet was a wedding-gift from a duchess to the mother of Alcala and Inez; that ring had been worn by a cavalier who had slain three Moors with his own right hand; that gold snuff-box was a gift from the Empress Catherine to an Aguilera then ambassador at the Russian Court; those medals were, every one of them, [Pg 276] tokens of some gallant deed performed by one of the ancestors of Alcala. Teresa counted each pearl in the chaplet, and every link in the massive gold chain.

Alcala and Inez watched with amusement the old duenna's delight.

"Nay, Teresa, lay not down that chain," said De Aguilera; "you have well earned some little acknowledgment of your long and faithful service. The very first use which we make of our newly-recovered property is to show our gratitude to her who in weal or woe has never forsaken our house."

"The chain—for me!" exclaimed the astonished duenna; "what could the like of me do with so costly an ornament as this?"

"Turn it into dollars," said Alcala quietly; but the Spanish cavalier could not help a flush rising to his cheek as he added, "as I am going to turn the goblet of gold."

Teresa looked aghast at such an unexpected announcement. She could scarcely believe that anything could induce Alcala to part with that splendid relic of family grandeur, embossed with the Aguilera arms—a goblet which had been touched by the lips of princes—a goblet which had been the most costly ornament of a table at which a hundred guests had sat down. [Pg 277]

"Better part with anything than with that!" exclaimed the old servant, making a passionate protest against what seemed to her little short of sacrilege.

"I have talked the subject over with my sister," replied Aguilera; "neither of us would touch our grandmother's property during her lifetime, and the greater part of the gems are hers. Nor is this a time for disposing of jewels; for that we must wait for more quiet days. Gold always commands its value."

"But that goblet," expostulated Teresa—"that which was the pride of your house!"

"Teresa, I must have nothing more to do with pride," said Alcala gravely but kindly. "I have renounced the pride of life as one of those things which are inconsistent with the character of a Christian."

Inez saw that this was an argument incomprehensible to Teresa, and in her own gentle way the Spanish maiden brought forward others which had a far greater effect upon the old servant's mind. Donna Benita should now have the little pleasures which she could yet enjoy, and the comforts which she required; so many things had long been needed by the family which could now be procured by the sacrifice of one costly cup. Surely, suggested Inez, it was better to have food in an earthenware dish, than to sit hungry at a board laden with empty plate, albeit of gold.

[Pg 278]

Teresa drew a deep sigh; she could not gainsay her young lady's words, but she looked at the doomed goblet with tearful eyes, as a parent might look at a child from whom she was forced to part.

"Oh, señor," cried Teresa with emotion, "grant to me but one boon; it is but a small one—it will cost you no effort or loss—it is the first favour which your old servant ever has asked of her master."

"It will scarcely be denied," said Alcala.

"Before you sell that precious heirloom, bid to a banquet those two English señors who have seen you in your—your difficulties; the brave caballero who recovered your treasure, and the elder one whose"—Teresa could not bring herself to say, "whose salary you have stooped to earn," so she described Mr. Passmore as he whose head was bald with age.

Alcala could not altogether disappoint the earnestly expressed wish of his old retainer, or deny her the gratification of letting his late employer see some proof of the wealth once enjoyed by the family of his clerk. Teresa's "banquet" was, however, reduced to a simple evening collation, to which not a single guest but the two Englishmen was to be invited. Teresa would fain have had all the great and wealthy inhabitants of Seville bidden to a grand entertainment, and have had the goblet of gold pass down the length of a table thronged with as many guests as had found place at the wedding-feast of Don Pedro de Aguilera.

[Pg 279]

"Our poor Teresa thinks our newly-found treasure inexhaustible," said Inez with a happy smile to her brother, when the duenna had hurried off to make purchases of some of the innumerable articles which she had now discovered to be indispensable. "Of what are you thinking, my Alcala?" continued Inez, laying her hand caressingly on that of her brother, and looking up lovingly into his face, which wore an expression of deeper thought than usual.

"I was thinking, dearest, of another to us long-buried and newly-recovered treasure, even the written Word of God," replied Alcala. "This in itself is truly inexhaustible wealth. Our country, our beautiful Spain, basely robbed of that treasure, has for ages been poor indeed! But Heaven is restoring to us now that which is beyond all price, even the knowledge of gospel truth. May we Spaniards be given grace to hold fast to the end that doctrine for which so many martyrs have perished in the flames,—the doctrine of justification by faith!"

The attention of both Alcala and of his friend Lucius being now earnestly directed to the subject of the evangelization of Spain, they found, with both pleasure and surprise, how many faithful labourers had been in the field before them. As in our own city, strangers might pass through hundreds of streets, marvel at the traffic of London, and wonder at its wealth, and yet be unaware all the time that, underground and out of sight, trains are rapidly bearing its merchant princes from place to place,—so those who had believed themselves well acquainted with Spain had lived in almost total ignorance of a great hidden work going on beneath the surface of society. Alcala and Lucius now heard for the first time of the band of Spanish reformers who had been receiving instruction from a Scotch minister^[22] on the rock of Gibraltar. They now first heard of the gifted convert from Romanism, Jean Baptista Cabrera, gathering around him these his brethren, the hope of the infant Church, and organizing them to form a band of faithful confessors, who, in the name of the only Saviour, should bear the banner of the truth into Spain. Alcala found that arrangements for the revision of the Scriptures, the compilation of an evangelical creed, and the division of Spain into districts, for the better diffusion of religious knowledge, had actually been made under the shadow of the tyranny which had so long darkened the land of his birth. Cabrera's conference with other Spanish reformers had taken place in the spring of the same year of which the autumn saw the flight of Queen Isabella. I will quote from an account of this conference given in the work^[23] to which I have so often referred in this little volume:—

[Pg 280]

[Pg 281]

"In this transaction we see the foundations laid of the Reformed Church of Spain. That glorious event took place under the flag of Great Britain. The day is well worthy of being noted; it was the 25th of April 1868. This was the birthday of that Church, and this day will long be a memorable one in the annals of Spain and in the annals of Christianity."

"Yes, the Lord Bishop of Cadiz had some cause to sound his cry of alarm!" exclaimed Lucius, after he and Alcala had been reading together a copy of the soul-stirring address of Cabrera. "The grand struggle between light and darkness has begun already, thank God! my own dear old country has furnished weapons for the warfare;" and the Englishman laid his hand on a complete Spanish Bible, which had been Aguilera's first purchase with the treasure so lately restored.

But though the hopeful Briton looked forward to a speedy and glorious termination to that warfare, Alcala revolved with some anxiety the difficulties which were likely to obstruct the progress of the evangelization of Spain. Isabella, that bigoted votary of Rome, no longer, indeed, bore sway; a priest-ridden government had fallen, and the Spanish people had shown little desire to uphold the Papal power; but all the political horizon was overspread with a dense mist of uncertainty regarding the future. Who would take the reins of government that had dropped from the hands of the Queen? Who would manage obstinate Juntas, control violent mobs, and guide the chariot of the State into anything resembling an orderly course? The eyes of Spain were turned towards her banished General Prim, that man who was, though but for a brief period, to play so important a part in her history. Prim would return to his country, would rise to be a ruler in the land from whence he had once been driven. His coming triumph was the perpetual theme of the exultant Diego, who now filled the place in Alcala's household which had been occupied by Chico. Alcala, too, foresaw that General Prim was likely to be the leader of the Spanish people: but was his accession to power an event to be desired or dreaded by those whose dearest object in life was the evangelization of Spain? Would Prim come to sustain the power of the Romish priesthood with the support of the secular arm? Would he, like his predecessors, regard Protestantism as a punishable crime? Was the circulation of the Scriptures to be prohibited, and a dungeon to be deemed the fittest place for the bold evangelist who should proclaim its life-giving truths? What was a subject of anxiety to De Aguilera was also a subject for fervent prayer. Earnestly he besought the Ruler of all the events of this changing scene to raise up a powerful protector for the infant Reformed Church of Spain.

[Pg 282]

[Pg 283]

FOOTNOTES:

[22] The Rev. A. Sutherland. *Vide* "Daybreak in Spain."

[23] "Daybreak in Spain."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

[Pg 284]

GLAD TIDINGS.



It was with an expression of amusement and surprise on his heavy features that Mr. Passmore read a note inviting him to pass an evening at the house of Don Alcala de Aguilera, some little time after the events related in the preceding chapters. Peter Passmore turned the paper over with his thick, short fingers, and laughed aloud.

"I shall take care to fortify myself by a good dinner beforehand—ho! ho! ho!—lest the entertainment prove as unsubstantial as the Barmecide's feast!" said the manufacturer to himself. "But there is something extraordinary after all in this Spanish clerk or caballero. If he's mad, 'there's method in his madness,' as Walter Scott would have said. It was frantic folly to stand the onslaught of a bull to please some silly señorita; scarcely better to get thrown into prison for the sake of reading a book. I thought Aguilera insane when he went forward to meet a mob that looked ready to dash out the brains of any man who stood in their way; but somehow or other this Quixote has contrived to get through all his adventures with credit, if not always with success. He subdued all those blood-thirsty ruffians with a few sentences uttered in his sonorous Spanish, better than a squad of their alguazils could have done with bludgeons and pikes. And certainly the dwelling of this Aguilera looks more fit to lodge a grandee of Spain than a clerk of the firm of Passmore and Perkins. A man has not time to look about him as he would at an exhibition when a set of howling ragamuffins are battering the door, and he expects soon to have his throat cut with their horrid long knives, but it seemed to me as if the place in which I stood was a palace. It might not answer our notions of English comfort, for we Islanders like to have a roof over our sitting-rooms, and don't care for gardens in the middle of 'em; and I confess to preferring a well-stuffed arm-chair to the finest seat carved in marble. But it gave an idea of grandeur. Well, well, I should like to see more of this Spanish palace, and I will certainly accept the invitation of Don Alcala de Aguilera, even at the risk of coming in for another adventure."

[Pg 285]

[Pg 286]

So, on the appointed evening, Mr. Passmore, dressed more carefully than usual, but wearing with indifferent grace his gay neck-tie and tight-fitting gloves, made his appearance in the patio of the house in the Calle de San José. Aguilera received his guest with the refined courtesy natural to Spanish gentlemen, and introduced him to Donna Inez.

The patio was lighted up for the occasion, if not with the brilliancy which Teresa desired, yet sufficiently well to display the beauty of the delicate Moorish architecture, the graceful columns and horse-shoe arches, the exquisite carving, and the rich hues of flowers clustering around the fountain, no longer silent, nor bearing the marks of decay. Passmore looked around him with

admiration, but with something of the feeling of the boor in the story who found that the stranger to whom he had shown scant courtesy was a prince in disguise. Aguilera making up accounts at the desk, and Aguilera doing the honours of his noble mansion, seemed to the manufacturer to be two different beings. Peter Passmore was not at his ease, and all the less so because of his imperfect knowledge of the language of his entertainers. His Spanish was seldom correct and never fluent, and the manufacturer was not devoid of that shyness which belongs to our national character, and which makes the Briton fear to compromise himself by committing some breach of etiquette in a foreign land, with whose customs he is but imperfectly acquainted. Passmore greatly missed his usual interpreter Lucius.

[Pg 287]

"I thought that I should have met Lepine here," Mr. Passmore observed to his host.

"I cannot imagine what detains my friend," said Alcalá; "I have expected him here this last hour. Lepine never fails to keep an appointment."

"I never knew him late but once," observed Passmore, attempting to keep up conversation in his broken and most ungrammatical Spanish. "It was on the evening before you killed—I mean to say, when you were killed—no, that's not exactly the thing—I beg your pardon, señor, for bringing up so awkward a subject," stammered forth the clumsy Briton, seeing the cloud that for an instant passed over the bright happy face of Alcalá's sister.

Diego now appeared with a tray covered with the fruits of Andalusia, and other elegant but inexpensive dainties. But Teresa would suffer no hands but her own to have the honour of bearing the goblet of gold, filled with the wine of Xeres. Proud as if she carried a monarch's orb and sceptre, the old retainer of the Aguileras brought in the family heirloom. Teresa was almost satisfied by the manufacturer's look of surprise, as, after taking a draught of the wine, he retained the goblet for some seconds in his hold, to examine before he returned it. Peter Passmore was more puzzled than ever by the late conduct of the possessor of such a magnificent piece of plate.

[Pg 288]

"Is that pure gold?" inquired Passmore, curiosity getting the better of politeness.

Alcalá, by a slight movement of the head, gave an affirmative reply. Teresa was offended by the doubt implied by the question, and muttered to herself, "Does the Inglesito take it for a bit of his own worthless iron?"

"I suppose, Don Alcalá de Aguilera," observed Passmore after a pause, "that you will scarcely care to take service again?" The question would, we may hope, have been more delicately put, but for the speaker's difficulty in expressing himself in Spanish.

This was too much for the endurance of Teresa; her indignation and disgust overcame even her sense of decorum.

"Take service!" she repeated, every wrinkle in her face appearing to quiver with passion; "is such a word spoken to the illustrious caballero, Don Alcalá de Aguilera?"

Alcalá quieted his retainer by a gesture of the hand; and then, turning to his late employer, thus calmly replied to his question,—

"I am assuredly going to take service, señor, but of a different kind from that to which you refer. I am preparing myself, with my friend's kind aid, for work in a sphere where I shall deem it an honour to hold the lowest place. I hope, ere long, to become a teacher where I have so lately become a learner, and to give myself to the ministry of the gospel in my native Andalusia."

[Pg 289]

Passmore but half understood the reply of the Spaniard, but he asked for no explanation of what might have been almost equally incomprehensible to the worldly man had it been spoken in English.

Lucius Lepine, breathless with the speed at which he had come, at this instant burst into the patio. The eagerness of his manner, the animation of his look, showed him to be the bearer of tidings, and at once riveted on the young Englishman the attention of all.

"Pardon me, señorita,—and you, Alcalá," gasped forth the guest who had so unceremoniously rushed into the court; "I have earned forgiveness for my delay for the sake of the news which I bring. Prim is in Spain—"

Diego could not suppress a triumphant viva.

"He has met with the evangelist Cabrera at the town of Algeciras—"

With intense interest Alcalá bent forward to listen, while the breathless narrator went on.

[Pg 290]

"Cabrera had an interview with the chief who is now the foremost man in the State—"

"What said the general?" asked Alcalá, with mingled anxiety and hope.

"Prim said to Cabrera, 'Are you of those who were prosecuted by the late Government as being bad religionists?'—'We are,' replied our noble evangelist.—'Then I have to tell you,' said the chief, '*that you may enter Spain with your Bible under your arm.*'"^[24]

There was a louder *viva* from Diego. But Alcalá did not speak; he had sunk on his knees, and was breathing forth from the depths of his soul a thanksgiving for the glorious sun of life and light

that was rising upon his beloved Spain.

FOOTNOTES:

[24] "Daybreak in Spain."

CHAPTER XXXV.

[Pg 291]

FICTION AND TRUTH.



ere closes my story, but not my work. The information which some writers might have put into a preface, I have purposely reserved, as the choicest part of my volume, for its conclusion.

I hope that A. L. O. E. may be pardoned for giving to the hero of her fiction the name actually borne by a noble Spanish evangelist now a standard-bearer of the gospel in Seville. Her tale has failed of its purpose if it has awakened no interest in the good work at this time going on in Seville, as well as in other cities of Spain. To give an idea of the nature and success of that work, and to place the true beside the fictitious Aguilera, she has but to transcribe from an "Occasional Paper," published in September 1873, by the Spanish Evangelical Mission.^[25] This date is about five years later than that chosen for the preceding story, and belongs to a period when a fresh revolution had convulsed the country of Spain.

[Pg 292]

"Our missionary agents at Seville have been called to pass through a season of great anxiety and of considerable danger, in consequence of the insurrections which took place in June and July, and the subsequent siege of the city. Through the love and tender mercy of our Heavenly Father, our friends were preserved from all harm, as were also the churches, mission-houses, and schools."

An extract from a letter written by an English eye-witness of the alarming insurrection which took place in Seville in that eventful summer of 1873 then follows.

"A terrible scene took place. The people gathered in many thousands, and vociferously demanded the heads of the members of the Junta, who were at this moment prisoners in the Ayuntamiento. The Plaza Nueva, now Plaza de la Republica Federal, and the Plaza de San Francisco, were filled with people who savagely shouted, '*Que muera!*' Several hundred volunteers had already formed a circle, expecting the prisoners to be shot. The governor tried in vain to appease the people, who, like so many hungry tigers, yelled for the lives of the unfortunate men. Then a heart-rending scene took place. The wives and children of the prisoners, pressing through the crowd, knelt in the midst of the circle, and begged the people to spare the lives of those who were so near and dear to them, the children imploring with tiny outstretched arms; but all in vain. '*Que muera!*' (Let them die!) was the only response.

[Pg 293]

"Suddenly Aguilera, our evangelist, accompanied by a few friends, appeared on one of the balconies facing the Ayuntamiento, and gave a heart-stirring address to the people. He spoke so loudly that I could hear him distinctly on the other side of the Plaza. The crowd at first would not listen. Some said, 'He is a traitor!' others, 'He is a Protestant!' and many shouted, 'Shoot him!' But by degrees the shouts subsided, and the crowd soon became thoroughly moved by his earnest words, and broke forth into hearty cheers and cries of 'Let them live!' Thus did Señor Aguilera by his courageous conduct save the lives of the unhappy prisoners, who would otherwise have been sacrificed to the blood-thirsty mob."

In another letter,^[26] written less than a month after the preceding, a Spanish missionary, the Rev. F. Palomares, gives details which can scarcely fail to interest those who care for the progress of our Lord's kingdom in Spain.

[Pg 294]

"The events at Seville during the last few days have been most serious. We passed three days of greater anguish than we had ever before experienced. A barricade was erected in front of the door of San Basilio Church,^[27] and a cannon was placed by the volunteers in the door of the schoolroom. On seeing these preparations, I had the English flag, and that of the Red Cross or hospital flag, hoisted on the church. I invited the neighbours, without distinction of religion or politics, to contribute bandages, medicines, and other necessaries for the wounded. This they did most willingly. A committee was formed to assist me in conveying the wounded, not only to our own hospital, but also to those that were in the vicinity of the fighting. All this was done with great risk to our lives, but our Lord Jesus Christ was with us on all occasions. At the same time I occupied myself in gathering under the roof of San Basilio the women and children, the sick and aged. By this means consolation and shelter were offered to more than fifteen hundred persons during the three days of danger, who left us with expressions of gratitude."

A few more touches from the pen of an English missionary at Seville must be added to fill up the picture from real life now placed beside that which is the mere creation of fancy.

[Pg 295]

"Thanks be to the Keeper of Israel, and praises to His name, for His loving-kindness towards us in

having kept us from all harm. The churches, houses, and schools connected with the Mission, although two of them are very near the scene of destruction, were not injured in the least. The June insurrection ended, comparatively speaking, pacifically; but that of July, I am sorry to say, was the cause of much bloodshed and loss of property. No one knows the precise number of the dead and wounded. The [Madrid] newspapers announce them to be about 800, but that is probably an exaggeration. The city had the appearance of a vast camp. Barricades were erected in all parts of it. On Sunday, July 27th, the Government troops could be seen advancing from the top of the Giralda. No one, excepting women and children, were allowed to leave the city.

"It was uncertain which part of the town the troops would attack, but the general opinion was they would attack the [Macarena] district in which San Basilio is situated; consequently many of the inhabitants of the adjacent quarters emigrated towards the cathedral and the river. I was at that time at San Basilio, making arrangements with Señor Palomares for the reception of the wounded. The church was filled with women and children, who were invited to take shelter under the English and Red Cross flags. I could not help remarking to Señor Palomares that God would probably bring good out of this evil, by causing some of those bigoted Roman Catholic families, who were now sheltering themselves under the roof of a Protestant church, to take refuge under the blessings of the gospel, and so save their souls from everlasting destruction.

[Pg 296]

"The bombardment commenced at half-past two on Monday, and continued till Wednesday, when the troops succeeded in taking possession of the city.

"Señor Palomares, myself, and several members of the Red Cross went out on Tuesday evening to bring in some wounded; but we could not get beyond the barricade of San José, for the balls still rushed by. It was a sad scene to behold. The whole neighbourhood had been saturated with petroleum, and the pillars of smoke and fire were terrible: I have never witnessed in my life such a scene before. The disasters of Bourbaki's army, of which I was an eye-witness, seem to me less than what I beheld during the three days of the bombardment of Seville.

[Pg 297]

"It is most astonishing and worth while mentioning that, whilst the houses to the right and left, before and behind, our (Garci Perez) school are more or less damaged, it should have escaped without even a ball-mark; and that, whilst houses only a few yards distant were burned, and a large cork manufactory not more than ten yards from it was almost totally destroyed, it should have escaped without injury.

"Our schools were only discontinued for a few days, and they are now as well attended as before. May the Lord have mercy on poor Spain, and cause the light of His gospel to shine in her midst!"

Let the reader of these pages breathe a fervent "amen" to this prayer; nor let him content himself with this sign of sympathy with those who maintain so holy a cause. Men and money are needed; the conflict is going on at this moment, the battle is not yet decided. Such Spaniards as Cabrera and Aguilera still contend in their nobler Plaza de Toros with fierce bigotry and superstition: a formidable enemy is before them; but their weapon is the Word of God, and English friends, faithful and firm, stand at their side. When in eternity the ancient martyrs and the modern spiritual heroes of Spain remember in the mansions of peace and bliss the struggle in which they once bore so noble a part, may my reader be able with humble joy to exclaim, "I was no idle spectator of the struggle! Such help as I could give I willingly gave, and I—even I—may now, while ascribing all glory to the God of hosts, join in the song of victory and the psalm of thanksgiving—for the triumphs of the Gospel in Spain!"

[Pg 298]

Another Occasional Paper, issued by the Spanish Church Mission whilst this volume was passing through the press, gives a cheering account of the progress of evangelical work in Seville. The number of children under religious tuition is a peculiarly encouraging feature of this work. Portions of Scripture, illuminated by English hands, are hung up not only in schools, but some of them in private houses, to the great annoyance of Romish priests. Though Spain is yet convulsed by civil war, and fierce bigotry has not ceased to oppose the truth, an Aguilera still holds his glorious post in Seville; and in the city where so many martyrs once died in flames kindled by the Inquisition, Spanish lips are now preaching the doctrine of justification by faith.

FOOTNOTES:

[25] Office, 6 Duke Street, Adelphi, London.

[26] What follows is a translation.

[27] A large *Protestant* church in Seville.

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