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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE CONSTANT PRINCE ***

Christobel Coleridge

"The Constant Prince"

Preface.

It is commonly supposed that the writer of an historical tale idealises the characters therein represented, heightens the romance of the situation, and at any rate brings the fairer tints of the scene into undue prominence. I wish to make it clearly understood that I have not done so in this instance. The high cultivation, the mutual affection, the deep piety, all the peculiar characteristics of the Princes of Avis, are matters of history, and I have only found it impossible to do justice to them. The personal appearance of the three eldest, and the special line taken by all of them with regard to the cession of Ceuta, indeed the whole tragical story, I found ready to hand, the only imaginary incidents being the meeting of Enrique and Fernando at Arzella, and the presence of the two boy princes at the siege of Ceuta.

There is a life of the Constant Prince which was written by the priest to whom I have given the name of Father José, which I regret much not having been able to obtain, though the outline of the story of his imprisonment is, I believe, taken from it.

The details of the Treaty of Tangier are very obscure; but it appears that the Moorish king of Granada considered his African brethren as guilty of a breach of faith in detaining Fernando.

The English characters are of course wholly fictitious.

Lastly, Calderon in his play, "Il Principe Costante," and Archbishop Trench, in his beautiful poem of the "Steadfast Prince," represent Fernando as refusing to be ransomed by the cession of Ceuta. This refusal he had neither the power nor the right to make. His real nobleness lay in his willing acceptance of the suffering brought on him by the decision of others.

C.R. Coleridge.

Hanwell Rectory,—

December 2, 1878.

Chapter One.

Foreshadowings.

"The child is father of the man."

In a small marble-paved court belonging to the newly-built palace of King Joao the First of Portugal, on a splendid summer day in the year 1415, five youths were engaged in earnest consultation. The summer air, the luscious scent of the orange-trees beneath which they were seated, might have inclined them to mere lazy enjoyment of their young existence—the busy sounds from the tilt-yard near have summoned them to the sports and exercises for which their graceful, well-grown strength evidently fitted them, or the books, several of which were scattered on the marble steps of the court, have employed their attention. But they were evidently so deeply interested by the subject in hand as to have no thoughts to spare for anything else—a fact the more remarkable as they were not engaged in a dispute, but were discussing something on which they were evidently all agreed, and which they regarded as of the highest importance.

"When our great uncle, Edward the Black Prince, won his spurs," said the eldest, a tall, dark-haired young man, with

a singularly considerate and intelligent countenance, "it was at Crecy by hard fighting. *He* did something to deserve knighthood. His father let him win the field for himself. 'Is my son unhorsed,' he said, 'or mortally wounded? Nay, then let him win his spurs.' And see how he won them!"

"And *he* was only sixteen!" said the second brother, who resembled the first speaker, but had a more fiery and vivacious expression.

"Ay, Pedro, we have waited too long for our chance; it suits not with our honour."

"Oh," broke in the fourth boy vehemently, "why cannot the King find some pretext for war? If Castile or Arragon would but insult us! But my father says he cannot engage in an unjust war merely to knight his sons. 'Tis very unlucky."

"Nay," said the eldest brother, "I cannot blame him. He must consider the country's good."

"Ah!" said Pedro, "there always *were* wars and deeds of arms in those good old days. But these are dull times; it is not worth while living in the world now. Everything is for policy and justice; no one acts for pure glory and knight-errantry."

"That is a stupid thing to say," said the third brother, who had not hitherto spoken, a youth with broad, thoughtful brows and large grey eyes. "We do not know what one half of the world is like; there is quite enough to do in finding out."

"Enrique is for ever wondering about countries beyond seas," said Pedro. "Are Duarte and he and I to seek knighthood by sailing away to look for savages—the saints know where?"

"We have not yet killed *nearly* all the infidels," said the youngest brother of all, rather dreamily.

"There are no Crusades now, Fernando," said Duarte; "and to my thinking absent sovereigns make ill-governed kingdoms."

"And are there no Infidels except in Palestine?" cried the little Fernando, springing to his feet. "I would sooner earn *my* knighthood by destroying the villains who steal children and imprison noble knights than by fighting with brave gentlemen like ourselves. I would sooner be Godfrey de Bouillon than our uncle Edward. Let us go and take Tangiers or Ceuta at the sword's point; then can we be knighted with honour, and the blessed Cross—" Here the child's excitement fairly overcame him, tears filled his eyes, and he hid his face behind Enrique.

"There is much in the child's words," said Duarte. "Weep not, Fernando, if I go to fight the infidel, thou shalt be my page. Come, Pedro and Enrique, walk this way with me." And the three elders strolled away together, leaving their juniors to speculate on their subject of conversation.

These five brothers, afterwards perhaps among the most brilliant, and certainly among the most virtuous, princes who ever adorned a royal house, were the sons of Joao the First of Portugal, the founder of the house of Avis, so called from the order of knighthood of which he was grand-master. He succeeded to the throne of Portugal rather by election than by inheritance, and after a period of disturbance and trouble; but his great qualities raised the little kingdom to quite a new place among nations, and in Philippa of Lancaster, the daughter of John of Gaunt by his first wife, he met with a Queen fully worthy of him. The interest which John of Gaunt's second marriage gave him in the affairs of Castile made an alliance in the Peninsula desirable to him; but Philippa was free from the distracting claims to the Castilian succession of her young half-sister Catherine, and involved her husband in no quarrels. It may well be a source of pride to the English reader to remember that her sons were of Plantagenet blood, for they inherited all the virtues and few of the faults of that noble and generous race.

Perhaps the profound peace which made it so difficult to these young princes to signalise their knighthood by any deed of arms worthy of their name may seem more to King Joao's credit in modern eyes than in those of his sons; but it was not strange that young men, all with talents and aims far above the average in any age, rank, or country, should wish to make a reality of that which was perhaps on the verge of becoming a splendid form, and burning with the truest spirit of chivalry, should, as many have done since, sigh for times when it was easier to express it. They were all as highly educated as was possible to the times in which they lived, and Edward, or Duarte, as he was called by the Portuguese form of his English name, was a considerable scholar; but war was still the calling of a prince and a gentleman, and they felt hardly used in being debarred from it. King Joao, however, was of so enlightened or so degenerate a spirit that he refused to plunge his kingdom into war solely for the purpose of knighting his sons. Hence the foregoing discussion.

The three elder brothers walked up and down under the shade of the orange-trees—tall and stately youths, with serious faces, and minds set on the subject in hand. Duarte walked in the middle, and seemed to be weighing the arguments addressed to him by Enrique; his more rounded outlines, and a certain tender gentleness of expression in his dark eyes, gave him the air of being younger than Pedro, whose colouring was darker and his face sterner and more impetuous. He was sometimes arrogant and hasty; but no one ever heard a sharp word from the just and gentle Duarte, whose mental power and high scholarship seemed but to add to his unselfish consideration. The tallest of the three was Enrique, in whose great size and strength and fair skin the English mother loved to trace the characteristics of the Plantagenets. He talked with intense eagerness, and his great dark eyes were full of ardour, but of the dreaminess accompanying ardour for an unseen object. The two younger boys had meanwhile remained sitting on the steps, ostensibly learning their lessons from a very crabbed-looking Latin manuscript spread out between them. Joao was a fine dark-eyed boy of fourteen, with an exceedingly acute and intelligent countenance. Fernando was two years younger, and though tall for his age, was slender and fragile. He had the flaxen hair and brilliant fairness of his mother's race, but the large blue eyes had the same dreamy intensity that marked Enrique's, with a sweetness all their own. These two were kindred spirits beyond the bond that united all the five, and never failed

them through the long lives spent in toil and self-denial.

Enrique having parted from the two elder ones came up to the steps, and Fernando looked up at him eagerly, while Joao jumped up, announcing that he knew his lesson, and should go and play.

"But I do not know mine," said Fernando, disconsolately.

Enrique sat down on the step, and drawing the child up to his side, began to translate the Latin for him into French, in which language the Portuguese court, in imitation of the English one, usually conversed. Fernando was so delicate that the strict and severe system under which they were all educated was sometimes relaxed in his favour. He was, however, an apt pupil, and presently Enrique closed the book.

"There, now you can go and play."

"No," said Fernando, pressing up to his brother. "Tell me, have you been talking about the knighthood?"

"Yes," said Enrique; "we are resolved that if we have to wait for ever, we will not make a pretence of that which should be so great a thing. Not the year of tournaments shall tempt us."

"When I am knighted," said Fernando, "I will go and fight the Moors in Africa, and destroy the castles where they make good Christians to toil as slaves. Would it not be joy to open the prisons and set them free?"

"Ay," said Enrique, looking straight out of his wide-opened eyes as if he saw far away. "Then, too, should we see what lies behind—behind Tangiers and Ceuta, beyond the sands. There might we spread the Cross."

"And there maybe are the two-headed giants and the dragons like the one Saint George of England killed; and magic castles, and fiery pits, the very entrance of hell. You used to say so."

"Ah, maybe," said Enrique, smiling. "Anyway there is the wide earth, the world that we do not know."

"Then you do not think all the countries are discovered yet?" looking up in his face.

"Nay, surely not," said Enrique, with gathering eagerness. "There," pointing to the sparkling bay before them, "does that go on for ever, and for ever. Well is the Atlantic called the Sea of Darkness, blue and bright as it may be! But the lost path to the Indies, where is it? Where is that island the Englishman saw in mid-ocean? Where, where?" Enrique paused, his face one unanswered question. "Some day I will know."

"But in the meantime," said Fernando, "the enemies of the Blessed Saviour are here close by, killing and destroying good Christians?"

"Well," said Enrique, coming out of the clouds, "we will deal first with them, sooner maybe than you think for! But there are more ways than one of subduing the world for Christ. You can win your knighthood in Barbary by and by, while I look for the fiery dragons beyond."

He pulled a roughly-drawn map towards him, and began to study it.

"Ah, but not all alone," said Fernando, vehemently; "the fiery dragons might kill you, and I could not fight the infidels by myself."

"Not yet," said Enrique, soothingly, "you have to grow strong first."

He stretched himself out, leaning on his elbow, and knitting his brows in absorbed study of the map before him. Fernando sat leaning against him in silence. His brothers were all tender and good to him; but Enrique was the best-loved of them all, and the idea that these eagerly-desired adventures involved a parting had never been realised by him before. Presently he raised himself, and sat a little apart, looking before him with a face that, with all its fair tinting and delicate outline, set into lines of remarkable force and firmness.

"Enrique," he said, presently.

"Well?"

"I *will* go without you to fight the infidel if there is no other way. For we are soldiers of the Cross, and our Blessed Lord is our Captain, and He would be with me. But oh! dear Enrique, I will pray every day that He will send you too."

"Now, then, mother will be angry," said Enrique, as the excitable boy broke into a passion of tears.

"Did she not say you should not talk of infidels, or Christians either, if it made you cry? I feel sure our uncle Edward did not cry at the thought of the French."

"I am not afraid; it is not that I am afraid," sobbed Fernando, indignantly.

"No, no! I know. See, Fernando, I promise I will go with you when you win your spurs. Hush, now, it is almost supper-time. Shall I take you to mother first?"

"No," said Fernando, recovering himself. "I will not cry."

"Come then," said Enrique, pulling his long limbs up from their lounging attitude, and holding out his hand. "Come and see the English mastiffs, and some day, maybe, I will tell you a secret."

Chapter Two.

The Deed of Arms.

"I know, Sir King,
All that belongs to knighthood, and I love."

The supper was over, and King Joao was seeking for some relaxation from the cares of state in the society of his wife and children. He and his fair English Queen would then sit in their private room, and the five sons would give an account of their studies, exercises, and amusements during the day, or sometimes practise speaking English with their mother, or receive from her good advice or tender encouragement. The King and Queen sat on chairs, the princes stood respectfully near them, when, after a silence, Duarte suddenly advanced and spoke.

"Sire, I and my brothers have a proposal to make to your grace."

"Say on. I am ready to hear you, though I do not promise to find wisdom in the proposals of your rash youth," said Dom Joao, while the fair-haired mother smiled encouragement.

"Sire, it has pleased you to regard without displeasure our wish not to receive the sacred order of knighthood without some deed of arms that should render us worthy of it; and I, and at least my brother Pedro, have waited till the usual age is past, in the hope that some fortunate quarrel would give your highness the power to grant our request."

"My son," said King Joao, "I cannot risk the interests of my subjects for your desire of fame. A knight has other duties—to guard the oppressed, to defend the weak, is indeed the calling of princes; but not always at the point of the sword."

Duarte bowed submissively; but, after a pause, he continued—

"Yet there is one enemy with whom we cannot be said to be either at war or at peace, since there cannot be honourable peace with the enemies of Christ. Yet Christian nations suffer nests of pirates to dwell undisturbed opposite our very coasts. Our soldiers, our ships, and innocent children are not safe from the Moors of Africa. When they swoop down on our shores, it is death or—apostasy for Christian men, and for our maidens slavery and imprisonment. The very key of their fastnesses is Ceuta. Could we but take that fortress at the point of the sword, it would be a deed worthy of Christian princes, of use to your grace's subjects, and honourable in the eyes of Europe."

Dom Joao looked at his son as if somewhat surprised, to hear so reasonable and well-considered a proposal. His authority was absolute over his five young sons, and though he could not but be satisfied with their progress and development, he had not expected from any of them an independent opinion.

"Since when have you thought of this expedition?" he said.

"It was suggested to me, sire, by some words of Fernando's," said Duarte; and Fernando, who had listened with breathless interest, sprang forward, and with more freedom than Duarte had ventured to use, exclaimed—

"Oh, dear father, it is the greatest desire of us all!"

"It would be fitter for you and Joao to pursue your studies at home," said the King. "Nevertheless, I will consider of this proposal."

The five lads did not shout, as perhaps nature would have inclined them to do, they bowed, and stood silent till their father withdrew, when there was a sudden relaxation of their attitude of respectful attention, and they surrounded their mother, pressing up to her, kissing her hand, and demanding if they had not at last found the right thing to do.

Philippa was a tall, fair woman, with a beautiful Plantagenet face, and an expression at once simple and noble, a fit mother of heroes.

"My fair sons," she said, "it is a noble purpose, an object worthy of Christian swords. It is good that you should win your knighthood by fighting for Holy Church, rather than for your own vain-glory. If your father thinks this attempt wise, it will be well, if not—"

"If not," said Dom Duarte, "I will not consent to the year of tournaments my father proposed for us. It is a mockery, a pretence—I hate false seeming."

"You do well, my son," said the English mother; "yet the tournaments might show you fit for real warfare."

"That might be very well for the younger ones," said Pedro.

"I am taller than you," said Enrique, indignantly.

"You said I should be your page, and I will not stay at home," said Fernando.

"Hush, my boys; do not dispute," said the Queen. "Remember, the true glory is in doing our duty. If every prince and gentleman went out to war, who would punish evil-doers and succour the distressed at home! Your father, who is the wisest man alive, knows that; and Edward must remember it when his time comes. For you younger ones it will be different. The blessed saints guide you to seek the right, and to be worthy of your forefathers."

To whatever degree of cultivation and even of virtue the Mohammedan kingdoms had attained among themselves, and whatever injury to learning may have been caused afterwards to mediaeval Christendom by their violent

expulsion from the Peninsula, the Moors of Africa were and must have been simply an embodiment of evil. The organised system of piracy which they maintained rendered life and property totally unsafe all along the Mediterranean. A regular system of ransom was in vogue, and where the friends of an unfortunate captive were unable to satisfy their demands, neither rank, nor age, nor calling, was any protection; and noble knights and aged priests were chained to the oars of their galleys, or toiled among the sands of Africa, while their fate remained a mystery to their friends at home—whether death, prolonged suffering, or far worse, apostasy had been their portion. Martyr or renegade, it was an awful choice, to be placed once for all before many an honest, ignorant squire or knight; but “captive among the Moors” was written in many a pedigree of Southern Europe, in some few even of distant countries. More still returned, impoverished by their ransom, to tell of their frightful sufferings; while, most terrible thought of all, girls and children disappeared now and again—to what fate? Every Christian sovereign and gentleman felt the ransom to be a disgraceful black-mail demanded of them, which yet they knew not how to refuse! There is nothing in the modern world that is quite analogous to the situation.

The Moors were the enemies of life and property, like the brigands of our own time, only infinitely more powerful, and as such were feared and hated. They were also, of course, as now, unbelievers, outside the pale of the Church; their conversion was a subject of prayer; they were, or might have been, the objects of missionary labour. But the Moors of the Middle Ages were something more than this. They were not only ignorant of Christ; they were the hereditary enemies of Christendom: not merely of Spain, of Portugal, or of France, nor exactly of the Church Catholic, as we should understand it, but of that sort of visible, territorial embodiment of it for which, in old romance, the Seven Champions fought and which Arthur and his Knights laboured to spread, and the defence of which made honour as well as religion a spur to every Crusader. Therefore it was not only as national and personal enemies, or as blinded heathens, that the knights of Europe regarded the Turks and Moors, but as the powerful foes of Christ’s kingdom on earth, embodied in Christian nations; so that national honour and religious fervour worked together, and glory alike for earth and for Heaven was won in attacking the Crescent with the Cross. It was not only very sad for a Christian man to see the unbeliever triumph, it was very disgraceful also.

Alas! if *all* the evil in the world could have been so embodied!—if Christendom had had no foes in its own household!—the fight between good and evil would indeed have been simplified, though not dispensed with. It was very clear to an old Christian champion that it was his duty to fight with evil; to do so with a pure heart and unwavering spirit was just as hard then as now. Our heroes lived in the dawn of a new day: when other duties were rising into view, other talents coming to be consecrated, but when the old visible symbolical struggle was still in full force. For faith, for knowledge, for good government, for the honour of Christendom, for the old and the new, they all fought and toiled—and one died.

Chapter Three.

The Three Swords.

“Oh, mother! mother! can this be true?”

Many months passed before the crude suggestion of the young Infantes was worked by the King and his ministers into a practicable form; and it is not necessary here to enter into all the considerations of policy and prudence that were involved. In spite of many feints and pretences hardly worthy of so liberal a prince as Dom Joao, the Moorish sovereign became aware of his intentions, and sent offers of splendid presents to the Queen for her young daughter, if she would intercede with her husband and preserve peace.

“My daughter,” said Queen Philippa, “has jewels enough of her own. I know not your customs; but with us, wives do not interfere with their husbands’ business.”

So, after much discussion to and fro, the fleets were prepared, the army gathered together, and the King determined to take the command of the expedition. Still, the foremost places were to be given to his three sons, who would thus have every opportunity of earning worthily their long-deferred knighthood.

Joao and Fernando were too young for any such hopes, and, to their great disappointment, were forbidden to take any part in the expedition at all, but were to remain at home with their mother. Joao consoled himself with planning future feats of marvellous bravery; but Fernando, who had relied on Duarte’s promise, was pronounced naughty and rebellious, and received double tasks, because he would not submit patiently to his father’s decision. His conscience was very tender, and he learnt the hard lessons diligently, and repented of his fault, while he pondered over the tales of boy-martyrs and child-crusaders, which, though held up to his admiration, it seemed so impossible, and even so wrong, to imitate. It was much harder simply to do as he was told; but Fernando did his best, and practised patience.

The time was drawing near for the expedition to start, when one morning the little boy was sitting by himself in a room in the palace of Lisbon which was devoted to the studies of the young princes. Fernando sat on a bench by the great oak table, employed in what a boy would now call “doing his sums”—that is to say, he was working out, in the cumbrous method of the time, a somewhat abstruse mathematical problem. There was no ornament to the bare wall, but a great crucifix over the high fireplace; the window was high up in the wall, offering no temptation to wandering eyes; and the only spot of colour in the room was the crimson dress and long fair hair of the little prince as he bent over his task. Fernando shared in some degree the strong mathematical turn of his elder brothers, and did not find his work uninteresting, though it strained his boyish powers to the utmost. His brothers were engaged in preparations for war, and his mother and sister Isabel were at a place called Saccavem with the chief part of the court. The little boys had been left behind with their tutors.

Suddenly the door was flung open, and Enrique, dusty and travel-stained, and with a face pale as death, came in. Fernando sprang up with a cry of joy, but his brother’s look silenced him. Enrique took him into his arms and sat

down on the bench.

"I have come to fetch you, Fernando," he said, huskily. "Be a brave boy; do not cry. You and Joao must come to mother, for she is ill at Saccavem, and—and—I must take you to her."

Fernando was more frightened by his brother's look of anguish than by his words, which were too new and strange to be more than half comprehended, and there was little time for the indulgence of grief. Enrique hurried their preparations, and soon the two boys were riding beside him, with but a few followers, hardly realising, in the haste of their journey, what awaited them at the end of it.

For the good Queen Philippa was dying, and the children must lose her motherly care—her encouragement of all their efforts after goodness and learning. High aims and kindly ways she had alike set before them; by her own example she had taught them the severest self-denial in the midst of the state necessary for the support of their rank: and the old chronicles tell—us that her five sons owed to her tender training much of the deep religious feeling, the loyalty to their father and to each other, the strong mutual affection and the remarkable virtue, that afterwards distinguished them. "She constantly talked with them of their duties towards their father and to the state," and, spite of the stiff and ceremonious manners of the times, they loved her tenderly, and showed their love; and for her dear sake, her English habits, opinions, and language became dear to her husband and children, and largely influenced the development of her adopted country.

She lay on her death-bed in the palace of Saccavem. Her ladies stood weeping round, her confessor was by her side, the low chanting of the priests who had been praying for her departing soul had ceased for the time, and before receiving the last Sacraments of the Church she had desired to take leave of all her children.

Joao and Fernando, as they entered awe-struck into the dim chamber, were clasped and held back by their sobbing sister, who knelt at some distance from the high daïs on which the Queen's bed was placed. She lay raised high on her pillows, and on the silken coverlet beside her were three swords, their jewelled scabbards catching here and there the light of the lamp.

The King sat near her, his head resting on his hand, his elder sons standing behind his chair, and at the further end of the long room several people were kneeling, sadly watching the dying Queen—her English squires, and other members of her household, to whom she had been the most faithful of friends. All was silent, save for the sounds of weeping that could not be repressed.

"My sons, come hither," suddenly said the Queen; and the five brothers came slowly forward and stood beside her, Fernando following the rest in a sort of trance of awe and bewilderment.

"My sons!" said Philippa, in a clear and audible voice, "you all know well that my blessing goes with you in your undertaking."

"Alas, dear wife?" said the King, weeping, "it will be long before your sons or I have heart for any such enterprise."

"Not so," said the Queen, heartily; "you will sail, I doubt not, on Saint James's Day, and the fair wind I feel in my face from the casement will fill your sails and blow you to victory."

The King could not answer; but he felt as if Saint James's Day might come and go before he could take the field, in his great grief.

"My sons!" again said Philippa, "it has pleased me well that you have so earnestly desired to earn your spurs by real service, and especially against the enemies of Holy Church; for pretences and empty forms are unworthy of princes. Therefore, I have caused to be made these swords, which ye will draw, I trust, in many a good fight in a good cause, and never against your sovereign or each other. Duarte, the time will come when you must use this sword in defence of your subjects; see that you rule them with justice, and make their happiness your highest good. And, my son, be kind to your brothers, to Isabel, and to Fernando; he is weakly and young—"

"Always, dear mother, so help me God and the Holy Saints," said Duarte, kneeling and kissing her hand.

"Pedro, you are brave and strong; let it be ever your part to do a knight's duty, in defending the weak and helpless,—fight for the oppressed. And Enrique, our soldiers love you, as my good father and uncle were loved; look ever to their welfare, nor ever regard them as churls and their deaths of no account."

"Oh, mother, mother, give us swords too!" cried Joao, pressing forward as his brothers faintly promised all that was asked of them.

"Alas! my little boys," said the mother, for the first time faltering, "I have no swords for you. I had thought to keep you with me longer. Alas! what will become of you! Love God, and serve Him. What better can I say?"

Then gentle Duarte drew first Joao and then Fernando up to the bed-side for their mother's kiss. Joao sobbed aloud; but Fernando remembered how his mother had blamed him for his tears, and shed none; while in his childish heart was the thought that he too would one day be worthy of a good knight's sword.

Then the Queen commended her daughter to the King's care, and bid him choose a good husband for her, that her lot might be happy, as her mother's had been before her; and then she grew worse, and her speech failed her; and Joao and Fernando were sent away into another room.

The fair wind of which the Queen had spoken blew into their faces as the two boys, so soon to be motherless, crouched up in the window and looked out at the sunset, feeling less wretched so than in the dark. It was not long before they heard a movement, and sounds of weeping and lamenting; but no one came near them, and they were

afraid to stir.

“Let us say our prayers,” suggested Fernando: and they knelt down in the fading light; but it seemed an endless time before Enrique came in to them.

“Have you been here alone?” he said. “Ah, there is no one now to care for us. Our mother is dead.”

Enrique’s voice was stifled with grief; but Joao flung himself up against him, Fernando laid his head on his shoulder; both feeling their worst misery softened by the mere presence of their kind, strong brother.

Chapter Four.

Perils and Dangers.

“He sails in dreams
Between the setting stars and finds new day.”

The Queen’s dying words were fulfilled. The fair wind she had promised sprang up in time, and on Saint James’s Day, 1414, such a fleet as had never been known in Portugal before set sail from the Bay of Lagos. The Portuguese ministers had wished to delay the expedition till the days of public mourning were over, but Dom Joao and his sons knew better what Philippa would have wished them to do, and did not wait an hour after their preparations were complete. Fifty-nine galleys, thirty-three tall ships of war, and 120 transports carried 50,000 sailors and seamen on board; while several English ships had volunteered to join in an expedition that promised so much glory, and was in so good a cause. For the Pope had granted them a bull of Crusade, making the war a holy one, and the blessing of the Church had been invoked on their arms by a series of solemn services, immediately following on the ceremonies of the Queen’s funeral; and no doubt the grief which they were enduring with all its chastening influences, deprived the young Infantes of none of their crusading spirit; but caused them rather to strive more earnestly to be worthy in their inmost souls of that knighthood which they hoped to win at the sword’s point. All had done their utmost to further the preparation; but Enrique had shown so much skill in the arrangements as to win for himself a foremost place in making them. After all, the younger brothers were not left behind. Dona Isabel had been left in the charge of the abbess of a great Lisbon convent; and it was at first proposed to leave the boys at Lisbon with their tutors. But Enrique and Duarte had pleaded for them, the latter urging that Joao was really old enough for the duties of a page, and strong enough not to suffer from hardship, and Enrique promising to take care of Fernando. He might stay on board ship when they neared the enemy’s quarters, and the change would rouse him from his grief. A little rough living would be much less hurtful to him than the misery of solitude and separation.

The sun was setting clear and bright over a sea of purple blue. A light wind stirred the gay banners and devices which floated from the mastheads, an unceasing source of admiration to the Portuguese sailors, for they had been introduced in imitation of the more northern nations, and were hitherto unknown in the Peninsula. The invention and embroidery of these banners had been for a long time a favourite employment of Queen Philippa’s court. Dom Enrique’s ship was one of the largest, and all on board was well ordered, and ready for action. “*Talent de bien faire*” was inscribed on his crimson flag, and “The desire to do well,” as the old French is said to signify, inspired him in small things as well as great.

The evening hour was a time of leisure, and on the deck of the vessel a group of young gentlemen were lounging about telling stories, prophesying success, and indulging in speculations as to what Ceuta would be like when they got there, while Enrique, at a little distance in his deep mourning dress, was sitting on a bench, his chin resting on his hand, and his great eyes gazing out towards the horizon, as if longing to see to the very world’s end. Fernando, who was more sociably inclined, was listening with great interest to a description of the interior of a Moorish city, given by a lively young Englishman, named Northberry, who belonged to Dom Enrique’s household, and who insisted forcibly that the Moors were in the habit of feasting on their Christian prisoners, arrayed in silks and cloth of gold, in palaces ornamented with untold splendour. Other poor slaves were forced to serve, sometimes to share the horrible banquet, and were driven to it with blows and curses.

Poor Fernando grew pale with horror, and Dom José de Alemquer, a knight of some renown, and brother to the Portuguese Prime Minister, remarked grimly—

“And with whom, Señor, have you conversed who has partaken of this extraordinary feast?”

“’Tis commonly believed in England, I understand, sir,” said Northberry. “What matter, since we are about to punish the miscreants?”

“When you are served up, may I be there to see!” muttered Dom José. “We shall find our work out for us; it were better to prepare for it in a pious spirit.”

“Prepare! we shall prepare,” shouted another young man, enthusiastically. “We are ready to wade through rivers of blood, and tear down the accursed Crescent if we leave not one infidel found alive in Ceuta.”

“If we fall ourselves, it is a sure path to heaven,” said another.

“That depends, so said the Bishop, on whether we have a true crusading spirit,” remarked a third.

“By Saint George!” said Northberry, “I’ll strike a good blow, crusade or no crusade; and God defend the right!”

“We are sure of success in such a cause!” cried the first speaker.

"But the crusaders were sometimes defeated," said Fernando.

"Ah, my lord, doubtless they had not the true spirit," said Northberry, with something of earnestness, carried off by the apparent sneer.

Fernando moved away towards his brother, and, pulling his sleeve to attract his attention, repeated some of the foregoing conversation.

"Did Enrique think it possible that they might be defeated?"

"Surely," said Enrique, "it is possible, if it were God's will, but," he added, colouring with enthusiasm, "I think, we are so well prepared, it is not likely."

"But could it be God's will that the infidels should triumph?"

"Why, yes," said Enrique; "you do not think what you say. It is His will that we should offer ourselves to his service; but it is not always His will to give us the victory. Else there would have been no martyrdoms. But yet," he continued, with the grave ardour peculiar to him, "there is a blessing on zeal and self-devotion. I, for one, would risk the result!"

Fernando looked satisfied, and then demanded if Enrique thought that the Moors were really man-eaters.

No; Enrique did not think so. They were very cruel and treacherous; kept no faith with Christians; but they were not, so far as he understood, savages. In fact, he hardly thought that they would treat prisoners of distinction otherwise than well.

"What else?" he added, smiling, as Fernando still looked thoughtful.

"It would be better to convert them than to kill them," said the boy, earnestly.

"That is what I hope for," returned Enrique. "Their crimes have deserved a just punishment; but Ceuta once in our hands, we can there show them what Christian life and Christian worship really is; and from thence I hope to send out missionaries to the lands beyond, where all is darkness. The good Franciscans will be willing to go, and who knows into what strange worlds they may penetrate?"

"I don't think," said Fernando, "that your gentlemen here think of converting them."

"Perhaps not. It is the part of princes to show themselves of a more enlightened spirit than other men. We must take heed that no needless cruelty stain our arms, and especially that in our own lives we show what it is to be Christians."

"Even a prisoner might do that, if he were very patient," said Fernando.

"Yes, like the holy martyrs. See, Fernando, I think there is no object worth living for, but that of winning men to the service of our Lord by conquest, by preaching, by the discovery of distant lands. I long to make myself worthy of it!"

Fernando's young heart thrilled within him, and he longed ardently for the day when he too should be old and strong enough to fight for the holy Cross. For he did not quite follow all that Enrique said, and the storming of Ceuta was, as was natural, much the distinctest image in his mind.

The sun sank below the horizon, the purple headland of Turo came into view, one by one the stars came out in the deep clear sky; while at the prow of each vessel was hung a great lantern, so that in the gathering darkness the fleet seemed almost as if composed of ships of fire. Enrique threw himself back on the bench, and lay looking up at the sky. The study of the heavens was familiar to him, and the movements of the stars, both as a means of guiding mariners and as in themselves wonderful, were a favourite source of contemplation both to himself and to his elder brothers. They were indeed among the first to find the true science more interesting than the false one, and in their study of astronomy deliberately to lay astrology on one side. He was pointing out to Fernando the different constellations that were visible, when suddenly, as they gazed upward, the dark still heaven flashed into lurid light, and the peaceful silence was broken by a loud shout of alarm. The great lantern of their own ship had caught fire.

"Back! back! Stand still," shouted Enrique, springing to his feet, and, in a moment, he rushed forward, climbed on to the high prow of the ship, and clinging on with one hand, with the other he detached the burning lantern, and flung it into the sea. Another moment and the ship must have been on fire: as it was, the wind caught a piece of flaming framework and wafted it on to the deck at Fernando's feet. He caught it up—it was too large to trample out, or he thought so—he could not push through the crowd that had rushed to the sides of the vessel, and he held out the burning mass at arm's length, unflinchingly, till Northberry, turning, snatched it out of his hand, and succeeded in throwing it into the water. At the same moment Enrique sprang down upon the deck, giving orders, and, allaying the excitement, desiring torches to be lit, and calling on all to give thanks to God for the saving of their lives.

Morning and evening a solemn service of prayer and praise arose from the whole fleet, and now on board the ship of *Good Hope*, as Dom Enrique had named his vessel, the sense of recent danger quickened every heart to thanksgiving.

Messages came from the King and from the other Infantes, to know what had caused the sudden extinction of Dom Enrique's lantern, and in the answering of these no one thought of Fernando till Enrique missed him, and, hastily looking for him, found him on the bench where they had been sitting, half fainting with the pain of his burnt fingers.

"I did not think of it at first," he said; "and then if I am a soldier I must bear pain."

Enrique could not understand how he had been hurt; and when he heard the story, declared that Fernando's courage had saved the ship, and then turned on Northberry with one of his rare outbursts of anger. Could he not see that Dom Fernando was burnt when he took the flaming wood from him!

Enrique was habitually gentle; but there was an intensity in his displeasure when it was once roused, which was not easily forgotten.

"I hid my hand behind me; it did not hurt me *much*," said Fernando, who was reviving. "Señor Northberry could not see."

"Dom Fernando is as true a soldier as yourself, my lord," said Northberry.

"I know it," returned Enrique; but he said no more, only anxiously watching while one of his chaplains, Father José, who, like most priests, was something of a surgeon, bound up the injured hand, saying that it was after all but a trifle.

He would hardly, for the rest of the voyage, let Fernando out of his sight; though the boy, exceedingly anxious to prove that he was able to bear such trifling casualties of war, resolutely concealed all the ill-effects which the adventure caused to his delicate constitution.

Chapter Five.

The Siege of Ceuta.

"Upon them with the lance!"

The Christian host approached the pillars of Hercules amid violent storm and tempest. Separated from each other, and scattered far and wide in the darkness of the night, there were hours when they feared that all their preparations had been in vain, when they dreaded the morning light that would reveal to them the gaps in their numbers. But the winds sank, and the sun rose, and the dispersed vessels drew together again, after but little damage, and the King prepared to superintend the landing of the troops. He did not then know what would have greatly encouraged him, that Zala-ben-Zala, the Governor of Ceuta, trusting too much to the effects of the tempest, had allowed the 5,000 allies whom he had collected to return home, thinking the danger over.

Joao and Fernando were ordered to remain and watch the assault from a vessel, moored at a safe distance from the shore, behind the rest of the fleet; in which were also safely stored all the Church vessels and furniture, which it was hoped might be used in the conquered city, but which must not in the event of a defeat, be allowed to fall into the hands of the Infidels. Here, too, many of the priests and chaplains, after saying mass in the different vessels, retired to watch the event, and here, all day long, the voice of prayer went up for the success of the Christian arms.

The two little boys were taken, before daybreak, on board their father's ship that he might bid them farewell, and here they saw all their three brothers ready armed for the attack, full of joy at the thought that the long-wished-for moment had at last come when they were to prove themselves worthy of knighthood. All looked grave, collected, and resolute, and the boys caught the tone of their elders, and bore themselves as like soldiers as they could.

"If we were *only* going too!" whispered Joao, as they went down again into their boat.

"We will one day," returned Fernando; but as he glanced up at the ship, he saw Enrique looking down at him with the light of the dawn on his shining helmet and clear, solemn eyes. Fernando thought that Enrique would look like that in heaven, and for the first time it occurred to him how likely it was that his brothers would be killed in the attack, and he felt that Ceuta might be dearly won. That was a strange day on board the young princes' ship. They heard, and could dimly see, the attack on the town of Ceuta, led by the Infantes Duarte and Enrique, and directed by their father from a small boat near the shore. They heard the shouting, the noise of the cannon, the rush, and the hurly-burly, behind the constant chanting kept up all day by the waiting priests, who bade the young princes pray for their father, since they could not otherwise aid him. The sea was now perfectly calm, the ships, lately so busy, almost deserted, save this one, where high on the deck an altar had been raised, and the solemn chant went up through all the conflict of hope and fear.

At last they became aware that the Infantes had entered the town, at least there was no retreat. The long, hot afternoon wore on, when, suddenly from every soldier in reserve, from every sailor in charge of the fleet, there rose a mighty shout; for, on the walls of Ceuta, there appeared the banner of the Cross. The town was taken. Over the fortress above the Crescent still drooped as if in despair.

Joao shouted and danced, and threw himself about in an ecstasy of triumph. Fernando felt half stifled; he could not speak. Presently a boat put off from the shore, and was rowed rapidly towards their vessel.

"What news; what news?" shouted Joao, pressing before captain and chaplains, and nearly throwing himself overboard in his eagerness.

"Good news, my lord," said the young squire, as he came up the side of the ship. "The town is taken, the fortress is yielding to the attack. The King, your father, bids me summon you and my lord Dom Fernando to his presence, as he is now in a place of safety, and would that you should see how towns are won."

"And the Infantes?" said Fernando as he prepared eagerly to obey the summons.

"They have shown courage worthy of their name, in particular my lord Dom Enrique, to whom, in great part, this happy result is owing."

The young princes were taken by a strong guard through the half-conquered city, for on the outskirts the battle still continued, or rather the Portuguese soldiers were still engaged in completing their conquest. The wonderful architecture, with its splendid colouring of red, blue, and gold all blazing in the hot light of an August sun against a sapphire sky, astounded the Portuguese princes, in whose native country the Moors had left no trace. All along the streets as they passed lay the bodies of the slain, Christian and Infidel side by side, while here and there frightful groans were uttered. Most of the inhabitants had fled or hidden themselves; but by chance a face scowled at the new-comers from the windows, and once they passed a group of dark-skinned, strangely-attired children, who were uttering in their unknown language griefs which needed no interpretation.

"We will make them Christians," thought Fernando, as he shrank a little from the terrible sights around him, through all the thrill of triumph.

They were taken to a mosque in the middle of the town, where their father, in full armour, was seated, receiving reports and giving orders to his different captains. Duarte was standing behind his father's chair; he looked grave and troubled. The King made a sign to the boys to wait while he listened to Dom Pedro, who was speaking to him.

"And so, sire, we fear my brother must have been surrounded, and his retreat cut off. Duarte and I have endeavoured to show ourselves worthy to be your sons, but Enrique—"

Pedro paused, and Duarte added with a faltering voice, "It was he who forced a way into the town and beat back the enemy. If we have lost him, would the victory were a defeat?"

The King's face was pale as when he had stood by the death-bed of his beloved wife, but he answered firmly, "My sons, this is the fortune of war. If my son Dom Enrique has fallen, he has fallen as becomes a Christian prince. Weep not for him, but see that we make sure of that which we have gained, and to-morrow shall the traces of the accursed worship be removed from this mosque. And in a Christian temple will I give you the knighthood you have so nobly won. And for my son Enrique there is a martyr's crown."

Many and many a time had Fernando, in daydreams and fancies, pictured to himself the fall of Ceuta. He had seen his brothers triumphant in the fresh honours of their knighthood, had heard the Infidel city proclaimed the property of Christ and of His Church, seen the Cross raised and the Crescent cast down. And now these things had come to pass, and for him, instead of joy and triumph, were grief and sorrow of heart. Ceuta was Christian, but Enrique was dead! This was the cost of the victory!

Probably, if the alarm had arisen earlier, the boys would not have been sent for into the city; but now their father welcomed them with the same stern self-control, and bid them listen to the orders he gave, and hear of their brothers' prowess. Nothing would ordinarily have pleased them better; and the excitement and novelty prevented Joao from realising their loss. Fernando stood still, pale and silent, till the ever-kind Duarte, in a pause of the arrangements, beckoned him up to his side and put his arm round him, and Fernando knew by the grasp of Duarte's hand that he was quite as unhappy as himself. How long this lasted Fernando could not tell; he felt as if it was a whole day since he came into the city, but it could not have been much more than an hour, for the sun had not yet gone down, when there was a great shouting among the soldiers who were guarding the mosque without, the door was flung back, and Enrique, alive and unhurt, came hurriedly in and dropped on his knees before his father.

"My father, I grieve to have alarmed you, but I and my troop were surrounded in a mosque at the farther end of the town, and had much ado to cut our way out. We have now crushed the last efforts at resistance; the town is ours by the grace and mercy of God, we can offer what terms we will."

There was no drawback now to the joy of victory. The King and his sons embraced Enrique, and presently a messenger was sent to demand the surrender of the fortress where Zala-ben-Zala with the remnant of his troops had taken refuge, and, after some delay, terms for its delivery on the next morning were agreed upon. The inhabitants of Ceuta were to be offered the choice of leaving the city or of submitting to the Christian rule. The mosques were to be turned into Christian churches, a Bishop to be appointed, and every effort made to induce the people to adopt the faith of their conquerors, which faith the Portuguese princes were too high-minded and far-seeing to discredit by permitting cruelty, plunder, or rapine to their troops, as was too often done in like circumstances.

So all was quiet and orderly when the sun went down, and the King retired to rest in a house near the central mosque, taking his two younger sons with him, while the other princes occupied themselves in the disposal of the troops.

Chapter Six.

The Captured City.

"Where bells make Catholic the trembling air."

Royal prince though he was, Fernando had never slept under such embroidered coverlets, nor seen such hangings of gold and silver, such carving and fretwork, as met his waking eyes in the dawn of the new day. The horseshoe arch of the window framed a piece of deep blue sky, against which a gilded dome, surmounted by a crescent, glittered in the morning sun.

Fernando sat upright and devoutly crossed himself, with a thrill of joy, as he thought how soon that symbol of evil would give place to the golden cross brought with them so carefully from Lisbon for the purpose. Presently he became aware that Enrique, still fully dressed but with the heavier parts of his armour removed, was lying asleep near the window, his long limbs extended on a coverlet of pink and silver, as if he had thrown himself down, wearied

with his day of fighting. As Fernando looked round the room he heard an extraordinary chattering and screaming, a noise quite unknown to him, and, not having any confidence in the character of his surroundings, he began to feel frightened. What powers of evil might not lurk amid those unnatural splendours! Joao was in the next room, and Enrique slept through the increasing clatter, which actually sounded like spoken words in an unknown tongue; and yes, a peal of horrible mocking laughter apparently just over his head.

Fernando could bear it no longer. He jumped up and seized his brother's arm.

"Enrique—Enrique, wake up! I think the foul fiend is in this room?"

"Fernando, hark! there is some Moorish devilry here!" and Joao, looking quite pale with alarm, peeped out of the inside chamber, then fled to Enrique as a refuge. The latter awoke, considerably surprised to feel his little brothers pulling at each arm, and as they had considered it their duty, as soldiers in war-time, to go to bed in their clothes, with their long hair rumped and their dress disordered, they presented rather a startling aspect.

"What ails you both?" cried Enrique.

"Enrique, listen! it is certainly the devil."

Enrique sat up and looked round, and presently began to laugh heartily himself. "There are your foul fiends," he said, pointing to some carving over the window, where were perched two huge green and scarlet birds with hooked bills, the like of which the boys had never seen before.

"Are they birds?" said Joao, slowly.

"Yes, they are parrots," said Enrique. "Once, when I went to the Court of Castile, I saw such a one that the King of Granada had sent as a present to my aunt Catalina. Moreover I have read of them in the writings of the ancients. They were sent formerly from Africa to Rome, and these are doubtless favourites of the ladies of this house. For I suspect we are in the ladies' chamber."

"But it is wonderful—they laugh," said Joao.

"Ay, and speak, though not in our tongue. There are wonderful things in the world that we know not of."

"Well," said Joao, "since no one can tell *what* there may be in these Infidel places, I came to take care of Fernando."

"Indeed," said Enrique; "I thought you woke me to take care of you. However 'tis small blame to you to have been puzzled."

Joao, not finding an answer ready, applied himself to trying to catch the parrots, and pursued them on to the balcony, while Enrique looked thoughtfully and curiously round the strange scene which he had entered in the dark two or three hours before. Presently he looked at Fernando, and smiled.

"So," he said, "Ceuta, praise be to God, is ours, fortress and all, for Zala-ben-Zala fled in the night, and before I came here Duarte and Pedro were there in command. It was your words, Fernando, that set us on this track."

Fernando blushed deeply. "Enrique," he said, "I am not a good Christian, and I shall never be like the holy martyrs."

"Why not!" said Enrique. "I do not wonder that the chattering parrot frightened you."

"No; but I thought I would do anything in the world to win Ceuta to be a Christian city, and the day our mother was buried, while we knelt in the abbey at Batalha, I made a vow that I would give up my life to convert the Infidel, to win the world back to holy Church."

"I think," said Enrique, "that you are too young to make vows save with your confessor's permission, or what holy Church ordains for you."

"That is what Father José said, when I told him what I had done. He bade me prepare myself by prayer and obedience for whatever life God might send me. But I did make the vow, Enrique, and I shall keep it. I thought—and this is what I want to tell you—that it would be quite easy, for I thought I cared more about it than about anything in the world."

"Well," said Enrique, as Fernando paused, faltering, but with his great ardent eyes fixed on his brother, "surely it is not now in the hour of triumph that you change your mind?"

"No; but dear Enrique, when I thought you dead, I did not care at all about Ceuta: I would have given it back to save you! Was that wrong?"

How little Enrique thought, as he listened with tender indulgence to his little brother's troubled conscience, with what awful force that question would one day ring in his own ears. Now he put it aside.

"If we were fighting side by side, Fernando, we should not hold each other back; but if it were easy to imitate the holy martyrs, they would the less have deserved their crowns. If we would seek any object earnestly, we must count the cost. But it was ill-managed that you should have had such an alarm. Never heed it. I am safe, and Ceuta *is* ours, and *will* be a Christian city soon. And now I must go to make all due arrangements; for we must confess our sins and prepare ourselves for the knighthood that is to come at last."

Fernando looked after him with admiring envy, as he pictured to himself a future day, when he and Joao should head such another expedition, and be themselves the heroes of it. But all vain-glorious thoughts received a rebuke when

he heard Duarte and Pedro petition their father, that since Enrique had certainly distinguished himself the most in the attack, he might receive the honour of knighthood *first*, before his elder brothers.

The King replied that he owed so much to his son Enrique, that he was willing to grant this request; but Enrique refused, saying that the rights of seniority should be respected; he would rather be knighted in his turn after his brothers.

So the next morning beheld a wonderful and glorious sight. Over the fortress of Ceuta hung the Portuguese colours; instead of the Crescent on the great mosque was to be seen a golden Cross. Within all traces of the Mohammedan ritual had been swept away, an altar which, with all its furniture, had been brought from Lisbon, was erected, and instead of the turbans and the bare feet of the Mussulman worshippers were the clanking spurs and uncovered heads of the Christians; while, most wonderful of all, the sweet peal of Catholic bells for the first time woke the echoes of the Moorish city. (A fact.) For the conquerors had actually discovered, stowed away in the mosque, a peal of imprisoned bells, doubtless carried off from some sea-side church by the pirates of Ceuta.

Then after high Mass had been duly performed, with all the ceremony possible under the circumstances, one by one, Duarte, Pedro, and Enrique stepped forward, and were knighted by their father before the altar of the new Christian church. Nobly had their desire been fulfilled; they had proved their courage, and in a noble cause.

All this time bands of Moorish people were pouring unmolested out of the gates of the city, great numbers choosing rather to go than to stay; and in the darkness, when the gates were closed, they came back and beat wildly against them with outcries of anguish and despair.

"Oh, why will not they stay and become Christians?" cried Fernando, bursting into tears, as he listened to their lamentations.

"That is not to be expected," said Enrique; "but now we have drawn their fangs for them. More than half their detestable privateers sailed from this port. It is in our hands, and we can penetrate into the unknown world beyond, and from hence send out missionaries among the people. That is what I mean to do."

"All is not gained by the taking of Ceuta," said Fernando, dreamily.

"No," returned Enrique, "we cannot gain in a day objects which need the devotion of our lives."

Chapter Seven.

The Twin Sisters.

"Against injustice, fraud, or wrong,
His blood beat high, his hand waxed strong."

Twelve or thirteen years after the taking of Ceuta a little group was assembled in the central court of a handsome house in Lisbon. This open space was indeed the summer sitting-room of the family; the sleeping apartments and the great entrance hall opened into it. Large orange, citron, and pomegranate-trees, were ranged round the marble pavement, and filled the air with their fragrance, while in the centre was a little fountain falling into a carved basin. An awning was pulled across the top to exclude the sun, and a few seats and coaches were arranged round the fountain. On one of these sat a tall man in the prime of life dressed in deep mourning. Several women, one prepared for a journey, were standing near, and also a couple of men-servants. In front of the gentleman, hand-in-hand stood two little girls of seven or eight years old. They were dressed in black, with little black hoods tied over their light-brown hair, which hang down in long curls beneath; they had fair, rosy faces and large grey eyes, out of which they were staring with an expression of alarmed solemnity. Poor little things! They were as merry-hearted a pair as ever made home cheerful, by chatter and laughter and pattering feet; but life looked very serious to them then, for they were about to be sent away from home, their mother's recent death having left them with no efficient female protector.

The gay young Walter Northberry, who had been attached to Dom Enrique's suite at the time of the taking of Ceuta, had some time after married Mistress Eleanor Norbury, a lady whose father, like his own, had followed Queen Philippa from England; and on her death he had resolved on sending her little twin daughters to be educated by his English relations. His own habits were not such as made it easy for him to bring up his little girls at home, and he was jealous enough of their nationality not to wish to send them to any of the Lisbon convents, where all their training must have been Portuguese. So having received affectionate offers from his brother, who represented the old family in England, the little maidens were to be sent under fitting escort to Northberry Manor House, in Devonshire. Communications were frequent between the two countries, and there was no difficulty in arranging for their journey.

"Well, Kate and Nell," the father said, "it's a hard matter to part with you after all, my pretty blossoms. Be good maids, and obey your aunt, and soon, maybe, I'll come and see you, and my father's country too."

"We want to stay at home," said Nell, with a pout, and with a tone of decision.

"Father, keep us?" said Kate more softly, with her big eyes full.

"No, no, my pretty ones," said Walter Northberry, wiping his own eyes; "'tis a fine place you are going to see; come along."

He held out his arms, and the two little black-frocked things sprang into them, clinging round his neck and crying.

"Come—come. Is the litter ready, else I shall be too late to get you aboard Dom Manuel's ship? But hark! who comes? 'Tis my lord the Infante himself."

Sir Walter set down his daughters, who retreated, hand-in-hand, under a great orange-tree; while their father rose and went to the door, as he heard horses stopping without. In a few moments he returned, accompanied by a tall, slender young man, dressed in black velvet, with a red cross on his breast. Fernando of Avis, as he was called, since, like his father, he was Grand-Master of the Order of Avis, had led, during the twelve years since the taking of Ceuta, neither an idle nor a useless life, but his boyish ambition was still unsatisfied; he had struck no blow against the Infidel power, led no armies to battle, and won no triumphs. His health had always been so delicate, and he was subject to such long attacks of illness, that it was only at intervals that he could indulge in his taste for military towards which, however, his natural impulse was so strong that he had no inconsiderable skill in riding, fencing, and tilting. The delicate Fernando was more essentially a soldier than any of his powerful brothers; he longed with a more ardent desire for knightly glory—a longing hitherto perforce suppressed; but it was for glory to be won by that chivalrous self sacrifice which formed the ideal of the Middle Ages, however seldom it was put in practice. And Fernando's dreams were of personal distinction only in one cause—the cause of the Church; he had therefore gladly accepted the control of one of these military orders which, somewhat similar in character to the Knights Templar, were so common in Spain and Portugal. The vows of these orders pledged their members to the most perfect devotion and purity of life. They did not always preclude marriage; and where celibacy was their rule, dispensations were obtainable, as in the case of King Joao himself; and their great revenues formed an ample provision for princes of the blood, and were applied by Dom Enrique—who was head of the Order of Christ; Dom Joao, who was Master of that of Saint James; and by Dom Fernando himself—to many useful and charitable ends.

Fernando was thus pledged to the life of a soldier-saint. He could not be a soldier, and with the discontent of his ambitious and ardent nature he daily felt himself still less of a saint. But those who watched his deep religious fervour, his constant self-denials, and his untiring patience, thought differently; still more those who felt his kindly charity and his unflinching sweetness of temper and warmth of heart. He still possessed the fair colouring regular features of his English cousins, but his blue Plantagenet eyes had a softened, wistfulness as of unsatisfied desires.

He had always shown marked friendship to Sir Walter Northberry, and was fond of the little twin maidens, to whom he would bring toys and comforts.

"You are better, I trust, my lord, as I see you abroad," said Northberry.

"Thanks, Sir Walter—yes, I am better, and I came to bring a parting gift to the children. Here, Mistress Eleanor and Mistress Kate—are not those the English titles?—come here and choose."

He held out two little jewelled copies of the cross of his order as he spoke, and the little girls approached him, well pleased; but Eleanor said—

"We are Leonor and Catalina. I will not kiss any one who calls me Eleanor."

"Fie, little one!" said her father; "it would become you better to ask my lord for his blessing on your journey."

"If I could help it I would not go," said Leonor; while the gentler Catalina was silent, and softly stroked the fur trimming of Fernando's mantle.

"See, now," he said, coaxingly, "my brother Dom Pedro has been in this terrible England, and he liked it well. Why, the little King Harry is my cousin, and he has made my brother Knight of the Order of the Garter. We have all cousins in England." Leonor appeared somewhat consoled.

"And besides, do you not know," said the Prince more gravely, "that wherever God may send us, He will be with us—ay, in a desert or a dungeon? Then surely in a strange country, where He will send you kind friends."

Catalina looked at him with eyes of deep earnestness. Nell said frankly, "My lord Dom Pedro has come safe home again."

"Yes, little one, and soon we shall see his marriage with Doña Blanca of Urgel. My brother Dom Pedro has been a great traveller. He tells us wonderful things. You, my little maidens, will see some of them."

By this cheerful view of the subject, Eleanor—or, as her mother had loved to call her by an English name soft enough for Portuguese lips, Nella—and Catalina were lifted into their litter in much better spirits than might have been expected, and, accompanied by their nurse and by two stout soldiers belonging to Northberry's household, were put on board the ship bound for England; while their father, thus set free from fears for their welfare, turned his attention to the military matters in which he excelled.

It was the eve of the Duke of Coimbra's wedding to Doña Blanca of Urgel, and once again the five princes were gathered in the little marble court under the orange-trees, as when, long ago, they had discussed the question of how their knighthood might best be won. Well and fully had they all answered that question; and long as had been the separations which the work of life had made between them, the bond that united the eager lads was no way loosened between the grown men who had held so staunchly to the high aims of their boyhood.

Fernando was resting on some cushions placed on the broad shallow steps, and close by him sat Enrique. Long ago Fernando had learnt that his life could not be passed side by side with this most dear brother, but the intervals that they passed together were his happiest hours, much as he owed to the more constant and as tender companionship of Duarte, whose duties kept him more continually in Lisbon. But Duarte only tried to make life easy to Fernando, regarding him as one to be shielded from every vexation. Enrique alone of all the brothers sympathised with his longing for the struggle of active work. Joao had grown into a stern, resolute person, of great courage and decision of

character; but Pedro, as he looked at his brothers almost with a stranger's eye, thought that none of them equalled the majestic dignity of Enrique's grave, ardent countenance, and great strength and size. Pedro was himself a very splendid figure, the gay attire proper to a bridegroom elect contrasting with the grave semi-religious habits of the three grand-masters. Enrique and Joao had come to Lisbon for the wedding, and this was the first meeting of the five.

"And among all these adventures and these foreign scenes, brother," said Duarte, "what has struck you most with admiration? What is there to be learnt for the good of our country?"

"Much," said Dom Pedro, "that I hope to tell my father at leisure. And, Enrique, in the great naval cities of Venice and Genoa, I saw much that I hope may be applied for the good of your sailors. But I saw no one who, to my mind, equalled our cousin King Harry, now alas! taken from his kingdom: God rest his soul! I felt that he was of our kin, for he had our blessed mother's face, whom I think Fernando favours most of us all. And a king more beloved was never lost to his people; nor a more winning friend and kinsman."

"It is indeed grievous," said Duarte, "to think of two great kingdoms—France and England—left thus to a helpless child."

"If our cousin had lived to fulfil his purpose of proclaiming a general crusade, we might have seen great results," said Enrique.

"The conquest of France stood in his path," said Joao.

"Ah," said Fernando, "that was a glorious purpose—for all the princes of Europe to lay aside their selfish quarrels, and purified by one great aim, to unite in winning back the Holy Sepulchre! Where would then be room for ambition and intrigue?"

"In former crusades there was a good share of both. You are a dreamer, Fernando," said Joao.

"Nay," said Enrique, "Fernando is right. There is no purification like a high purpose; but we must pursue it in the teeth of intrigue and ambition; it will not sweep them away."

"True, for they spring from the selfish desires of the heart," said Pedro, rather sententiously.

"We are not all free," said Duarte thoughtfully, "to devote our lives to *one* aim, be it ever so high: for our duties are many. And so it was, I suppose, with our cousin King Harry."

"Nay, the golden lilies had a tempting flash," said Joao, laughing.

"Well, and I will not say, having seen much of good and ill government, that to pacify the unhappy kingdom of France was not as good an aim as any. But how is it with your purposes, Enrique? I half feared to find you bound for some savage island in the midst of the sea of darkness."

"No," said Enrique; "but there is light in the darkness now. Come with me to Sagres so soon as our fair bride can spare you, and see the observatory I have built—the calculations that I have made. This is a much wider world than our fathers thought, Pedro, and one day there shall be known Christian lands which the Mussulman has never polluted; and where the simple natives will know no faith but that of Christ."

"There are other dreamers here besides Fernando," said Pedro, with a smile.

"No," cried Enrique, eagerly; "it is no dream. I will show you grapes grown in our new found island, such as Spain cannot beat, and the inhabitants listen willingly to Christian teaching. If I can but perfect our compasses and other instruments, we can penetrate the sea still further—already have we reached the African coast—and then a Christian kingdom behind Barbary and Morocco, and Christian lands to the far west. Look you, Pedro," and Enrique sprang up and came over to him, laying both hands on Pedro's shoulders, and looking in his face, "your mathematics were used to be more perfect than mine. You must come to Sagres and help me."

"Willingly," said Pedro; "you shall explain your problems to me."

"I owe much to Duarte," said Enrique, "in such matters; and he has studied so thoroughly the courses of the heavens, and can so well judge of fair or foul weather, he should have been a sailor born. Then I purpose to bring some of my natives hither, that they may return to their own country good Christians and civilised men. They trust my sailors as if they were messengers from Heaven. See what a power it is for good. Whole islands—nay, Pedro, I sometimes think whole continents, may owe to us their salvation."

So spoke the great Enrique of Avis, in the young days of the modern world, he who was at once a great soldier and a devoted son of the Church, the priestly knight of the Middle Ages, who helped the new learning many miles on her way, to whom astronomy and physical science began to open their treasures; while in his breast burnt the same fire of adventure, the same longing for discovery, that in our day has penetrated Arctic seas and African deserts, fulfilling the command to replenish the earth and subdue it. But, prince though he was, Enrique met with scant sympathy beyond the limits of his family, in designs which the world had not yet learnt to understand. And little did he dream of how much misery Christian men would bring to those unknown lands, after which his heart hungered; or that his earnest desire to bring his islanders to a sight of the blessings of Christianity should be quoted as a precedent and justification for all the horrors of the slave trade.

Pedro had enough of the same power to understand his efforts, and he was beginning a sympathetic reply, when one of Fernando's attendants came towards them telling him that Sir Walter Northberry desired to speak with him.

"Ask him to come hither," said Fernando; and even as he spoke, Northberry, with a pale and disturbed countenance,

came hurriedly towards the brothers.

“Alas! my lord!” he said, with a hasty reverence, “I have the worst of ill news. I am a miserable man. The ship in which my little daughters sailed has been attacked by Moorish pirates. There was a vessel bound from France to Lisbon came to the rescue, and beat them off; but oh, the saints pity us! the cursed villains carried with them my little Kate. Woe’s me that ever I let them go.”

Northberry covered his face with his hands, unable to repress his despairing grief; while the princes pressed round him, full of sympathy and indignation.

Fernando took his hand, and drew him to a seat, saying eagerly—

“Everything is at your command. What can be done? Have you any due?”

“Surely,” said Duarte, “a sufficient ransom will open the prison gates.”

“Horrible degradation!” cried Enrique and Fernando in a breath.

“As to that, my good lords,” said Northberry, “I care not for degradation, if I can but get my poor little maid back. Better tempest and shipwreck. But this French vessel that brought me the news said that the attack was made at night by a superior force, and that they were gone in the morning beyond pursuit. So Dom Manuel sent the wretched news back, and sailed as fast as might be for England, lest Nella should share her sister’s fate. Alas! alas!”

“And *this!*” cried Fernando, with flashing eyes, “*this* is what we suffer on our shores—we! princes, knights, Christians—shame—shame upon us! Better spend the last coin in our treasury—shed the last drop of our blood—better die among nations, lose all—everything—than have it so! What! we hold our kingdom undisturbed by a false peace with friends such as these! Let it go, but let us drive them from Portuguese waters—from Christian soil. I will endure it no longer; I will do it single-handed.”

Fernando stood with lifted hand and face on fire, long suppressed passion giving startling effect to his words; but suddenly his face paled and he dropped back on his seat.

“I—I can do nothing,” he said, in a voice of inexpressible melancholy.

Enrique leaned over him, and put his arm round him, as if he had been still the little brother, whose excitement he had soothed so often in early years.

“Everything in our power shall be done, good Sir Walter,” said Duarte, earnestly.

“Indeed, my lord, I doubt it not,” said Northberry. “I am sorry so to grieve Dom Fernando.”

Fernando looked up.

“Duarte, I meant to reproach no one,” he said, humbly. “My friend, I can do little for you, or any one, but pray; I will go and do that.”

“My lord,” said Sir Walter, kissing his hand, “such prayers as yours must be answered.”

Fernando shook his head sadly. He blamed himself for the outburst of feeling which had seemed to reproach his brothers for failing in a duty which he could not even attempt, and for long hours that night he knelt in his private chapel, and prayed that at whatever cost to himself the power of the Moor might be lessened and the little captive restored unharmed to her friends.

Fernando often pursued his devotions at risk to his own health, the care of which did not present itself to him as a duty in the way it would now to an equally conscientious person; and perhaps, had his austerities been fewer, he would have been better able to follow the wish of his heart. But he followed the light given him, and his prayers in due time bore fruit. But not immediately; no tidings of Katharine Northberry came to Lisbon; the sorrow narrowed itself to one sore spot in her father’s heart, while a long and dangerous attack of illness for Fernando followed close on Dom Pedro’s wedding.

Enrique put aside his pressing schemes to stay with him and to nurse him, and as he grew better to understand the deep desire of Fernando’s heart, he resolved that before every other object he would devote himself to carry it out.

Chapter Eight.

Two Lives.

“And like a double cherry—seeming parted.”

The clear light of an English spring evening was shining down on the grey walls of the convent of Saint Mary, streaming through the golden green of the neighbouring wood, showing the towers of Northberry Manor House through the trees, and sparkling on the blue strip of sea behind them. Far on either side stretched wood and forest, hitherto untouched by the hand of man, while from the pleasant fields cultivated round the convent and Manor House green glades and glens wound away into the forest, where the hunter might sound his horn, the outlaw take refuge, where wild game of all kinds still dwelt without chance of extinction, and where fairy rings were found on the grass, strange sights seen, and strange sounds heard beyond the chime of the church bells of Northberry. The lords of the

manor rode through the rough roads now and again on visits to their neighbours, or for assize meetings at the nearest town; the convent priests, who also served the little village church, went through the wood now and then at the summons of the Bishop; but the villagers who clustered round the convent and manor walls were afraid of the forest, and Eleanor Northberry had never passed through it since she had been brought there, six years before, a solitary and frightened child, pining for the little twin sister who had been torn from her side. She had been tenderly received and cherished by her cousins, and with their daughter Adela was placed at the convent, where she learnt to read and to sing, to sew and to embroider, going home occasionally to Northberry Manor, and growing so much into a part of the family, that Sir Edward Northberry contemplated finding a husband for her in due time among the gallant squires of Devon, and never sending her back again to the "foreign parts," which, spite of his connection with Lisbon, he regarded as peopled by a mixture of Frenchmen and Moors.

Within the convent precincts was a garden surrounded by high old walls, through one of which a gate led into the little burial-ground where the convent chapel stood. There was a sun-dial in the midst of the garden, on the step of which Eleanor—or as she loved better to be called, Nella—Northberry sat making wreaths from a great heap of white hawthorn on the grass beside her. The garden was neatly kept, with a plentiful supply of herbs useful for cooking or for medicine, and a few spring flowers, such as bluebells or lilies of the valley, and in the centre of the turf an apple-tree in full blossom; there were cherries and plums in plenty, with the fruit just setting among their green leaves. A large oblong pond full of fish lay across the bottom of the garden. The birds sang sweetly; a family of robin-redbreasts were making their first attempts at flying from the low branches of the apple-trees. There was a low sound of chanting from the chapel, where the nuns were practising the services for the approaching festival of Whitsuntide. All was full of peace and calm, brightened by the fresh and hopeful spring-time.

Nella finished her long white garland, and laid it at her feet. She clasped her hands on her knees, and watched the little snowy clouds as they came floating from behind the cherry-trees across the sky. She was very simply dressed in a grey frock cut square at her neck, and finished with a white frill; but she was a tall and beautiful girl, almost a woman in height, with her long brown hair drawn back from a broad fair brow, a frank and simple countenance, and eyes at once innocent and fearless. She was almost too much for the nuns sometimes, with her wild spirits and dauntless gaiety, delighting in woodland scrambles and hairbreadth escapes. But she was loving and loyal-hearted, and no rebel, though a little difficult of control.

Just now, however, the evening calm had stolen over her spirit, and she sat lost in thought, her memory, seldom active, going back to the days of her early childhood, as she glanced at the gold cross which she wore constantly round her neck.

Nella could not be said to have forgotten Catalina. She prayed for her morning and evening, and she knew that masses were constantly sung in the convent chapel for her deliverance; but the sorrow of her loss was regarded as too terrible for common speech. A cloud of horror hung over her memory, and Nella, whose simple, healthy nature easily adapted itself to new surroundings, rather shrank from the thought of her. Her father had never fulfilled his promise of coming to England; her nurse had been taken captive with Kate. She could vividly remember the night attack, when she had run out to see what was the matter, and found the others gone on her return, and carrying her thoughts back she could remember different trees and flowers, a house that seemed to her of wonderful splendour, a mother's kiss, her bluff father's voice, and, more clearly than anything else, the tall, pale young prince who had given her the jewel round her neck and bid her trust in God.

It must be remembered that though Nella's memory enabled her to recall orange-trees and pomegranates, strange dresses and customs, and the "Moors" as familiar objects of dread, she never met with any one who had ever seen an orange-tree, or done more than hear of a Moor as a sort of emissary of evil. She had nothing therefore but her own childish impressions to fall back upon, which were confused and blurred, and she invariably pictured Catalina as her own double, grown to the same height, wearing the same clothes, and thinking the same thoughts. But the image seemed as far removed from her as if she had been taught to regard Catalina as among the saints in Paradise. Nella was not imaginative; she did not realise strange conditions; a sort of reserve had always veiled even from her own thoughts the present condition of her twin sister. But her convent life was almost over, and the change in her own existence made her thoughtful.

"I am thirteen," she thought; "I have made my first communion, perhaps before many years I shall be married; but Catalina—"

Suddenly, for the first time, it came clearly before her mind that Catalina, if alive, could not be in the least like herself, could not be a Christian at all. Nella sprang to her feet and almost cried out as the thought stung her, and for the first time in her life she was seized with the intensest desire to know her sister's fate; she felt as if she must discover what had become of her, as if the uncertainty so long acquiesced in had become suddenly intolerable to her.

The chapel bell began to ring for vespers; one of the nuns came into the garden and called Nella. She took up her wreath and followed into the chapel, and as she knelt and prayed, the twin sister whom she could no longer picture to herself seemed to call to her out of terrible and unknown darkness.

In the convent chapel, among the oak-wood and the cherry-blossoms of an English spring, Eleanor Northberry laid her garlands on a holy shrine and listened to the chanting of the vesper service; while the light faded away over the peaceful garden, and the last reflection of the sunset died out from the long fish-pond, and the nuns were left to the peace and the stillness of night.

The sun also dropped down to rest over another small inclosure, far away in the warm south. Round the royal palace of Muley Hassan, King of Fez, were magnificent gardens, and on the side devoted to the women was one, the very gem of them all. A kind of cloister surrounded it, built with the utmost elaboration of Moorish art, horseshoe arches, fretwork of the most exquisite forms, blazing with gold and silver, and glowing with the gorgeousness of Oriental colour. Flowers of almost tropical variety and beauty were growing in profusion, and in the centre was a fountain in

which gold and silver fish were swimming. On the brink stood a young girl with a splendid wreath of crimson passion-flowers in her hand. She was dressed in a tunic of blue silk, wonderfully embroidered with coloured flowers, full white silk trousers were fastened round her ankles above her golden slippers; on her head was a rose-coloured turban, coquettishly set on the top of the long straight plait of hair that fell down her back. She seated herself on the rim of the fountain, and laying her flowers at her feet, listened to the distant sound of girlish voices laughing and chattering beyond the cloister, or to the noise of a number of parrots and other birds inclosed in a golden network at one corner of the garden.

The girl's face was fair, with fine outlines, large blue eyes of a peculiar wistful softness, and with an expression gentle, dreamy, and somewhat passive. This was Leila, a Christian slave, the pet and plaything of the ladies of Muley Hassan's harem; this was Katharine, Eleanor Northberry's lost sister.

Strangely enough there had been a sort of outward similarity between the lives that were essentially so different. Each sister had been brought up in seclusion in a household of women. Catalina, like Nella, learnt to embroider and to sing; she too lived among birds and flowers and pleasant places. She too was taught to be obedient, to submit to rules; and the gentle nature obeyed more perfectly, and carried cushions and sang little songs or gathered flowers for the princesses, more aptly than Nella learnt her tasks or steadied her dancing steps in Northberry convent. But the little slave had been treated as a favourite toy, and nothing had occurred to drive her thoughts beyond herself. She had at once been separated from her nurse and taken to the palace, and though she could have told, if asked, her real name and have understood probably her own language, years of soft living separated her from any reminder of her old life.

"Leila, Leila!" cried a clear voice.

Leila sprang up and ran to the garden-gate to meet a lady, of exquisite dark beauty, who came and sat down on a pile of silken cushions near the fountain. Leila took, at her signal, a golden casket from another little girl, and kneeling before her mistress, began to take out its contents and display them.

Mistress and maiden smiled with delight as rubies, diamonds, and emeralds came to view.

"My jewels are the best in the harem," said the Princess Zarah, proudly.

"Yes, lady," said Leila, "neither Zuleika nor Zoraya have half so many."

"There is a string of pearls for you," said Zarah. "Or, no—choose among these for yourself."

"What is that?" said the little slave suddenly, pointing to a small eight-pointed ornament with a ruby in the centre.

"That!" said the princess. "Why, child, that is yours already. It was tied round your neck when you were brought to me."

Leila took the cross in her hand, and gazed at it with a fixed, dreamy look.

"Nella had one too," she said suddenly. "Dom Fernando gave them to us."

"Who is that?" said Zarah, indolently.

Leila looked perplexed, tears filled her eyes, and, with a half-unconscious movement, she made the sign of the cross.

Zarah struck her hand sharply.

"Hold, child! that is wicked. Do that again and you shall be beaten."

"Are all Christians wicked?" said Leila, timidly.

"Of course, child—they are unbelievers."

"And Nella must be a Christian—I was once."

"There, do not fret. Here is a spray of emeralds, for you to put in your turban. You are happy enough, and spoiled, my little one. Religions do not matter so much for a woman, certainly not for a slave. Some day, when I can spare you, you shall marry a true Mussulman, who shall give you sweetmeats and jewels. You are very pretty—none of the other princesses have such a pretty slave."

Leila laid the jewels down, and, slipping away from her mistress' side, she leaned over the carved parapet of the ladies' garden, peeping through the trellis-work that divided it from the more public grounds of the palace. Down below, she saw four or five men, haggard, weary, and scantily clothed, dragging heavy loads of earth to form a bank on one side of the garden. Presently a Moor came up and struck one of them a sharp blow. He cowered under it for a moment, and then, as the striker turned away, his victim looked up to Heaven and made the sign of the Cross.

These poor sufferers were Leila's fellow-Christians. Tears filled her eyes; she longed to help them. But she was a slave, petted, soft, and self-indulgent, like a pet animal. She shrank away from the painful thought, and, going back to her mistress, tried to forget it in wreathing the passion-flowers round her hair.

Chapter Nine.

In Northberry Forest.

“The huge, broad-breasted old oak-tree.”

Northberry Manor house was a heavy, grey stone building, with a small court in the centre, and four little round towers at the corners. A moat surrounded it, crossed by a drawbridge, which, however, was rarely raised. England still felt the benefit of the strong government of Henry the Fifth, and all was at peace. The gates stood open, save at night; the servants and retainers stood idling about the court, and the great hunting-dogs sat in the sun and enjoyed life, one lovely morning in Whitsun week, as Nella Northberry, in all the delight of a holiday, came running out of the hall-door among them, calling them to her, and stroking and petting them with fearless affection.

“Oh, how much nicer this is than embroidery!” she cried, clapping her hands.

“And oh, how shocked Dame Agnes would be to hear you say so?” said a tall, slim lad, with a ruddy brown skin, bright hazel eyes, and an air of alert and cheerful activity.

“Ah, but, Harry, I have improved so much. See, this is my new green holiday kirtle, and I worked the border to it, I did indeed. Sister Katharine showed me the stitch.”

“It is a very fine kirtle, truly,” said the boy. “See, you have let Lion lay his paws all over the front of it.”

“It will brush, it is made of serge,” said Nella, blushing. “But now, Harry, I have something very serious to speak of. Where will you come and talk to me about it?”

“Let us come on to the tower battlements then,” said Harry, struck with the air of serious purpose that suddenly changed the girl’s laughing face.

Harry Hartsed also had relations in Portugal, and his father, a poor squire, lived not many miles from the manor. Sir Walter Northberry, after the fashion of the time, had taken him into his household that he might acquire the education of a gentleman, and he was now about seventeen, a fine, high-spirited boy, earnest and ambitious. He and Nella took their way on to the top of one of the little towers, from which they could see over miles of forest, in every variety of spring colouring.

Nella leaned against the battlement, the wind freshening her rosy cheeks and blowing her long hair about her shoulders. She fixed her eyes on Harry, and said—

“Now I am going to tell you a secret. I want you to help me, but I will never forgive you if you speak to any one else about it.”

“I always keep your secrets, Nella; you need not scold me beforehand,” said Harry.

“Well,” said Nella, too much in earnest to reply to his challenge, “it is about my—my sister.”

Her eyes fell, and she coloured deeply, with the awe of one approaching a mystery.

“Your sister! But you know nothing about her, Nella,” said Harry, tenderly and rather shyly.

“No; but I mean to find out. I began to think of her on Whitsun Eve, when I was making a garland for Our Lady. I want to know what has become of Catalina. I am sure she is alive.”

“But it is quite impossible that you can find out about her, Nell,” said Harry. “Either she is dead—God rest her soul!—or lost to you for ever.”

“I am going to ask the witch in the forest,” said Nella, coolly.

Harry started, and said in a tone of strong disapproval—

“I shall not help you to do that.”

“Then I shall go by myself.”

Harry was a straightforward youth, who disliked what he could not understand. There was something disgraceful as well as dreadful in a Moorish captivity. If the lost girl was a Mahometan slave, the less they knew of her the better; and as for the witch in the forest, in plain English he was very much afraid of her.

“I will not hear of such a thing, Nella,” he said. “It is very wicked to consult a witch who has sold her soul to the Evil One. Besides, how do you know what she might do to you! Now, do you think Father Anselm, or the Lady Abbess, or your aunt, or Sir Walter would consent to it?”

“No,” said Nella, “of course not. But I am sure that it is right to go. And I shall tell my beads all the way and wear my cross round my neck. She cannot harm my soul or my body while I have that. I will let her cut my hair off and give her my string of pearls if she wants them. And if you are afraid, I will go by myself.”

“Afraid! I am not afraid of the forest! But you ought not to deceive Dame Agnes and go in secret.”

“Very well,” said Nella. “And ought you to have got out at the little postern, and gone to Dunford Fair, when Sir Walter forbade you? Or away down on the rocks to get the sea-gull’s eggs, when he sent you to the Master Armourer at Newton? If you may play truant for pleasure, surely I may for a good purpose.”

Master Harry Hartsed, like many another, found his principles impeded by his practice, and, dropping the question of obedience, observed—

"You are a girl, which alters the question."

"Ask Father Anselm if a boy has any more right to be disobedient than a girl," retorted Nella.

"I shall not let you run into danger," said Harry, firmly.

"Then," said the girl, bursting into tears, "I shall be very unhappy, and I thought you loved me better. I'll never forgive you—never. And, oh dear, dear Harry, *do* help me—*do*! I don't want Walter Coplestone and Adela to know about it; but if you are so cruel, I—I think I must ask Walter. He would—"

Perhaps the fact that Nella was a girl *did* alter the question. Harry yielded, as he usually did, to her strong will and ready tongue, and said—

"Well, what do you want me to do?"

"To wait outside the postern to-morrow at the full of the moon. I can get out, but I can't get across the moat; so I want you to have your little boat ready, dear Harry. Then, I am not afraid of the forest; but I don't know the way to the blasted oak, and you do. So you must come, and wait there while I go and see the witch. You will, dear Harry!"

Harry was perfectly aware that Nella was going to do a thing that was both wrong and dangerous; but, alas for his good nature! he hated saying no, and more than one scrape that lay heavy on a tender conscience and truthful spirit had been caused by this weakness. Young as Nella was, she was so much of a woman for her years that he, whose thoughts had hardly yet strayed beyond his boyish round of duties and amusements, could not withstand either her coaxing or her contempt. He admired her more, though he hardly knew if he liked her so well as kind little Adela; but Nella was queen of Northberry Manor, and turned all the young people there round her finger.

Besides, he could not make her give up her plan save by betraying her secret, and he could not let her carry it out alone. In the depths of that untrodden forest, strange things were sometimes seen, and much stranger were imagined. Many a frightened woodman or swineherd had seen a werewolf dash aside into the impenetrable undergrowth, or in a sudden clearance had beheld a gnome or a demon grinning at him from between the trees, had heard the rush of the wild huntsman over his head in the autumn storms, and fled in terror from the haunted spot. No doubt it needed little to suggest these and the like phantoms; but it takes a long time for any race of animals to become extinct, and chance specimens of the wolf and the wild boar may have lingered in forest glades long after they were supposed to be exterminated. And wild men of the woods may have had a real existence in a state of society when maniacs were regarded with superstitious horror, and when these vast forests afforded a refuge for criminals and outlaws of every description.

To the boy and girl who by the light of the May moon penetrated the forest glades, they seemed to be peopled with fearful forms and more fearful possibilities. Moonlight and towering tree-trunks, thick undergrowths of hazel and elder, made strange combinations; and as at the sound of their footsteps great owls and woodpeckers started from their roosting-places and screeched and whirred round their heads, hares and foxes rushed through the grass and brambles, and the wind stirred and echoed through the tree-tops, they shuddered, and Nella felt that she had hardly counted the cost of the undertaking. The path was tolerably plain to them; it was a horse track, and led through the forest down to the shore, and they pursued it for about a mile, in almost entire silence, and then turned aside to the right into a narrower one, which shortly led them, to what was always called the blasted oak. This was a great withered tree, which stood alone in the centre of a clearing, without a leaf or a twig to break the forlorn aspect of its wide-stretching arms now glimmering white in the moonlight.

"Now," said Nella, "we must sound a hunting horn, and some one will show us the way to the witch."

Harry took hold of the horn that was slung round his neck; to sound it required a considerable effort; but he was ashamed to hesitate in Nella's presence, and putting it to his lips, blew a blast much fainter than that with which he was accustomed to summon the dogs on a hunting morning. It seemed to them as if the whole forest rang with the sound, as if it echoed away through glade and thicket till it must rouse Northberry Manor itself, nay, as if it might call the whole country to arms.

Nella shrank up to Harry and they both stood trembling and terrified. No one answered their summons.

"The witch will not come, Nella," said Harry in, it must be confessed, a tone of relief.

"Then we must blow again," said Nella; but, as she spoke, they saw running in the grass in front of them a little white rabbit. Instead of starting from them it ran up to Nella's feet, and then away from her for a short distance, then back again. "Is that the witch?" she whispered. "Must I follow that? I will cross myself first." As the rabbit retained its form and showed no alarm at the holy sign, Nella, summoning all her courage, quitted Harry's hand—as no two people could, it was supposed, approach the witch together—and followed the little creature, which now turned and ran back into the wood. Nella, child as she was, was of the stuff that makes heroes. She conquered her terrors, and clasping her cross tight, she followed the mysterious summons. It did not occur to her that the animal was pulled by a string attached to its neck. It did not lead her very far, for she soon found herself in front of a low hut, under the door of which the rabbit disappeared. Nella tapped timidly, the door was flung back, and she stepped into a tiny room, very full of smoke, since the chimney consisted only of a hole in the roof. Neither in that respect nor in any other did it differ from the huts of the peasantry round, except that a torch was stuck into a wooden stand of peculiar shape in the centre. The roof was so low that the tall Nella could have touched it with her hand, and on the floor under the torch sat a very little woman, with black eyes, sharp features, and a red cloak over her head. She rose as Nella entered, and stood upright, even then hardly reaching to the girl's shoulder, and said a few words in a language which Nella recognised, though she did not quite understand. "I cannot speak Cornish," she said.

Perhaps the witch was not accustomed to visitors with their wits so much about them, though the old Cornish

language still crossed the border into Devon, and was not unknown there among the peasantry. Still, it added to the mystery of the witch's proceedings in the eyes of some of her visitors, and increased the confidence of those to whom it was familiar.

"And what do you want of me then, maiden?" she said in English.

"I am Eleanor Northberry; I want to know where my sister is who was stolen away by the Moors, and I will give you these pearls if you will tell me," said Nella, who had rehearsed her little speech. She looked at the witch as she spoke, in full confidence of receiving an answer, and with less fear than she had expected. Somehow, there was something very commonplace about the witch now that she had found her.

"You have asked a hard question, my lady," said the witch in a much more respectful tone. She knew her position too well to frighten the young lady of the Manor to death, aware that, though feared and tolerated, a little too much licence would bring the laws against witchcraft in full operation upon her. She turned her back on Nella, and mumbled and muttered a little to herself, and then facing round, said in a wheedling tone, "Sure, it's the face of the lovely young lady herself, I read in the stars. Wouldn't you like to hear what suitors you will have, my pretty lady—about the great lord across the sea?"

"No," said Nella, though a little reluctantly. "I want to hear about Catalina. For," she thought, "I shall not be able to pay her to tell me *too* much, and besides,"—Nella's thoughts here became hazy even to herself; but they were to the effect that she would not use this sinful means of information more than she could help.

"I see," said the witch, after a moment, "a maiden like this one before me!"

"Yes," said Nella, "we were both of an age, and alike exactly."

"Her eyes are blue, and her face is fair," looking at her visitor's. "Those around are—dark—dark."

"Yes—for the Moors are black," eagerly said Nella. "Oh, is she alive and happy?"

"The prisoners of the Moors live far away," said the witch. "One day shall there be a great ransom—and a great deliverance. Friends shall meet across the sea—a talisman will save the lost."

"Why, I come from across the sea," said Nella. "A talisman! would it be the cross that Prince Fernando gave us?"

"Ay, the fate of a prince is in the balance," said the witch, mysteriously.

"But shall I ever see my sister again?" urged Nella.

"Across the sea—across the sea," repeated the witch. "I can tell no more, my lady—no more."

"Then I think I had better go home," said Nella, hardly knowing whether she were impressed or disappointed, but a good deal less frightened than when she came in.

"Give me the pearls, and keep the secret of your visit, else will the talisman work for ill. But now go home, Mistress Nella, go home with Master Harry, and don't you be coming into the forest at night; 'tisn't fitting for young ladies like you, and will anger his honour, Sir Walter, sure enough."

The different tone in which these last words were spoken startled Nella, for the witch dropped all her mysterious solemnity, and spoke, with half-coaxing command, in a voice that sounded strangely familiar.

Perhaps she was afraid of losing the doles of bread that Dame Agnes Northberry dispensed in the courtyard of the Manor, and which old Bess, as she was called, came to claim without any one guessing at her identity with the witch of the forest, who was visited in darkness and mystery. The young lady of Northberry was a client with whom she was afraid to deal.

On the whole, Harry, standing without in the darkness, listening to the strange cries of bird and beast, and watching the awful shadows change and sway in the rising wind, had the hardest time of it. He had followed Nella almost to the door of the hut, and was unspeakably thankful when she ran out alive and unhurt and ready to hurry home as fast as possible.

She hardly spoke, till they were safe out of the forest shades and in the familiar home fields, and then Harry said, in a subdued tone, "Was it very terrible, Nell?"

"No—no," said Nella, with hesitation. "She said Catalina was across the sea, and had a talisman—the cross, you know—and that if I saw her it would be across the sea. But I was not much frightened,—and I don't think there was anything—wicked. There were no—demons." Nella sunk her voice a little, and spoke in a tone of slight disappointment mingled with relief.

"Well," said Harry, breaking the spell with a laugh, "for all she told you, you might as well have stayed at home, Nell."

"No, not when I had said I would go."

But they both thought it rather remarkable that the next morning Harry Hartsed received a letter from his relations at Lisbon, duly favoured by a ship bearing despatches to the court, inviting him to come to Portugal and try his fortunes "across the sea."

Chapter Ten.

His Heart's Desire.

"He greatly longed some land that now did feel
The yoke of misbelieving men once more
To his Redeemer's kingdom to restore."

Harry Hartsed arrived in Lisbon while the court was still in mourning for the death of the great and good King Joao the First. He bore various despatches to Sir Walter Northberry from his English cousins, and from his daughter; and was kindly received by his own distant cousin, Sir James Hartsed, and by him placed in the household of the Master of Avis, who showed him much kindness, and made many inquiries after his little favourite, Nella Northberry. There were enough English about the Court of Lisbon to prevent Harry from feeling lonely, and the life there was full of interest and energy. Not that Harry's disposition led him to emulate the Portuguese princes in their love of literature and science; but he did ardently desire to make as graceful a figure in the tilt-yard as Dom Fernando, and to be able to pick up a nut with the point of his lance when his horse was at full gallop, as cleverly as King Duarte himself. He succeeded beyond his hopes in these aims, growing from an uninformed country lad into an accomplished gentleman; and, moreover, in the atmosphere of earnest piety and strict performance of duty in which he found himself, he could not but perceive that something more than good horsemanship and skill in arms, or even in learning, went to the making of these splendid princes.

The years since the disappearance of Katharine Northberry had been full of changes. The marriage of Dom Pedro had been followed by that of Dom Duarte to Leonora of Aragon. The Princess Isabel had been given by her father to Philip the Good, Duke of Burgundy; and Dom Joao had also found a wife for himself. These various royal households added greatly to the gaiety of the court; and when the period of mourning for King Joao was over, it proved that the young Queen Leonora loved state and ceremony, and inaugurated many festivities. She was at this time very popular with the people, and every one rejoiced in the presence of a lady at the head of affairs.

Duarte, meanwhile, with an industry and talent equal to his father's, and with an even greater purity of action and intention, devoted himself to schemes for the good of his subjects, and by so doing made up for the loss of his father's great minister, Alvarez de Pereira, who had died a few months before the king, and who had long ago put into shape the young princes' plans for the tithing of Ceuta.

Dom Enrique had been but little at Lisbon, his great undertakings filled up his time, and he had of late joined the King of Aragon in a war with the Duke of Milan, during which he had been taken prisoner, to the great alarm and distress of his brothers; but he had soon regained his liberty, and now, at the end of 1435, was at the court.

Fernando's health had become somewhat less delicate, though it was still a check on his sharing in his brothers' exploits; but he led a very busy, useful, and devout life, managing the affairs of the Order of Avis, spending nearly all his private fortune in ransoming prisoners from the Moors, and in acts of charity or devotion. To the poor, wherever he went, he was a personal friend, and the young men of his household regarded him with enthusiastic admiration, marvelling at the combination of such saintly qualities with such a genuine love for all connected with military honour and personal prowess.

The people spoke of his almsgiving, his life of prayer and self-denial, his unflinching gentleness of word and deed, of the sufferings borne with such exemplary patience, and thought that he led the life of a saint on earth. And all this while the life that looked so holy and so peaceful, and was so pure from outward stain, was full of inward storm and struggle, of longings and ambitions, but imperfectly laid at the foot of the Cross. There was much yet to come before Fernando's victory was won.

One bright winter's day he was sitting in his private room in the palace. As Master of Avis, he possessed property and residences in more than one part of Portugal; but in Lisbon he still lived under his brother's roof, chiefly that Duarte might bestow on him, in his frequent illnesses, as much as possible of his scanty intervals of leisure. Besides, Fernando's tastes were simple, and he loved the surroundings of his boyhood. He had been occupied all the morning, after attending mass in the king's chapel, with the various affairs of his order, and with a consultation with the Archbishop of Lisbon, over the details of a new mission to be despatched to the coast of Africa, in the wake of some of Dom Enrique's recent discoveries, and now, wearied with so much exertion, was sitting by the hearth, on which burned a small wood fire.

It was a pleasant room enough, long and narrow, with a high carved and painted ceiling, and a great chimney-piece of white marble, carved with the dragon's heads that King Joao, in honour of his English Garter, introduced on every occasion, just as he taught his soldiers to shout Saint George.

Harry Hartsed and a young nephew and namesake of the great minister, Alvarez de Pereira, were sitting at the farther end of the room, and talking in a subdued voice, as they looked out between the mullions of the window over the palace garden.

After some discussion between themselves, Harry glanced at the prince, and, perceiving that he was doing nothing, crossed the room and ventured to address him.

"My Lord, Dom Alvarez and I were discussing a question. May I crave leave to ask your opinion on it?"

Fernando started from his reverie, and looked up with the expression in his eyes, half-wistful, half-eager, altogether unsatisfied, that contrasted so strangely with the kind bright smile with which he ever greeted a request.

"You are welcome to my opinion," he said, gaily; "but I know not if it will be of much value to *you*."

"My Lord, Alvarez here declares that his fate has been foretold by the stars, and that certain days in the year are unfavourable to him. That if he went into battle on those days he would assuredly be slain. That being so, it would be well to cast one's horoscope, and learn how to keep from such dangers."

"But," said Fernando, "if duty called Dom Alvarez to battle on these fateful days, he would but go in with a worse heart for thinking it sure that he would never come out again."

"I should do my duty, my lord, I trust," said Dom Diego Alvarez, who had followed Hartsed.

"Assuredly, señor; I did but speak to show you how little, to my thinking, knowledge of the future is a help to the present performance of duty. And you have, surely heard, since it is the common story, how a Jewish astrologer would have dissuaded the king, my brother, from receiving the homage of his subjects on the day appointed, declaring it to be an unfortunate one."

"But his grace was not influenced by a rascally Jew," said Harry.

"No," returned the prince; "against the opinions of his councillors he held to his first intention. The king and the dukes, my brothers, having deeply studied the courses of the stars, have found great wonders among them, for which they glorify God; but they do not read in them their own future."

"Well," remarked Harry, "I must say that little knowledge came by one attempt I know of, to read the future," and, in answer to the prince's question, he related his expedition to the forest with Nella.

"Alas, poor child," said Fernando, much moved, "it needs no witch to guess at her fate. Young Mistress Nella must have a brave heart."

"There's nothing, my lord," said Harry, "that I should enjoy more than a good blow at the Infidel, and there are many here that think with me. We listen to tales of the siege of Ceuta, and long for our turn."

"Ay?" said Fernando, thoughtfully. "It seems as if our prayers must be weak when we withhold ourselves. But who is coming?"

"It is the Duke of Viseo, my lord," said Alvarez.

"Then you may leave us," said Fernando, as Dom Enrique entered, and, after an affectionate greeting, sat down beside him.

"I think of soon returning to Sagres," he said; "my sailors will be looking for me. Since we have penetrated to the coast of Africa, I have more business than ever."

"I should like to go with you for a time to Sagres," said Fernando. "I could not make observations for you like Duarte, nor work out your mathematics like Pedro, but I long to see more of your doings there."

"It is so cold at Sagres," said Enrique; "the winds there are too bleak and rough for you; and yet it would be well for you to spend a few idle weeks."

"I am strong now," said Fernando hastily; "nothing will hurt me."

Enrique smiled and shook his head.

"Nothing ails me *now* but idleness," repeated Fernando, as he looked up at his brother with a sort of inquiry in his face.

Enrique was standing leaning his back against the high chimney corner, and now he turned his eyes on Fernando and said—

"Is that thought so fresh in your mind still?"

"Is it ever absent?" cried Fernando, rising in his eagerness. "Can I forget my childish vow, and the longing I have ever had so to devote myself? We have done much with Ceuta for a centre for the spread of the Cross. If Tangier were ours—" he paused, laying his hand on Enrique's shoulder. "See, my brother, I am strong enough now for a campaign. I should run no more risk than the rest of you. Is it not my turn? I am the only one of us all whose sword has never been drawn. Am I fit to be head of the Order of Avis? Does such home-staying become my father's son? Must I be the only one to do nothing for the honour of Portugal or for Holy Church?"

Enrique's enthusiasm was easily fired. All his life he had been ready to turn aside from his own special objects to strike a blow at the Moor.

"If you and I could head an expedition," he said, thoughtfully; "much toil need not fall on you."

"Ah!" cried Fernando. "At such a time I should feel no hardships. I am not so full of my own conceit as to imagine myself a fit leader. Let me but fight under your banner; profit by your experience. Is not our prosperity a shame, while we suffer that unimaginable evil at our very gates?"

"It would consecrate all other efforts," said Enrique, with the peculiar earnestness that always made his words weighty; "and to fight as we have always wished, side by side, in this holy war!"

"Yes. Alone I could do little! This hope has been my one aim, my prayer, through all the poor life that has borne so little fruit. Enrique, *you* have known it?"

"Yes. I know that you have never swerved from it. But you must not call your life fruitless, my Fernando."

"Fruitful of impatience and discontent! In truth I am not worthy of this task."

"Nevertheless," said Enrique, with his grave smile, "let us together offer our unworthiness to Him Who will purge our sins away. So shall we win honour for ourselves and our brother."

Self-devotion and personal glory were so united in the mind during the reign of chivalry, that it was not marvellous that these ardent souls did not quite distinguish between them. Enlightened as the princes of Avis were, they were, even Enrique, men of their own day. Their more personal aims of scientific discovery, missionary work, organised charity and the like, were experimental, and they could not set them quite on a level with the recognised privilege and the duty of distinguishing themselves in the battle-field. First, they must be soldiers, afterwards, men of science and philanthropists, and Fernando felt himself to have missed his vocation. The deep sense of religion, felt in especial by these two, offered them another and higher object. Perhaps the strong desire of self-devotion was the talent specially committed to the "ages of faith." The evil they wished to remove was great and obvious, and Fernando did not consider that he might be doing the Church's work perhaps as effectually in another way. He was humble enough in his estimate of himself; he had done the work at hand without a complaint; but the long-restrained wish, once entertained, swept all before it like a flood, and could see no obstacles and no objections. His natural tastes, his religious fervour, his wish for self-denial, and that self which he had not yet altogether learned to deny, all worked together, by the force of his strong will, to attain his object. Enrique loved him too well to oppose him, and moreover was to the full as impetuous, and more used to having his own way.

Chapter Eleven.

Diffusing Minds.

"How often, O my knights,
Your places being vacant at my side,
This chance of noble deeds will come and go."

The Princes Enrique and Fernando, having matured their ideas by much discussion, decided on proposing to the King to make an expedition for the taking of Tangier, similar to the one that their father had sent out against Ceuta. Should he, however, be unwilling to make a great national expedition, they would obtain from him his consent, and as much aid as he thought proper, and would devote to the cause all their own resources, which were considerable. Their eagerness grew as their ideas developed, and some inkling of their wishes getting abroad, all the younger nobility caught fire at the notion, and the princes soon saw that their cause would be a popular one.

It was therefore with some confidence in the result that they sought their brother in his private apartments, to lay their plans before him.

Duarte's life was one of unceasing toil for the good of his subjects. He had already worked out a great scheme for improving the legal system of Portugal, and his industry was immense. His difficulties were much increased by the over-liberality with which his father had given away the crown-lands to his nobility, and many an anxious hour was spent by Duarte in trying to find means to fill his empty exchequer. He set an example of economy in his household, closer than his young queen altogether approved of; but the remedy for this great evil was still to seek. Busy as he was, however, he retained the scholarly tastes of his youth, and his book, *El Leal Conselheiro*; or, *The Faithful Counsellor*, a collection of moral and political sayings, was in its day of great value. Nor, however hurried, did he ever fail in kindness and consideration, especially to Fernando, whom he regarded with almost the protecting affection of a father.

He rose now from the table at which he was writing, and greeted his brothers warmly.

"Ah! Enrique," he said, "have you come to tell me how matters go in your new dominions?"

For Duarte had made Enrique a present of his recent discovery, the island of Madeira.

"Not now, sire," said Enrique, with some formality. "We have a request to make to you."

"You can hardly ask me for what I will not grant," said the King. "Sit here, Fernando," pointing to a couch by the fire. "You look pale—are you well to-day?"

"I am well and strong," said Fernando. "You think too much of my weakness."

And he remained standing, while Enrique, whose words of course carried greater weight, unfolded their cherished scheme. Duarte's face grew very grave as he listened.

"This is your wish, my Fernando?" he said, moving over to him.

"The wish of my heart—of my life!" said Fernando, as he grasped Duarte's hand.

"I fear that I see not the way to grant it," said Duarte, with a reluctant gentleness difficult to contradict.

"Tangier," said Enrique, "would be a splendid jewel to set in the crown of Portugal. We were young and untried when we took Ceuta; it is little likely that we should now fail."

"I do not fear failure," said Duarte; "assuredly not under your leading. Yet my father could not see his way to further conquests in Barbary, nor can I."

"How so?" said Enrique, bluntly. He was quite as great a man as his brother, and though thoroughly loyal to Duarte, was not much accustomed to opposition from him, but rather to admiring assistance in whatever he proposed.

"I will tell you," said Duarte, gently. "You are a greater soldier than I, Enrique, and your eyes see far into the possible future; but it is I who must consider the well-being of Portugal."

"Pardon," said Enrique, "if I spoke in haste. Without your good will we could do nothing."

Duarte sat down on the couch and drew Fernando to a place beside him, watching his face while he spoke.

"First," said Duarte, "I cannot tell where the funds to engage in such a war are to be found. We have no money to spare; it costs me much care to consider how to support the state."

"We put our resources at your disposal," said Enrique.

"But yours, my brother, are already hardly pressed for purposes which will, to my thinking, do more in the end for the spread of the Cross than even the taking of Tangier."

Enrique was silent; he knew well enough the truth of this. Scientific discoveries were not made for nothing in days when only one man saw the necessity of them.

"But," said Fernando, "it seems to me that a small force, well armed and full of zeal, would be sufficient."

"You think so?" said Duarte, as if weighing words. "War is very costly, and even if the council consent, that would be no holy war for which unjust taxes were levied."

Justice was too strongly impressed on the sons of King Joao for this principle to be resisted, however unfamiliar it was to the fifteenth century. Fernando, however, spoke pleadingly.

"You speak of the well-being of Portugal. Surely it is for the highest well-being of a nation to engage in a noble and self-sacrificing struggle. There are better things than prosperity and ease."

"Yes," said Duarte. "There are good laws and honest living, education, and the due support of Holy Church. See you, if my father's reign had been, as we all once wished, one long war against the Infidel, where would have been his translation of the Holy Scriptures into Portuguese—where Batalha and our other great abbeys, to say nothing of the general reform of the kingdom? Do not mistake me, my brothers; my heart glows like yours to fight for the Cross. But, as I read my duty, God has given me this piece of ground to till, and it calls for all my care. You, too, would both be missed much from all the good works you have taken in hand."

"We can return to them with new ardour," said Enrique.

"Yes, and Fernando longs rightly to bear arms. I would it could be so."

"I live but half a life," said Fernando, low and earnestly.

"But then, bear with me while I tell you another difficulty. What pretext have I for making war on the Moorish king? He has in no way injured me!"

"There is never a prisoner taken but offers no pretext, but a reason," said Fernando, eagerly. "Every captive groaning in those dungeons is a good cause."

"There has been less kidnapping of late," said Duarte.

"Yes, since Ceuta was ours," replied Enrique. "Take Tangier and there will be none."

Perhaps Duarte was more inclined to the scheme by the ardour of Fernando's wish than by any other cause. He was still hesitating, when there was a summons at the door, and the two other brothers were admitted.

"Consult them on the matter," said Enrique; and Duarte, after the first greetings, rehearsed Enrique's arguments and his own, demanding the opinion of the new-comers.

"I say," said Pedro, decidedly, "that the scheme is a foolish one. What is the good of plunging Portugal into a rash war with a prince who is a tolerable neighbour, as times go? I give my voice against it."

"If it is done," said Dom Joao, "it must be by the force of the whole country. No smaller expedition could have a chance. If Fernando had seen anything of warfare, even his hot head could make no such proposal."

"I do not rest on my own judgment, my brother," said Fernando, gently. "Enrique's experience is beyond dispute."

"Enrique once tried to take Gibraltar," said Joao, referring to a rash attempt of Enrique's youth, "and took me with him."

"When you were glad enough to go," said Enrique, smiling.

"Ay, but since then I have grown wiser. Look you here. Your ardour runs away with you, and Fernando knows nought of the matter. Tangier would be a hard nut to crack, and he could not bear the campaign needful for taking it."

"You have no right so to put me aside," exclaimed Fernando; then checked himself. "Pardon me, I am hasty. I think indeed little enough of my own powers. I do but wish to devote my uselessness to the service of Holy Church."

"Holy Church would take the will for the deed!" said Joao, with a contemptuous good nature which was hard to bear. He was very fond of Fernando, but his practical and less tender nature had less sympathy for him than any of the others. Fernando coloured, but said nothing; and Duarte, with an elder's authority, said—

"The wishes of our brothers, Enrique and Fernando, and their opinions, have due weights I give way to them so far that I shall lay this matter before the Council of Portugal, when all may speak their mind. But, my brothers, let not our difference of opinion bring the first cloud between us."

"Nay," said Fernando, with rather a painful smile, "Joao does but prove the truth of my complaint, that I have hitherto been the idle one among you. But we have taken enough of the king's time. I would but ask him to forgive me for urging my wishes on him."

"Nay, it is well to be reminded of our higher aims," said Duarte, who had not quite approved of the way in which Fernando had been put down by the others. "We will speak of it again in Council."

In spite of Duarte's warning there was a good deal of hot discussion between Enrique, Pedro, and Joao, which certainly resulted in fixing Enrique's own view of the matter. Duarte declined to speak of it further in private, and Fernando's desire grew so strong that he feared to trust his own temper in the dispute. He spoke, however, in the council well and to the point, urging his view of what number would be sufficient for the attack, and the reasons why he thought that it should be made. Enrique supported him with all the weight of his influence, and the war was exceedingly popular among the younger nobility. Pedro opposed it entirely; Joao declared it to be only possible with a very large force and at great expense; and the king, finding his council divided, at last appealed to the decision of the Pope. If he authorised the war, and would give a Bull of Crusade, well and good; if not, the project must be abandoned.

But meanwhile Enrique and Fernando made their preparations, to be ready to start at once when the consent, of which they never doubted, arrived.

Chapter Twelve.

Self Chosen Ways.

"I saw the Holy Grail, and heard a cry—
O Galahad, and O Galahad, follow me."

The number of voices raised in favour of the Moorish war concealed the fact of how many regarded it with disapproval. Sir Walter Northberry at once offered himself as a volunteer, and Harry Hartsed, in common with all the members in Dom Fernando's suite, was hot in the cause, saw no difficulties, and talked as if Tangier were already won, a mode of proceeding provoking to the opposing princes, and to those who thought with them.

No such light-mindedness could be urged against the prince himself. There was, indeed, a light of hope and happiness in his face rarely seen there before; but he spent long hours in prayer, not so much for the success of his undertaking, as that he might be worthy to engage in it, and constantly urged on his followers the necessity of preparing for a holy war by a holy life. He showed no resentment at his brothers' opposition, merely saying that he did not wonder at their distrust of the views of so inexperienced a person as himself, though he could never be grateful enough to Enrique for his comprehension of them. Enrique had so many other matters in hand, in preparation for his departure, that he had not much time to bestow on the collecting of the forces, and moreover had something of the self-confidence of great conscious power, that anything in which he was engaged could be made to succeed. So that Fernando had it all his own way, and perhaps was hardly the person to realise all the difficulties in his path, since he credited others with his own strong and unwavering zeal.

The war was, on the whole, popular among the clergy, and was approved by the Archbishop of Lisbon; and Father José—who had been Fernando's confessor and chaplain from childhood, and had constantly listened to his longings for such an opportunity—rejoiced that his dear son, as he regarded Fernando, should at last gain the wish of his heart. But he said much less about triumphing over the Moors, than about the necessity of faith, purity, and holiness in those who would attack them, about the sin of rivalry and contention among men engaged in a holy war, pointing out how self-indulgence and disputes had been the ruin of crusades. No one, he said, who entered on a holy war, in such an unholy spirit, would find the sword of the Moor open to him a passage from earth to Heaven. No one, who, during this period of preparation, fell into mortal sin, neglected his religious duties, or indulged in uncharitable feelings, would be a true crusader, though he bound the cross on his shoulder, and sailed under the authority of a Bull of Crusade.

These truths, however wholesome they might be, and however entirely accepted and enforced by the prince himself, were not always palatable, and Father José's preaching was often deserted for that of a chaplain belonging to Dom Enrique's household, named Martin. This priest was instrumental in turning the minds of many towards the war. He preached in glowing terms the glory that was to be won both for earth and Heaven, the certainty of success, the sure path to Paradise; painted vividly the triumph over the conquered city, the splendid spoils that would be the rightful property of the conquering soldiers of the cross, the dreadful fate that would rightly befall the "Pagan hounds," whom they would destroy; and finally promised absolution and the Church's blessing to all those who heartily engaged in the contest. This preaching worked up the young nobility to a state of wild enthusiasm, and among others Harry Hartsed, who, though greatly admiring his prince, thought his sentiments rather fine-spun, and that to take arms with a view of revenging the wrong of the Northberry family, and of gaining some spiritual advantages for himself, was

quite enough.

All his interest in his little playmate's lost sister was revived by the intelligence that Sir Walter had declined all offers of marriage for Nella in England, and that in the event of his returning safely from the present campaign he meant her to come to Lisbon and rejoin him. She was now more than sixteen, and her reputation as a beauty had preceded her.

Harry thought that when spoils and honours should enable him to think of a wife, he would like to see Nella's brave blue eyes, and hear her frank tongue, before he gave his heart away to any dark-glancing, soft-spoken Portuguese.

All through the spring the preparations were pushed forward; and at last, after much delay, came the long-expected answer from the Pope.

He wrote that wars of offence with the Infidel were allowable in resistance to any actual injury committed by them on any particular kingdom, but during a period of entire peace could only be justified by proving that the existence of the infidel power was injurious to Christendom at large, in which latter case the Pope granted a bull of crusade. He could not now perceive that the King of Portugal had received any injuries from the King of Barbary, or that the latter had recently in any way made himself obnoxious to the nations of Christendom. He could not therefore grant the bull of crusade, and recommended King Duarte to abstain from the attack.

This was King Duarte's own opinion; but he could not read the Pope's despatch without thinking of the disappointment it would inflict on his ardent brothers; and, alas! of the great unpopularity of disbanding the already impatient army. This difficulty also occurred to Pedro, who blamed Duarte for having allowed the preparations to be begun.

"Look you," said Duarte, "I shall leave it in their hands. If they can conscientiously disregard the opinion of his holiness, let them make the attempt. It is indeed true that Fernando has never seen warfare. When this is over he will be content, and if Tangier is taken, maybe the Pope will not think the war unjustifiable."

The Popes of the fifteenth century had not so lived or ruled that their fiat should be accepted with unquestioning respect. It was a hard matter, however, to display the letter to the eager spirits who were staking their all on the attempt.

Fernando turned pale as death, and uttered not a word.

Enrique read through the parchment, and then started up, exclaiming—

"There are things that man must do at his own risk. Who can authorise the inmost promptings of the soul that lead to great ends? The holy father may fear to speak; we will give Tangier to the Church, and win his blessing at the sword's point."

So said Enrique, having indeed much experience of the inward promptings of which he spoke; and Duarte was much swayed by his words.

Fernando was still silent. There was the sharpness of a personal wish, both to sway him and to cause a fear of being swayed.

"Let it be as the king will," he said, slowly; but Duarte had not the heart to accept his submission.

"Matters have gone too far to recede," he said. "Go, my brothers; I confide in your judgment, and may the blessing of God rest on your arms."

Fernando bent down and kissed the king's hand, while Enrique exclaimed—

"Tangier shall be yours, when we meet again." Dom Joao shrugged his shoulders. "That depends," he said, "on the number and the condition of your troops."

All was now hurry and excitement. And between the contending views there was much confusion.

Dom Joao's opinion on military matters had great weight; and when it was known that he disapproved of the expedition, many held back from it.

The young queen liking the excitement of the start, and the probable glory to Portugal favoured the enterprise; and strangely enough it fell out, that the war was advocated by all the gayer and wilder spirits, while the more sober doubted and held back.

Queen Leonora laughed at her husband for the strange reluctance that he showed to part with Fernando.

"All the—others," she said, "were constantly absent from him on long and dangerous errands; surely he could let Fernando go for a few months."

"That is the very thing," said Duarte sadly; "I have never been parted from him, and this war fills me with anxiety and dread."

"Why, you grow slow of heart," said Leonora, laughing. "You did not think so when Ceuta was before you."

Spite of this rallying, the parting was a cruel one. Although there was a keener sympathy of character and opinion between Enrique and Fernando, Duarte had been to the latter a constant companion and support; and to act against

his judgment, and to cause him pain and anxiety, was the first sacrifice in which his project involved him.

Chapter Thirteen.

Before Tangier.

“Who is there that wishes for more men from England!”

On the 22nd of August the fleet of the Infantes set sail from Lisbon, fourteen thousand men having been decided on as the number necessary for the expedition, and in due course arrived at Ceuta, where Dom Enrique, who had hitherto exercised but little personal superintendence, proceeded to review them, and to examine into their efficiency, Fernando assisting him. The sight of Ceuta recalled to them both that first campaign—so brilliant, so prosperous, so well-planned and executed. It was something to receive the blessing of the Bishop of the city that their father had made Christian, and to see it happy and prosperous under its new rule.

As the day went on, Fernando grew very weary of riding about in the hot sun, and began sadly to discover how unequal his strength was to the fatigues of a campaign. Enrique, perceiving this, sent him back to his lodging, whither he presently followed him in much perturbation.

“Fernando,” he said, “things are against us. My mind misgave me when we landed as to our numbers; and now I find that, instead of the fourteen thousand ordered to embark, we have but eight! Many fell back on hearing the Pope’s decision; many more from respect to Joao’s views. There has been some strange want of common sense in the officers who superintended the embarkation. They say their orders were not precise, and the king’s commands uncertain. Anyhow, we are here with but half our troops?”

“Well, dear Enrique, we who are here must fight the harder!” said Fernando, smiling.

“The commanders wish to send back the fleet for more troops,” said Enrique.

“No! How should we keep up the spirits of those waiting here? What would the king think? And the enemy would get wind of our intentions! We must push on at once, and trust in the force of our onslaught?”

“That is my own view,” said Enrique, “but my mind misgives me!”

“That is the most fatal thing of all. It is too late for misgivings,” said Fernando, resolutely.

“And you—how can you bear the march over these hot sands? You are over-wearied already.”

Fernando winced somewhat, but answered, “You might go by land with the main body of the troops, while I with the rest go to Tangier by sea. I could well do that.”

This plan, after a good deal of discussion, was finally adopted; for Fernando was far from well, and could not have attempted the land march. He was the most cheerful and sanguine of the party; but there was so much difference of opinion, and so much depression at the insufficiency of the forces, that the joyful, resolute spirit of crusaders, seemed far from the rest of the army, and time and energy were wasted in disputes and lamentations. The men had lost confidence in their leaders, every one was of a different opinion as to waiting for fresh troops or pushing on as they were, and instead of prayer, praise, or hopeful anticipation, there was perpetual wrangling.

It was now found that Father José’s teaching had far more effect in softening, these differences than Father Martin’s; for the former led them to dwell on the blessing of a high and earnest purpose, which would consecrate success, and could not be destroyed by failure; while the latter fell in with the popular feeling, by finding fault with the lukewarmness and want of zeal shown by the other Infantes, who had thus risked the success of the expedition. As he belonged to Dom Enrique’s household, he accompanied the land march; while Father José went by sea, in company with all the members of Fernando’s suite.

Harry Hartsed was one of the malcontents. There was something provoking to his common sense in the ill-management of the start; and though he had no expectation of failure, it afforded him great satisfaction to grumble at the princes, and even at the king, by way perhaps of showing that he was not a Portuguese subject. Young Alvarez was more scrupulous and more serious-minded, but he had misgivings as to disregarding the wishes of the Pope; and these two lads represented widespread phases of public opinion.

Fernando heard but little of this. Remembering how easily Ceuta had been won, and feeling the utmost confidence in Enrique’s skill, he did not much fear failure, and bore no grudge against his other brothers for thinking differently from himself. He recovered his strength during the sea-voyage, and as they neared Tangier, and he stood on the deck in full armour with the cross of his order on his breast, the look of hope and joy on his face communicated itself to his followers; and whatever else they differed about, they were all ready to live or die for him.

Under his orders the landing of the troops and the meeting with Dom Enrique’s contingent was safely accomplished, and, in better spirits than they had yet enjoyed, the little army prepared for the attack. They found that their old enemy, Zala-ben-Zala, was in command at Tangier, and soon became aware that the King of Fez was bringing large numbers into the field against them. Before they left Lisbon the king had strenuously advised them not to leave the beach unguarded so that the enemy could cut off their chance of retreat; and he felt the necessity of this so strongly, that he sent an autograph letter to Enrique at Ceuta, entreating him to observe this precaution. Enrique, however, either disregarded it, or found that with his small number it was impossible to spare any from the attack; for there began such a struggle as tried the courage of veterans, and showed the young recruits the face of war in good earnest.

The Portuguese forces marched to the attack in two divisions, commanded by the two princes. Each division fought under the flag of Portugal, and also under that of the order to which its leader belonged, the red cross of Avis, the green cross of the Order of Christ; and on Enrique's banner was inscribed the motto he had so well earned the right to carry, "*Talent de bien faire*;" on that of Fernando the humbler legend, "*Le bien me plait*."

They fought on through the hot September day, with fresh battalions constantly coming up to the defence, till they became conscious that they were contending against a superiority of numbers such as they had never contemplated. Troop after troop of turbaned soldiers came pouring down upon them; nevertheless, they fought with such ardour, that Enrique's division pressed right up to the walls of the town and raised their scaling-ladders against them; Fernando's side having meanwhile been so fiercely attacked, that it was all that he could do to hold his ground. Alas! the scaling-ladders which they had brought were too short to reach the top of the ramparts, and after frightful loss of life, and long hours of vain effort, Dom Enrique was forced to sound a retreat, before the darkness overtook them, at the enemy's very gates. He reached the camp just as Fernando came up to join him, and the two brothers embraced eagerly, thankful at least to find each other safe.

"You are unhurt?" said Enrique. "Then all is not lost."

"Oh, yes, I am unhurt," said Fernando, "and ready for another attempt to-morrow. The odds are great, but our men showed no flinching. I fear me our losses are terrible."

"So great," said Enrique with reluctance, "and the odds are so much against us, that there is but one thing left to do, and that is to retreat. We must go back to Ceuta, and wait there for fresh troops and longer ladders."

Fernando recoiled almost as from a blow.

"What!—have we failed?" he said.

"Well, say we have not yet succeeded. There is no help for it, Fernando; it must be done."

Enrique was bitterly mortified, and disappointed, and spoke less gently than usual; and perhaps Fernando had never struggled so hard; with himself as before he answered—

"You can judge best, my brother; be it so."

There was no time to be lost in making the arrangements. The army was to re-embark while sheltered by the darkness, and Fernando went to see how best to transport the wounded; while Enrique held council with the officers, who all agreed with him as to the necessity.

There were loud murmurs, however, among the younger noblemen, and there was a good deal of delay after the first decision before the final start was made. At last all was ready, and Enrique prepared to give the order for the march in the silent night, without banner, shout, or trumpet. How different from that, morning's approach! What was it moving in front of them, through the purple darkness of the southern night—long, dim, white lines, between them and the sea?

Alas for the disregard of the king's counsel! They were the white cloaks of the Moorish troops, and the little Christian army was surrounded on all sides.

"Betrayed! betrayed! Caught like mice in a trap!" cried Enrique, losing his self-control. "Where is the false traitor to whom this is owing?"

"Hush!" said Fernando, laying his hand on Enrique's arm. "Let none see your amazement. The hand of God is against us. We were unworthy of the cause we undertook in self-willed opposition."

He spoke in a tone of calm, sad conviction, and then, seeing Enrique's distress, added gently—

"The blame lies on me. I know well that you acted for my sake."

Enrique shook his head; then, after a moment's silence, started into energy again.

"Now we must sell our lives hard. There is no choice remaining. We march on the town with the first dawn of light. And now to prayer. May God have mercy on us! we are in evil case. Where is Father Martin?"

"My lord, my lord!" cried young Alvarez, rushing up, "here is a sentinel who declares that in the dusk he beheld Father Martin pass him by, and afterwards a figure steal to the enemy's lines."

"Where is the holy father!" said Enrique, calmly disregarding this assertion.

But Father Martin was nowhere to be found, and instead of the proposed solemn services, the whole camp was engaged in a passionate discussion as to whether he had been the traitor or not. Young Hartsed hotly defended him, and he and Alvarez disputed till words almost came to blows.

With the first ray of light the rail to arms was sounded, and several hours were spent in desperate efforts to break through the enemy's ranks. It was all in vain; and as the shadows of evening fell the recall was sounded, and in humiliation and sorrow of heart the defeated princes sent to offer terms of capitulation, and to ask for what ransom they and their troops would be allowed to depart.

The Steadfast Prince.

“Still to abide 'mid failing hearts high-hearted.”

The two Infantes occupied a tent in the centre of the Portuguese camp, and when their messengers returned they came out to the front of it, and, surrounded by their chief officers, prepared to receive the Moorish delegates who had come to offer them terms of surrender. The wounded had been cared for as well as circumstances admitted, and an attempt had been made to draw up the poor remnant of the troops in good order, so as not to produce an impression of utter defeat. But nothing could alter the dejected countenances and downcast air of the beaten army; the very banners hung listless in the still air of evening, and many a wistful look was cast at the blue sea, so near yet so unapproachable, beyond which lay Portugal and home.

Life had never held so bitter a moment for Enrique of Portugal as when he stood there to receive and not to dictate terms of surrender; and from an enemy whom he regarded with a mixture of contempt and hatred. He was, however, perfectly calm and impassive, not losing the advantage that his splendid presence gave him, and prepared to accede to the demand for a heavy ransom before he and his army were allowed to depart.

Fernando stood beside him; disappointment and self-reproach put aside for the present, he showed himself an equally worthy representative of the honour of Portugal.

The Moorish envoys were exceedingly courteous, and began their interview with many compliments on the valour of their illustrious foes.

Enrique replied, very briefly, that the fortune of war being against them, they must leave it to the King of Fez to name their ransom.

And then, still wrapped in courteous phrases, came the ultimatum. The town of Ceuta must be restored to its former owners, and to insure this one of the Infantes, with a certain number of nobles, must remain as a hostage in the hands of the King of Fez.

“The King of Portugal,” said Enrique, “will be prepared for the payment of any money ransom the King of Fez may demand.”

“The town of Ceuta,” said the chief officer of the Moors, “is the price of your liberty. Otherwise your troops must be put to the sword, and you and your chief nobles retained as prisoners at the king’s pleasure.”

“The King of Fez,” said Fernando, “has a right to impose conditions. I offer myself as the hostage he demands.”

“Fernando—no!” cried Enrique, suddenly losing his self-contained manner, and laying his hand on Fernando.

“The noble Infante,” said the Moorish envoy, “need have no fears. He and his companions will be treated as the guests of the king, and will be released immediately that Ceuta is in the hands of my master.”

Fernando smiled. “I have no fears,” he said, quietly.

“And doubtless,” said the Moor, “the King of Portugal will see that it is consistent with his honour to release his noble brother without delay.”

“The King of Portugal,” said Fernando, “will act as becomes an honourable and a Christian king.”

“I do not consent—I do not consent!” said Enrique, in such agitation that Fernando said—

“We will crave leave to withdraw, and to discuss this matter first with each other and then with our nobles.”

So saying, he moved back into the tent, followed by Enrique, who threw himself into a seat, covering his face.

“I—it must be I,” he said. “I will not leave you. How can I look Duarte in the face?”

“But I could not undertake the command of the troops alone,” said Fernando; “and besides, we will not give them *more* than they ask.”

Enrique still seemed unconvinced; Fernando sat down beside him and spoke earnestly.

“Look you, Enrique. My self-willed longing to give my life to the cause of Christendom him brought this on us. ‘Behold! to obey is better than to sacrifice;’ but I heeded neither Duarte’s wish nor the Pope’s will, nor our other brothers’ opinion. It is fitting therefore that I should bear the brunt of failure.”

“To demand Ceuta,” cried Enrique; “Ceuta, our one conquest from the realms of darkness! A law, alas! that we—that / should have lost Ceuta to Christendom!”

“That,” said Fernando, very low and tenderly, “will not be for *your* decision.”

Enrique started, and looked up in his face. Fernando took him by both hands and smiled with wonderful sweetness, while he said—

“When we *took* Ceuta, my Enrique, and all my joy was gone at the fear of your death, you bade me remember that we would both have given our lives for it in the battle. / bid you think of that now.”

Enrique bent his head down on his brother’s hands and groaned aloud.

“How can I face Duarte—what can I say to him?” he repeated.

“Tell him,” said Fernando, “to remember that both he and I are Christian princes, soldiers of the Cross of Christ. And give him my—my love.” Here he faltered for a moment; then, recovering himself, said, firmly—

“We delay too long. Let us consult with the officers. I cannot, I suppose, remain here alone.” Enrique seemed quite unable to recover himself, and Fernando was forced to take the lead in the discussion that followed. There was no lack of volunteers to share in his self-devotion, nor indeed was there any particular reason to shrink from a temporary detention in an enemy’s country. Several nobles of sufficient station to satisfy the requirements of the Moors were selected, and Father José resolved on accompanying his beloved prince; and this fact a little comforted Enrique, and enabled him once more to meet the Moorish envoys, and to announce to them that he had resolved on accepting the terms proposed, and that his brother, with twelve companions, would remain behind as hostages for the restitution of the town of Ceuta, he himself and the rest of the army being allowed to depart unharmed.

Moussa-Ben-Hadad, the Moorish envoy, was courtesy itself. El Señor Dom Fernando, Infante of Portugal and Grand-Master of Avis, would be the guest of his king, who would be honoured by his presence, and would do his best to make his stay agreeable, short as it would be. He would be allowed free communication by letter with Portugal. A document was prepared and signed by Moussa-Ben-Hadad and by the two Infantes, to the effect that Fernando was to remain a prisoner until such time as Ceuta should be given up.

Alvarez and Harry Hartsed both entreated to remain with him; but he refused steadily, saying that their rank was not sufficient for hostages, and that no unnecessary force should be wasted. Sir Walter Northberry was among the wounded.

All was prepared for the start during the night, and with the first dawn of day this defeated Christians began their retreat, in good order and with banners flying. They had no need to eat their hearts out with mortification and wounded pride, as they noticed the innumerable ranks of the foes between whom their own small force took its way to the beach. Self-reproach and shame was for the leaders, who had so misjudged and mismanaged; and Enrique felt as if the weight bowed him to the earth.

The time for parting came, and the two brothers were alone. It might seem but a formal parting for a short time, but upon them both lay the weight of a conviction which each was too tender to the other to put into words. But the sympathy between them was too deep and keen for any doubt as to the other’s opinion. Fernando laid his hands on Enrique’s shoulders and looked full into his face.

“You are my other self, and you know my heart by your own,” he said. “Courage! for we shall not part for ever.”

Enrique dared not give way. He took Fernando’s hand, and together they went out to the front of the tent—the last one remaining of the little camp—where Enrique’s suite were ready mounted on the one side, and the escort of Moors awaited Fernando on the other.

The brothers embraced each other in silence; Fernando mounted his horse and bowed to the knights and nobles standing round. In the light of the summer morning, with the new sun shining on the red cross on his breast and on his steadfast, smiling eyes, Enrique beheld him; then, mounting his horse, he rode away, and left this well-beloved brother behind.

Chapter Fifteen.

A Burning Question.

“To do a great right, do a little wrong.”

The ill-fated expedition had not long set sail before the king discovered its insufficient numbers, and in all haste he ordered Dom Joao to equip himself and follow his brothers to Ceuta. Joao, to do him justice, was perfectly ready to do so, and in a very short time set sail with a fair number of troops, hoping to join them before they could leave Ceuta, and, had they waited for a reinforcement, all might have been well.

He had not calculated on their over-haste. The vessel bearing the fatal news crossed him on the way; and when he arrived at Ceuta he was greeted with the story of the defeat of the army, of the detention of Fernando, and of the serious illness of Enrique, who, completely overcome by mortification and anguish of heart, had fainted on reaching his ship, and had been carried on shore at Ceuta, unable to exert himself further. All was in confusion; but Dom Joao wasted no time in reproaches or regrets; but after giving a few necessary orders, and encouraging the troops to look for better times, he went at once to his brother’s lodging.

Enrique was recovering a little from the violence of the fever that had seized on him, and was dressed and lying on a couch; but when he saw his brother he rose up, weak as he was, and threw himself on his knees before him, covering his face.

“Alas, my brother! how can I look on you?” he cried. “I have been the worst enemy of my country and of the Church and of my most dear brothers!”

“It has all gone very ill,” said Joao. “We must seek for a remedy. Rise up, my brother; you shame me. This from you to me!”

“Ah, could I but find a harder penance!” sighed Enrique; but he allowed Joao to help him back to his couch, and began to tell him how it had all chanced, and to ask what had brought him there in such good time.

"Duarte has troubled much about Fernando," said Joao; "how was it with him when you left him?"

But the attempt to speak of Fernando threw Enrique into such an agony of weeping that Joao was obliged to cease questioning him, beginning to perceive how terrible must have been the experience that had thus prostrated one of such resolute will and power of endurance.

"Courage!" he said; "a better day must dawn. Fernando will soon be restored to us; and though we yield Ceuta nominally, it shall go hard but we will soon win it back again. For that object a war will cause no difference of opinion."

Enrique made no answer. He lay silent for some moments, then turned and looked up at his brother. "We were eating our horses before we yielded, and there was no water, and no hope. That must soon have killed him and all the poor fellows whom we have led to ruin."

"You would have been fools to hold out," said Joao, bluntly. "But what is to be done now? Here am I, with six thousand at my back—"

"Here? Fresh troops?" cried Enrique, starting into animation. "Then what is to hinder one more effort? Let us go back to Tangier, and win it, or die!"

"But the treaty?" said Joao.

"The treaty! That does but hold Fernando fast. We gave no pledge not to continue the war on another footing. And they harassed our rear enough as we retreated to show how far they care to keep their word. I am another man, now you give me hope."

Joao was not altogether averse to the proposal, and Enrique, with reviving spirits, recovered his natural ascendancy; and arrangements were made for Joao to return home with the sick and wounded, while Enrique, with the fresh troops, marched again on Tangier. No second brother, he said, should be thus risked. His first care, however, was to put Ceuta into a complete state of defence; and while he was thus engaged came first the news that the fleet which he had sent home immediately after the retreat from Tangier had met with a violent storm and been wrecked on the coast of Andalusia, where the Castilians had showed great kindness to the distressed sailors. Next arrived a peremptory despatch from the king, ordering both his brothers to return at once, and to make no further effort to continue the war for the present. Enrique was bitterly disappointed, though he felt that he could not wonder at the king's doubt of his judgment.

"I cannot look him in the face," he said; "I cannot see his grief. Go you to Lisbon, and I will hide myself in Sagres, and pray for pardon."

The king convoked the States-General of Portugal, and a great council was held to decide on the next step. The Pope was again written to for his opinion, and the discussion began with all the ardour and heat attending a question where good men see, strongly, different sides of the right. For Duarte himself it was a time of agonising doubt. His peculiar tenderness for Fernando made the thought of his loneliness and suffering, of his possible hardships and of the loss of his daily presence, haunt him by night and day. Every feeling of his heart urged him to give up the city and win this beloved brother back. But then, he looked on himself but as the steward who must give an account of his kingdom. Ceuta, Portugal itself, were not his to yield. What right had he to give back one acre of Christian land to the realm of darkness—to let the consecrated soil be profaned once more by the accursed faith of Mahomet? What life, what love, was too precious to be sacrificed to save the souls of the Christians of Ceuta? This was one side of the question; and perhaps it is hardly possible in these days to realise how powerful this obligation seemed to such a prince as Duarte. On the other hand, it was urged that it was a foul shame to grudge any fortress, however valuable, for the life of a prince of Portugal, who had voluntarily offered himself, trusting in the honour of his country, and also that, after all, they had given their word to cede Ceuta, and were bound to redeem it, even to an infidel power. These were the nobler views on either side. Of course the party who contended for the retention of Ceuta contained many who cared nothing for the religious question, but who declared openly that the great sea-port was worth far more to the state than the precarious life of a prince who had never been able to make himself prominent or useful, while many of those who wished to yield it cared little for Fernando, and less for the pledge, but were only anxious to avoid the expense of a war.

But between the right on either side Duarte's scrupulous conscience wavered with agonising uncertainty; though with his deep love for his brother, and his instinctive preference for the simpler, more immediate duty, he inclined somewhat to the view of yielding the city. Pedro and Joao spoke in the council with no uncertain sound. A treaty should be kept, they said, and their dear brother's life saved at all costs. No sacrifice could be too great to make. Then let them go to war with every resource at their command, and win Ceuta back, and Tangier, too. Their words had great weight; but the Archbishop of Braga, a powerful ecclesiastic, spoke on the other side, all the other bishops agreeing with him, declaring that one man's life must not be considered in comparison with a whole city.

The Pope's letter came in support of this view. The war had been undertaken in defiance of his wishes, and had led to an unhappy result. Certainly, Christian land must not be given up to an infidel power; but he offered the much-desired full of Crusade, and recommended Duarte to go to war to deliver his brother. All this time Enrique had remained at Sagres and made no sign, only trusting that the matter might be settled without his intervention. But now, Duarte wrote, summoning him to Lisbon, assuring him of his forgiveness and affection, and desiring to hear his view of the question.

The time had gone by for the wild anguish with which Enrique had met Joao; but when he came into Duarte's presence, and kissed his hand, ten years might have passed over the heads of them both since they parted. Duarte's gentle cheerfulness had faded, and all the fire had gone out of Enrique's great grey eyes, and his manner was subdued and spiritless.

Duarte made him sit beside him, and for a long time they were silent, holding each other by the hand. Then Enrique said—

“My brother, you can forgive?”

“We suffer together,” said Duarte. “Enrique, you know what our brothers say in this matter, and the contrary opinion of the Pope. How does your conscience speak?”

Enrique’s strong frame shook, as he answered—

“Were I the hostage, I could not so buy my freedom. Would that I were!”

Then Duarte took a letter from his bosom and put it into Enrique’s hand. It contained a few lines from Fernando, speaking of his good health and kindly treatment, and begging for Duarte’s forgiveness for the rashness that had risked so much. He sent messages of love to all his brothers, especially to Enrique, “who granted me my heart’s wish at the cost of his own judgment.” There was no single word as to his own return, or as to the cession of Ceuta, and Duarte said—

“This most precious letter was doubtless read by his jailor before he was permitted to send it, so that he could not freely speak his mind, to us.”

Enrique kissed the letter, he seemed unable to speak, and Duarte said—

“I sent for you, since you and he were ever as one, so that your mind on this matter will be his.”

“So he said.”

“Yes, you wrote me his words,” said Duarte.

There was long silence, and at last the King spoke again.

“Grieve not so terribly, my brother, speak as your conscience urges. Alike we love him.”

“Alas, yes! Duarte, his one wish was to see those cities Christian. For that he longed to die. I *know*, he meant that you should hold fast by Ceuta. And we were bound to that service. Had he died by a Moslem sword, we must have given thanks for a blessed end. My life—*his* life must not be weighed in the balance with Christian souls. Remember our knighthood. We shame him, if for his sake we tear down the Cross our father raised, and see the Crescent glittering again on the cathedral of Ceuta. We dare not put our brethren before our God.”

Enrique’s faltering voice strengthened, and the colour came back into his face as he spoke. The terrible anguish of this avowal had been faced and met; the bitter cross which he had helped to fashion taken on his shoulders. It had cost many a long hour of prayer and fasting before he had brought himself to the point of declaring the view that his inmost conscience had all along suggested, and even now he implored Duarte to spare him from the necessity of speaking of it in the council. He could not change his mind; but if the States-General, if Duarte thought otherwise—

“This was for me only,” said Duarte. “No one shall question you. Alas! your silence might have told me your conviction. I seem to hear him speak through your lips.”

Pedro was less considerate than Duarte. He was indeed too generous to utter a word of reproach to Enrique for his former disregard of his opinion, and when, coming in to seek Duarte, he saw his changed looks, he greeted him with the utmost kindness; but the substance of the conversation could not be concealed from him, and he said, sarcastically—

“Well, your conscience may be at ease. There are many in the council beside you and the Archbishop of Braga, who think our poor Fernando’s life worth less than a valuable fortress. He is sickly, they say, and of no use to the state, let him pine in exile, we will keep Ceuta safe while we have it.”

“Hush, my brother,” said Duarte with his gentle authority. “Well you know that taunt is out of place.”

“I meant no taunt,” said Pedro; “but it was one thing for Fernando to dream of crusading lying here on his couch, or even to lead an army to the attack, and quite another for him to suffer all the contumely which Moorish cruelty and spite can suggest, if we do not hold to our side of the bargain.”

“You speak as if we would leave him in their hands without an effort,” said Duarte. “But, come, the Queen waits for supper for us. My Enrique, you will be a welcome guest.”

Enrique would fain have been spared the supper, though of course no one but his brothers had a right to question him on his views; but he knew that it was best that he and the King should be seen together, and came to the table, though he looked so white and sad that the Queen rallied him on his unsocial air.

Leonor disliked depression and dull times, and did not see why the cession of Ceuta should be made a burning question. Dom Pedro, on the other hand, disliked the Queen’s frivolity, so he turned to Enrique and engaged him in a discussion of the latest calculations, by which his study of the stars was being reduced to a science useful to mariners; and that congenial topic brought a little brightness to Enrique’s mournful face, for he and Pedro differed on some nice point, and in discussing it forgot for a brief moment the dreadful difference that really lay between them. But the responsibility that rested on his shoulders never passed from the King’s mind. Others thought, argued, believed, but in the long run he must act.

Chapter Sixteen.

Old Friends.

“But the blue fearless eyes in her fair face,
And her frank voice, showed her of English race.”

In the midst of all this turmoil and excitement Eleanor Northberry came back to Portugal. Suitable escorts were so rare that, one having offered itself, she was sent back without previous notice, and arrived just as her father had recovered from the wound received before Tangier, and while the question of the cession of Ceuta was still before the States-General.

She had grown into a most beautiful maiden, tall and straight, light of foot, and slender of limb, with a clear voice that spoke her mind without fear or favour; blue eyes, clear and bright as the morning; and a skin fair and rosy, such as had not been seen in Lisbon since the young days of Philippa of Lancaster. The arrival of the English beauty was like a ray of sunlight in the gloom of that time of suspense and sorrow; and to Harry Hartsed it dispersed the clouds altogether; for she greeted him heartily as fellow-countryman and friend. He lived, too, with Sir Walter Northberry since the break-up of Dom Fernando's household, so that they had many opportunities of intercourse, and Harry was envied, especially by Alvarez, who fell a victim to this new and lovely creature the first time that he beheld her.

Young hearts will be gay, and young lips will laugh, happily for the world, even in sad times; and Harry and Nella, a few days after her return were enjoying a lively chat over their old recollections of pleasant Northberry.

“This central court, with its fountain, and those tall orange-trees, and the couch on which my father sits, is almost the only thing I can remember well. We stood there under the trees, I and Catalina, and the prince sat here, by my father, and gave us the little crosses, on the day we sailed.”

“Alas!” said Harry; “when shall we see our beloved prince again?”

Nella did not know much of the matter in dispute, and decidedly inclined to the view of rescuing the good prince at all cost. She looked solemn for a moment, and then said,—

“Ah! there is no witch here to tell us what he is doing.”

“Do you believe in the witch still, Mistress Nell?” said Harry, slyly.

“No, sir; not since I went down to help my aunt give out the dole one day, and saw her eyes look out under old Goody Martin's hood. Doubtless she knew us all well, having been at the manor every week. Oh, you need not laugh; when I change my mind, I say so.”

“I wish there was another witch near Lisbon, whom you longed secretly to consult about your sister,” said Harry in an insinuating tone.

“Sir, when I wandered in the woods by moonlight, I was a silly little girl; now I am a woman, and wiser. Alack! I think I miss the dogs and the fresh breeze, and I know I miss my dear aunt and uncle. This old home is very new. I halt and stammer when my father speaks Portuguese. I am altogether an English girl.”

“There is no speech like English,” said Harry; “I love it best.”

“Oh, you have grown to look quite like a foreigner,” said Nella, saucily. “I am but a country maid, and your court is too solemn for me.” There was an indescribably joyous sweetness in Nella's voice and manner that took from her gay retorts anything of boldness.

“See, Harry,” she continued. “To-morrow I am to be presented to the queen; I practise my reverence every day.”

She came up to him as she spoke, making a low, sweeping curtsy.

“Rise, fair Señorita,” said Harry; “our poor court is honoured by such a guest.”

“Now—now, I know you are no longer an Englishman!” cried Nella. “That speech was never learned in Devon!”

“Like a Portuguese, madam, I can talk; but I mean what I say like a true son of Devon.”

“I cannot believe in such perfection. You were never one to belie yourself with over-diffidence.”

“I leave that to my betters,” said Harry, with a bow.

“Oh, saucy boy!” cried Nella, laughing, then paused suddenly, as the gates were thrown back without, and her father entered, cap in hand, escorting an exceedingly tall and stately personage, with a sad but kindly face. Behind him came Alvarez; and the whole scene brought back strongly to Nella's mind the visit of Dom Fernando, years ago.

“My lord,” said Sir Walter, “allow me to present to you my remaining daughter Eleanor.”

Blushing, and with unwonted bashfulness, Nella curtsied timidly, in very different style from her mock reverence five minutes before.

“Welcome home, señorita,” said Dom Enrique, with a grave smile. “You come at a sad time;” and then, as if he could hardly turn his thoughts from the matter in hand, he continued, addressing her father,—

"You know, Sir Walter, that the States-General have at length resolved to offer a heavy ransom for my dear brother, and if this is refused, the Pope offers a Bull of Crusade, and we strain every nerve to free him by force of arms."

"I am aware, my lord, that Ceuta is not to be ceded," said Sir Walter rather drily.

"It has been so determined," said Enrique, with a sigh; for well he knew that the decision had been made on no such lofty motives as actuated himself. Most men had thought Ceuta too precious to be parted with, not because it was a Christian town, but because it was a strong fortress; and Enrique had the unspeakable pain of finding himself on the same side with men who cared nothing for his brother; and whose principles he despised.

"The king resolves," he said, "on the strictest economy, to make this possible. He has changed his mode of living, and cut off his few pleasures, for our brother's sake. He hopes that his nobility will follow his example."

"The late king, my lord, was so generous to his nobles that they owe their utmost to his blessed memory."

"Even so," said Enrique. "But now, Sir Walter, I came here to-day to speak with you of—of the foul treason that cut off our retreat, and made my brother's sacrifice necessary. That most accursed traitor and renegade, Brother Martin, has indeed disappeared; but it has been whispered that others—his friends and followers—knew of his intention, and that he had in some measure spread the poison of his apostasy among his followers and admirers. Think you this is so?"

Harry Hartsed, who had been standing apart with Alvarez, gave an indignant start, and coming forward, said, impetuously,—

"My lord, Brother Martin's preaching was ever in favour of the war. He never uttered a word of treason in my hearing, and I saw much of him. I do not believe that he was the traitor."

"Softly, softly," said Sir Walter. "Master Harry, you speak too freely to the duke."

"Pardon," said Harry, doggedly; "but I will speak for my friends when falsely accused."

"The treason of Brother Martin," said Enrique, "has been proved by eye-witnesses. No Christian gentleman should call him his friend."

"If I may speak," said Alvarez, "Señor Hartsed was much with Brother Martin, and in his councils."

"What! You dare to say that he spoke treason to me!" cried Harry.

"Young gentlemen," said the prince in his tone of grave dignity, "you forget yourselves. Sir,"—to Harry—"you have given your opinion, and that is enough. Sir Walter, I must go, for I have much business on hand."

Dom Enrique rose as he spoke, gave to Nella—who had retired to some distance—a courteous farewell, and went out, his look of sorrowful oppression never having given way during his visit. Alvarez followed him.

Sir Walter, when his guests had departed, turned back to Harry, and rebuked him sharply, both for daring to stand up for so foul a traitor as the renegade monk, and also for forgetting the respect due to the prince.

Harry took the reproof sullenly. His heart too was sore at the thought of his lost master. Brother Martin's passionate preaching had really stirred his emotions, and made him feel himself a true Crusader. He thought him unjustly accused, and was determined to defend him.

Alvarez, on the other hand, was filled with wrath at the very sound of his name, and the result was that the next time they met the two young men had a violent quarrel, in which Alvarez was passionate and Harry obstinate and sulky. They were silenced and rebuked by Sir Walter, who happened to overhear them; but they parted in mutual anger and hatred.

All was going wrong. The king suffered much in health from his sorrow and from the great labours which his endeavours to fill his empty exchequer cost him. Dom Enrique was unapproachable in his grief and pre-occupation; and the gentle Fernando, whose eyes and ears had ever been open to his followers' troubles, and who had managed to heal many a quarrel, was far away.

Into the midst of this sad society, where every one was full of mortification, sorrow, or anger, had come Nella Northberry, and her high spirits recoiled from it. She was sorry for the prince and angry at Brother Martin's treason, but she was not unhappy like the rest—only dull, and a little home-sick. She soon became aware of her power both over Harry and Alvarez, and her vanity was not quite proof against the flattery of the passionate homage of the young Portuguese. Her love of mischief prompted her to provoke her old companion by as much sauciness as was consistent with the etiquette which she was compelled to observe towards him; for the queen had placed her among her ladies-in-waiting. Nella hated court life, was too young and undeveloped constantly to keep herself in sympathy with the prevailing troubles, and, in short, she diverted herself by making her two admirers jealous of each other. Nella was young, gay, and unguarded; but she soon had cause to regret her first month in Lisbon.

Chapter Seventeen.

Misjudged.

"But whispering tongues may poison truth."

Spite of sadness of heart and severe retrenchments, a certain number of court ceremonials were inevitable, particularly when the convocation of the States-General had filled Lisbon with the Portuguese nobility and great ecclesiastics.

Nella did not love pomp and state; she had been accustomed to a life of great freedom and simplicity, and, spite of some girlish pleasure in the handsome dresses provided for her by her father, she found it unspeakably wearisome to stand behind Queen Leonor for hours while she held receptions. One of these took place as soon as the offer of a ransom for Dom Fernando had been decided on, and the whole company were full of the subject, discussing the wrongs and rights of it at every moment when speech was possible. But besides the main question, there was a strong undercurrent of suspicion and indignation against the supposed sharers of Brother Martin's treason. A great many people who had followed the apostate priest and had admired his preaching were loud in abuse of him, and repeated more than one saying which *now* appeared to them suspicious. Harry Hartsed, from a mixture of obstinacy and dislike to join in an outcry on an absent man who could not defend himself, declared that there was no proof against Brother Martin, and that he had always heard him express the most loyal sentiments. He was fresh from rather a sharp discussion on these points when the queen's movements made it possible to approach Nella, who looked very handsome, her fair skin set off by her green and silver dress, and her golden head towering above the other ladies. She smiled when she saw Harry, as if his presence was a pleasing variety.

"Well sir," she said, in English, "these court receptions may be mighty fine for you, who have your tongue free to talk, but I find it dull enough to stand speechless for hours."

"Speak now, then, fair mistress," said Harry, smiling; "and let me catch your words as they fall. Or would you prefer to listen while I tell you that I have but lived through the hours till I could reach your side?"

"No," said Nella, pouting. "Why, have you grown into a courtier too?"

"And do you really wish yourself back again at Northberry?"

"Ay, that I do! Indeed, Harry," said Nella, with a sudden change to earnestness that reminded him of her childish days, "sometimes I think that I do not love my good father nearly enough; for I cannot help wishing to go back again to Devon, though since Adela and Walter Coplestone have married and left the old manor it has been solitary enough."

"I shall not be able to go back to Devon till I have seen war enough make my fortune," said Harry; "nor do I wish to go—now," he added, meaningly.

Nella blushed a little and cast down her eyes, and as she raised them they met those of Alvarez, fixed on her with an expression of such passionate jealousy that her heart gave a frightened throb. How she wished that she had never teased Harry by encouraging his rival—for as such she began to recognise Alvarez; and though she scarcely realised that Harry wished her to be more to him than his old playmate, he had always been jealous of interference, and the feelings of Alvarez were unmistakable. The latter, too, was by far the best match, and Nella had a frightened conviction that her father would favour this suit whenever it was formally offered. She was glad when the queen signed to her to attend her, so that further speech was impossible.

While this little scene was passing a dance had been going forward—one of those stately and ceremonious exercises which were limited to a few couples at a time, whose graceful movements afforded a spectacle for the rest of the company.

Dom Pedro had led out Queen Leonor; and the king excusing himself on the plea of fatigue, sat down a little apart, watching the dancers with sad, unseeing eyes. Presently Enrique came up and joined him.

"I have a petition to present to you, my brother," he said.

"What is it, then?" asked Duarte; "what is it you wish?"

"Will you give me leave to go with the envoys who offer the Moors this ransom? Who could plead as I? And at least I should see my Fernando once more."

"I cannot refuse you," said Duarte; "but, Enrique, my mind misgives me. I would not be too long without your counsel."

"*My* counsel!" said Enrique, bitterly; "take any counsel rather than mine."

Duarte smiled.

"Your presence, then," he said. "But I think it is well that you should go, though I have little hope, Enrique, in my heart—"

"Dare to utter such a threat, and you shall answer for it with your life!"

These words, in tones of high indignation, suddenly interrupted the brothers' colloquy.

"How now? Young gentlemen, remember where you are?" said Enrique, advancing, and confronting with his stately presence Hartsed and Alvarez, who, with flashing eyes, and hands on their sword-hilts, had been so carried away by their dispute as to forget entirely the royal presence.

Alvarez collected himself at once, bowed, and drew back; but Harry cried out, fiercely, "My lord, I care not where I am! Dom Alvarez has insulted me foully, and I defy him to repeat his base slander!"

"The cause of your dispute, sir," said the prince, "can be of no moment to me, unless it were confided to me in a more suitable manner. Such violence argues ill for your cause, be it what it may."

The prince was himself very sore-hearted, and Harry had committed a great breach of propriety; but he felt himself deeply injured, and flung away without a word. Alvarez followed him into the court outside, and then the two young men turned and faced each other, and Alvarez spoke.

"I believe you to have been cognisant of the treason of your friend, the miscreant priest, Martin."

"Speak at your peril," shouted Harry, "or I will go back and before all the princes give you the lie!"

"As you will, señor. I will not yield the Lady Eleanor to a traitor, nor see my prince's confidence abused by a foreigner."

"Foreigner!" cried Harry. "No one but a rascally *foreigner* would utter such an insult. Draw, and defend yourself!"

Alvarez was not slow to answer this demand, but the clash of arms in the palace precincts soon collected an indignant crowd, and among them Sir Walter Northberry.

"Now, Master Hartsed," he cried, wrathfully, "brawling in the palace court. What means all this? Put up your swords this moment, gentlemen—for shame?"

"Master Hartsed challenged me and gave me the lie," said Alvarez.

"Dom Alvarez insulted me and called me traitor," cried Harry.

"This is not the first time that I have heard this wrangling," said Sir Walter. "Señor Dom Alvarez, it would be well if you would explain your charge against a member of my household. And you, Harry, be silent until I question you."

Trembling with indignation, Harry put a great force upon himself and remained silent; while Alvarez bowed, and looking at Sir Walter with his dark, flashing eyes, said—

"Sir, I had not meant in any way to make public my suspicions, but Master Hartsed's violence towards me, in especial after the honour which you this morning have done me, obliges me to speak."

Sir Walter bowed, and Alvarez continued—"Perceiving some slight tokens of favour which the lady whom I am unworthy to name had the grace to bestow on me, Master Hartsed lost patience and demanded how I dared to address Mistress Northberry."

"That is false?" cried Harry, "you lie in your teeth!"

"Master Harry, will you be silent at my desire?" said Northberry, sternly, "and hear Dom Alvarez to the end!"

"I," said Dom Alvarez, "was fain to tell him, that I marvelled how the friend and defender of the traitor Martin, whose name was on all men's lips, should dare to raise his eyes to an honourable lady. Upon which he threatened, and finally drew upon me."

"And on what grounds, Señor Dom Alvarez, do you accuse Master Hartsed of cognisance of this foul treason?"

"Master Hartsed," said Alvarez, "was ever in the company of the traitor, he has denied the possibility of his treason, and still calls him his *friend*. He must choose, I think, between this friend and loyal gentlemen."

"Into my house he comes not if he takes the traitor's name on his lips," said Northberry. "Now, Master Harry, what have you to say?"

"Nothing, before those who call me traitor," said Harry, with some dignity; then his anger getting the better of him he exclaimed—"Dom Alvarez knows best whether it was not he who threatened to interrupt *my* suit with his foul slander."

"Your suit, ha, ha!" said Sir Walter, roughly, "'tis the first I have heard of it. Now, to put an end to this folly, I will tell you, sir, that I have betrothed my daughter to Señor Dom Alvarez de Pereira. Nor do you make a fit return for my hospitality by raising your eyes to her. And this matter of your intimacy with the traitor priest must be looked to. Not that I hold you guilty of his treason, but it misbecomes you even to name his name."

Those present noticed, that instead of violent self-defence Harry Hartsed received this speech in silence, only turning very pale as he bowed stiffly to Sir Walter and walked away by himself.

Chapter Eighteen.

At Abzella.

"My Arthur, whom I shall not see
Till all my widowed race be run."

Many miles inland, out of sight of the blue sea, on the other side of which was home and freedom, the Portuguese captains waited at Arzella for the news of their deliverance. They had been hurried away from Tangier almost immediately after the Portuguese had embarked, and though no positive cruelties were inflicted on them, the

Moorish promises of courteous treatment did not prevent their escort from making their journey as wretched as they could. Intentional forgetfulness of needful comforts, rude jests, over-haste, and much ill-temper, tried the hot spirits of the Portuguese nobles sorely, and they were less wretched now that they remained under the charge of Zala-ben-Zala, and were allowed a certain amount of freedom and solitude, during which they could solace themselves with speculations as to the turn events were taking in Portugal, and how soon Ceuta would be handed over to the Moors. The prince never joined in these discussions, and when they were urged upon him would reply gravely—"As God wills;" though he sometimes endeavoured to pass the time by tales of the old Crusaders, of the sufferings they endured, and of the support which was granted to them. And once, when some of the younger nobles repeated to him the insulting language used towards them by their jailers, he pointed to a gang of slaves who were toiling over some of the fortifications of Arzella.

"So suffer our fellow-Christians," he said.

"They are not peers of Portugal," said the young man, sullenly.

"Stripes wound and blows hurt, be they who they may," said Fernando. "We can but endure; but oh, my friends," he added with tears in his eyes, "would that I were alone to suffer!"

"Alas, sir!" cried the young man, yielding, "it is your indignities that cut us the most."

It was after some weeks of dreary waiting that the prisoners became aware that envoys had arrived from Portugal and had been brought under a safe-conduct to Arzella, where Zala-ben-Zala was to discuss with them the terms of their deliverance, and one day the prince was summoned alone to meet them.

Fernando turned as he left his companions and said, in a tone of peculiar earnestness—

"My friends, remember, were we free, we would all give our lives to save Ceuta to the Church of Christ."

Fernando was conducted from the fortress where he had been lodged across the town of Arzella to the governor's palace, and ushered with much state and ceremony into the great hall, where stood Zala-ben-Zala, surrounded by a crowd of Moorish nobles and officers in their splendid dresses of state; opposite them a few Portuguese in full armour, and in front Dom Enrique himself, also armed, his dark surcoat giving additional dignity to his great height and stately presence, he was bareheaded, and as pale as death.

"You are at liberty to speak with one another," said Zala-ben-Zala. "Maybe the interview may change the mind of your highness."

"I speak the mind of the council of Portugal," said Enrique, in a voice of deep sadness. Then he stretched out his arms: "Oh, my Fernando, the choice was not for me," he said.

Fernando held him fast for a moment, all the surroundings forgotten; and then they sat down together on a great divan and looked into each other's face, and Fernando knew that Enrique had not brought his freedom.

"Come," he said, "tell me your errand."

"They will not yield the fortress," said Enrique. "They offer any ransom, and the Moors accept none."

"As God wills," said Fernando, but he tightened his grasp of Enrique's hand.

"My most dear brother, Pedro and João would have freed you; but I—that Christian town; and now I see the council risks your life—not for the Church, but for selfish power, and I—I lent my voice to theirs."

"I, too, have thought much on it," said Fernando, steadily; "of the obligations of the treaty, however ill our enemies have kept the lesser provisions of it."

"What, they ill-use you?"

"Nay—you see I am well. And I think of those unhappy ones whose fate hangs on mine. And I thank the merciful Saviour, who lays not the choice on me, but gives me the easier way of submission, and permits my poor life to be a defence to a fortress of Christendom as in no other way it could be. The wish of my heart is given,—may I but tread, in the footsteps of those blessed ones who have endured worse sufferings in the same cause, on honour which myself little deserved?"

Fernando smiled as he spoke, and for a moment Enrique felt that the confusion of good and bad motives, the doubtful self-denial, and still more doubtful justice, that led to the retention of Ceuta, were lifted by his brother's faith and love into the instrument of a holy martyrdom.

"So," continued Fernando, "bid Duarte not to grieve, for if I suffer, it is no more than I have deserved, and to suffer, even without choice, for such an end, is too great honour."

"Duarte is sick with the care and weight of decision," said Enrique sadly.

"Ah, could I but see him?" said Fernando, suddenly faltering; then, with renewed firmness, "But it cannot be. And you, my Enrique, how changed your face is. You must turn your thoughts again to Sagres and the adventures of your mariners. That is the appointed way in which you must serve. We still work together."

"And if—if the council and the king resolve to yield Ceuta?"

"Why then—God's will be done!" said Fernando, "and we may yet clasp hands again. Meanwhile some soul is passing away with the holy rites of the Church, some babe receives Christian baptism—who else were cast into outer darkness. But see; the governor interrupts us."

"Prince Fernando," said Zala-ben-Zala, "I trust your entreaties have induced the Duke of Viseo to endeavour to change the mind of the king."

"The King of Portugal," said Fernando, steadily, "must act as he thinks well. I have made no entreaties, and shall make none."

"Know you what you say!" thundered out Zala-ben-Zala, suddenly changing his tone. "Think you that henceforth your life will be easy, as it has been! Shall the forsworn hostage be treated as a king's son? No! Our prisoner no longer—you are our slave; and when next King Duarte sends envoys, let them see their prince of the blood—their Grand-Master—tending the horses of his Moorish masters as a slave—I say—in fetters and in rags?"

"The princes of Portugal do not yield to threats," said Fernando, calmly.

"I am but a mouthpiece," said Enrique, as steadily as he could.

"Go home and tell what you have seen," said the Moor, roughly.

The coarse threats stood the two princes in good stead, for their pride nerved them to a firm and silent farewell, though Enrique's heart was ready to break as he passed out of the hall with the officers who accompanied him, and left Fernando standing alone among his captors.

A short while afterwards, as the Portuguese nobles were eagerly watching for the prince's return, or for a summons to join him, their prison was suddenly entered by a party of Moorish soldiers.

"Now, Christian dogs, our turn has come," roughly shouted the foremost; and seizing on the Portuguese nearest to him he tore off his velvet mantle, flung it aside, and forced him down while he fastened fetters on his wrists. Resistance was vain, and with blows and curses the whole party, the old priest included, were loaded with chains, and dragged through the streets to the courtyard of the governor's palace.

There stood their beloved prince in a rough dress of common serge, fetters similar to their own on his wrists, and his chained hands on the rein of Zala-ben-Zala's beautiful Arab horse. He stood with his head up and his lip curled, with a sort of still disdain. At that moment the Portuguese envoys, with Dom Enrique at their head, passed with their guards through the court, and Zala-ben-Zala advanced to mount his horse with a rude gesture to the prince who held it.

Fernando bowed with knightly courtesy, and, advancing, held his stirrup, as if it were a graceful service rendered by a younger to an elder noble; then looked up and smiled in his brother's face.

Chapter Nineteen.

Times out of Joint.

"Commingled with the gloom of imminent war
The shadow of his loss drew like eclipse,
Darkening the world."

Nella Northberry was standing alone by the fountain in the hall of her father's house. The oranges were ripe on the trees, their sweet blossom was passed, and she herself looked pale, sad, and sullen. She had scarcely known what made her heart so heavy when her father had told her that she was to regard Dom Alvarez as her betrothed suitor, receiving her girlish expressions of unwillingness with entire indifference. Spirited as Nella was, it could not occur to her to resist her father's will, or think of disposing of herself in marriage; she knew that it was impossible, and the girls of her day had generally too little intercourse with the world before marriage to feel aggrieved at their absence of choice. Nella's life had not passed quite in accordance with established rules hitherto, and the fetters galled her.

She stood looking down into the clear waters of the fountain, her tall slim figure drooping a little with unwonted sadness, and her thoughts straying tenderly back to England—England, which she should never see again now. She thought of the grey convent, the wide woodlands now painted with russet and gold, the fresh autumnal breezes, the cheerful barking of the dogs at the old Manor house door; and her heart went out to it all with a passionate yearning that brought the hot tears to her eyes.

"If Catalina were here, perhaps Dom Alvarez would have liked *her* best," she thought, "and I might have gone home again." And with this strange reason for missing her lost sister, the tears came faster, and she pressed her hands over her eyes.

"Nella?" suddenly said a voice beside her, "does your father tell me true? Are you indeed betrothed to Dom Alvarez?"

Nella looked up with a start, for beside her stood Harry Hartsed, with a pale face and heavy eyes, as if he had passed a sleepless night.

"Oh, yes, Harry, it is true!" said Nella.

She turned her head away and cried bitterly, while Harry was dumb for a moment; for if she had told him that she was married already, there would hardly have been a greater barrier between them.

It did not occur to Harry to ask her if she loved Dom Alvarez; but he said, passionately—

“I had hoped one day to go back to the old Devon tower, which must come to me; and though I never could have made you a great lady, Nella, you should never have been vexed or crossed, and have had your will always.”

“Oh, hush! hush!” said Nella, “hush!”

“Tell me one thing,” said Harry; “Dom Alvarez accuses me of a share in the treason that rained my beloved prince. Do you believe *that* of your old playmate!”

Nella turned round, her blue eyes flashing through their tears.

“I would as soon believe it of myself,” she said.

“Then I care for no one,” cried Harry; “and when my prince comes home, he will see me righted.”

Perhaps it was as well for Nella that her father at this moment came out of the inner room. She ran up to him, and grasped his hand.

“Father, Harry is no traitor! How dared Dom Alvarez utter such a falsehood!”

“Leave me to settle that matter, my daughter,” said Sir Walter, sternly, “and go you within. What have you to do with the disputes of these gentlemen? Your country-breeding makes you too forward, and too free of tongue.”

Nella blushed deeply, and withdrew; but as she curtsied to her father, she looked for a moment at Harry, and said quickly—

“I shall never believe it!”

In all ages of the world, it is hard for women to sit at home and wonder how matters are going in the world without, and Nella had no chance of asking a question as she prepared for her first interview with her suitor. She was very unhappy, and knew too well that she would not have been so had Harry Hartsed been in Alvarez’s place; but she submitted to her unusually splendid toilet with a sense that she was submitting to the inevitable. Only she felt as if the blue brocade weighed down her young limbs till there was no life left in them, and as if the strings of pearls were burning their way into her brain.

She waited long after she was dressed, growing more and more weary, till she began to wonder at the delay. Perhaps Dom Alvarez would not come to-day after all.

At last, hearing sounds without, she sent one of her maids to inquire if her father had returned, and in a moment Sir Walter came into the room.

“Alas! my daughter!” he said, “better a widow’s coif than all this bravery! Young Hartsed, whom I renounce for ever, has foully slain Alvarez!”

“How?” said Nella, in a tone of utter amaze.

“He attacked and challenged him in the public street; they fought, and Alvarez is wounded well-nigh to death; while Hartsed is put in ward during the king’s pleasure. Now we see his treason plain enough—he sought to be rid of the witness of it.”

“Do not all men fight those who call them traitor?” said Nella, in a low clear voice.

“Your lady is distracted with the fatal news,” said Sir Walter, hastily; “she knows not what she is saying. See to her, ladies, I have no time to spare.”

With desperate hands Nella unfastened the jewels from her hair, and helped to cast aside her gay attire; then she sent all the ladies away, and alone awaited further tidings.

These were not long in coming. Dom Alvarez was severely wounded, but it was thought that he would recover in time; and after a very hasty inquiry into the matter, the king sentenced Hartsed to banishment from Lisbon. It was ill for them all that his strength was failing under sorrow and suspense, and that Dom Enrique had started on his unhappy embassy to Arzella.

As it was not thought suitable for Nella to visit the court during the severe illness of her betrothed, she was not aware of the king’s increasing indisposition, and was not present at Dom Enrique’s sad return, yet she dimly hoped that he might take up the cause of his brother’s favourite. But the news he brought stirred up the whole nation to a pitch of fury, and preparations for a renewal of the war were begun on a much larger scale, and with lavish expenditure. The pride of Portugal was touched to the quick, and the king reduced his private expenses, and gave all he could save to the common object. The winter and spring passed in arming and planning the campaign. Nella’s affairs were in abeyance. Harry Hartsed was gone, no one knew whither; and Dom Alvarez, on recovering from his wound, left Lisbon for change of air, and was to join the army with Sir Walter. All the talk was of hope and revenge, only the king’s face was unchangeably sorrowful.

One evening, shortly before the expedition was to start, Duarte was lying on a couch in his private room, resting from the fatigue of a long day in council. Beside him sat Enrique, who, with João, was to command the army, Dom Pedro being needed at home in the king’s weak state.

"Enrique," said Duarte, breaking a long silence, "ere we part, I would tell you my mind on certain matters."

"I will never cross your will again, my brother," said Enrique, humbly.

"I have thought much and long," said Duarte, with his grave gentleness. "This war is good,—justified by the conduct of the Moors to our beloved one. But, if it fails, I have written in my will that Ceuta must be ceded to them, and, to my thinking, it was our duty to have abided by our word. I was slow plainly to see this, but in this long sickness my eyes have grown clearer. Our Blessed Lord knows the souls in Ceuta which are His own, and would guard them through the fiery persecution which the failure of our arms would have brought on them. Maybe He would have allowed us to deliver them from it. It shows the faith of the blessed Cross in a poor light to the heathen when Christian men break pledged faith. And yet, Enrique, though as I lie here on soft cushions, with all things easy round me, I seem verily to feel *his* rough usage, taste *his* hard fare, it goes harder with me to pluck that jewel out of my father's crown, and give it back to the darkness whence he won it, than to see my Fernando win a martyr's crown."

"I shall never raise my voice against your will," said Enrique. "Daily, with prayer and penance, I entreat that Ceuta and Fernando both may yet be saved to us. If Ceuta goes, there is nothing for me who lost it but to vow myself to a life of penitence, and till Fernando is safe, there is no joy on earth for me."

"Take heart, my Enrique," said Duarte, tenderly. "If you have risked Ceuta, you have won wide lands to Portugal and to the Church; and remember, it is to you and Pedro I confide my son."

"Alas, Duarte, there would be no hope for church or country without you at the helm."

"As God wills," said Duarte, and words and tone vividly brought Fernando before Enrique's mind.

And before many days were over the stroke fell; and, as some say, of an attack of the plague, which he was too weak to resist, as others tell, of the long strain of grief and responsibility, the just and gentle Duarte died, of whom all agree that he never uttered a harsh word, nor committed an unrighteous action.

"A selfless man and stainless gentleman,
Who revered his conscience as his king."

He died, and with his life all the preparations for war fell to pieces, and came to an end. Portugal was plunged into a wild chaos of dispute and mis-government; the three remaining princes passed out of the clear following of clear aims that had marked their youth, into the wretched conflict, half-good, half-evil, of hand-to-hand fighting, with the necessities of every-day, till they hardly knew for what they were striving. There were miserable differences and cabals between the widowed Queen and Dom Pedro, who yet strove to act honourably by her; wild, mad accusations against these loving brothers of having poisoned Duarte, for whom either of them would gladly have died, a world of wrong and worry, from which they could not escape.

With the rights and wrongs of that unhappy story, a sadder one perhaps than the fatal siege of Tangier, we have now no concern; but some strange change must have passed over the mind of the nation, for no other effort was ever made to rescue Fernando. To all seeming, his country forgot him, as Harry Hartsed was forgotten. But Enrique, when in the intervals of his wretched life at court he went to gaze over the wide Atlantic, and plan how to penetrate its mysteries, prayed for the unknown suffering of his beloved brother, while Nella Northberry added to her prayers the name of another loved and lost one.

Chapter Twenty.

Darkness.

"For there is no way out of pain and trouble but only to endure them."

A party of travellers had come to a halt in the shade of a clump of trees, which pleasantly varied the monotony of the rough, sandy plains, covered with long grass, through which the road lay between Arzella and Fez. A weary journey, under the blasting winds and blazing sun of a North-African May. The sun was sinking now, and the wind was calm, and the Moorish cavalry, with their white turbans, flashing weapons, and beautiful steeds, brought to a halt on the small spot of grass, stood out picturesque and bright under the dear, rosy sky, a subject for a picture; the foil to these splendid soldiers being the coarsely-clad prisoners, or perhaps slaves. Prisoners, for how could they escape from their well-mounted guards? Slaves, for they ran hither and thither, fetching and carrying, rubbing down the horses, and bringing them water from a spring at hand, their steps, if lagging, hastened often by blows, and their answers, if sullen, met by rough jests or curses. And very various was their demeanour. Some fierce, and evidently stung to the quick, glanced up at their tyrants with muttered curses, and eyes of wrath and scorn; some sulkily did as little as they could; some stumbled through their work in utter weariness and pain, others hurried over it with officious readiness, humbled into an effort to avoid offending their terrible masters. It is not noble blood alone that can give a man patience, dignity, and courage, when called to lead the life of a slave.

One there was who, a little apart from the rest, was tending a splendid charger, black as jet, and with large, gentle eyes. The beautiful creature stood patient and still, as slowly, as if from fatigue and weakness, but with no apparent reluctance, and with more than one gentle word and caress, his delicate-handed attendant washed the sand from his hoofs, and gave him food and drink. As the prisoner turned somewhat feebly to lift a heavy skin of water, one of his fellow-slaves flung down his own burden, and, lifting the skin, held it to him on his knee, kissing the hand that took it.

"My lord, my lord, to see you serving that accursed brute?"

"Nay, my friend; thanks for your help; but do not call the good horse names. My brother, the king, has none such in his stable. I think I have something of his love for noble horses," said Fernando, with a smile. "But finish your own task, Manoel, or Moussa-ben-Hadad will give you the rough words you like so little."

"No matter, if I can aid your highness."

"I have finished," said the prince; "and our hour of rest is coming."

As he spoke, a tall Moor came up and struck young Manoel a rough blow, bidding him not to linger, but to bring him the water for his horse at once. Fernando did not interfere; perhaps experience had taught him that it was useless; but his brow contracted, and he bit his lip hard.

A little later, and while the Moors were taking their evening meal, the Christians, with whom of course they might not eat, sat together apart, eating the coarse black bread provided for them. It was their most peaceful moment, for they could then talk freely with each other.

The prince was one of the last to join them, and as he came up slowly and wearily, several sprang up to meet him, trying to form a couch for him with their rough garments, and offering to bathe his feet, which were bruised and dusty.

Fernando accepted their services gently and gratefully, asking them how they had fared during the day.

"As ill as usual, my lord," said one sulkily; "and small prospect of anything better at Fez. But the infidel dogs might beat my brains out ere I would consent to fawn and crouch and feign compliance, as Dom Francisco did but now. I scorn it!"

"Scorn will not give us a better supper than black bread; see, here are dates, to flavour it," said Dom Francisco, while the first speaker, an older man, snatched the gift from his hand and flung it away; and there was a disproportionate outcry of annoyance and vexation. Worn-out nerves and tempers were easily ruffled, and the men who had resigned themselves to lose their freedom could ill bear the loss of a handful of dates.

"Ah, hush, my friends," said Fernando; "worse than blows without are quarrels within."

"Now, now, my sons," said Father José, who had come up unperceived, "that was ill done. Now, if my lord of Viseo will not fling them away, here are oranges and a piece of dried goat's flesh, given me by that lad in a green caftan, who has, methinks, a less hard heart than the rest. And it has struck me, my children," proceeded the good father, "that the blessed Paul and Silas would not have converted their jailer had they bickered with each other, or grumbled at the prison fare, instead of singing Psalms in the darkness of the night. Wherefore, as singing causes the Moslems to blaspheme, I propose, while we divide the goat's flesh, to recite a portion of the Psalter."

Father José was a powerful though elderly man, and as he had never been accustomed to a luxurious life, he was able to endure the privations and hardships of his captivity better than most. He was good-tempered, too, and cheerful, and was without the heart ache that almost all the others carried about with them for near and dear ones, lost, it seemed, for ever. And, more than all, his faith was strong and clear, and a real support to the failing hearts of others.

Fernando's weak health caused him to suffer far more physically than any of his companions: he had been very ill at Arzella, and was even now hardly able to bear the fatigue of each day's journey. Nor did the blood either of Avis or Plantagenet run so tamely as to make insults easy of endurance; he pined for his brothers, and felt every trouble of his comrades as if it were his own. But then, too, he was able to feel the comfort of their love and devotion. As he lay on the ground, too weary to eat or take much share in the conversation, his face, worn as it was, had not its old restless look, and his eyes as they watched the sunset, were full of peace. It was not only that he had lost the sense of an unfulfilled desire; not only that he felt that his sufferings *did* serve the cause that he loved so well; better still than this, the passionate will that could see but one way of serving had learnt to submit at last, till he could take each trial patiently as it came from the Hand that sent it, and—completest victory of all—accept also each alleviation. The evening air and the fair landscape, the interval of rest and quiet, were really soothing to him, and there was something in this peacefulness which drew all his comrades to his side, each with his tale of trouble, or with the offer of some little service as comforting to himself as to the prince.

"We are still together," was a consolation even in the midst of their suffering.

Alas! it was soon the only one left them. Too soon they looked back on that hard journey as a period of comparative happiness. When they reached Fez their masters changed. Whether the sea-port towns had been considered as too unsafe in case of a siege, or whether the African Moors had been enraged by the strong representations of the Moorish king of Granada—that, under all the circumstances, the heavy ransom ought to have been accepted,—Zalaben-Zala sent his prisoners into the domains of Abdallah, the young king of Fez, whose prime minister was named Lazurac, and was one of the most savage monsters of history.

The unhappy prisoners were driven, with stripes and curses, through the streets of Fez, the dark-faced Moors flinging rude words, and even stones, at them as they passed.

"*One* bore His Cross through a raging multitude, and for us!" said Fernando to Manoel, who was near him; but as he spoke they came close under the frowning towers of the Darsena, a kind of castle, which guarded the town. Here they hoped at least for rest and shelter; and it was with almost a sense of relief that they were driven through the gates and into the inclosure of the castle, and on—through a long passage, down—down a sort of rough slope, through some great doors, which were locked and barred behind them, leaving them, in an utter blank of darkness, they knew not where.

Utter darkness—not a ray of light penetrated their prison. As they sank down, wearied, they could not see each other; when they put out their hands they could feel nothing near; all was silent and black as the grave.

“Let us pray,” said Father José, and began, “Out of the deep have I called unto Thee, O Lord.”

It was the deep indeed—the very depth of misery; and as they began to recover from the fainting weariness of their terrible march the horror of the darkness struck them more forcibly, and they were afraid to move, lest they should lose each other in unknown depths, till Fernando proposed that the least exhausted should try in a body to reach the wall of their prison, but never going beyond easy recall from himself and one or two others, who were completely spent.

They found that their dungeon was of considerable extent, but they were afraid then to penetrate all across it. It was damp, too, and bitterly cold, and no provision of food or drink seemed to have been made for them. It seemed like the intentional ending of their sorrows; and numb, stupefied, and utterly hopeless, they crowded together on the cold floor of their dungeon, unknowing whether minutes, hours, or days passed over them, till suddenly their door was opened, and a man with a basket and a dim lantern in his hand was allowed to enter.

“Prisoners,” he said, in broken Portuguese, “I am a Majorcan merchant, and am allowed to sell bread to the prisoners.”

“For the love of Heaven, a light,” cried Manoel, “that we may see our misery.”

The merchant came towards them, and turned his flickering light on the face of Fernando, who lay, almost senseless, in Father José’s arms.

“We have no money to buy of you, good friend,” said the priest; “but if of your charity you could give us a drop of wine for our dear Lord—”

The Majorcan knelt down, put his lamp into the hand of Manoel, and pouring out a little wine, held it to the prince’s lips; and as it touched them he opened his eyes and looked round, as if bewildered. The merchant had a good grave face, and, when they repeated that they could not buy of him, he smiled and said, “Still, he came there to trade with prisoners,” and put his provisions down beside them; and he also left them the means of making a light; but this he advised them to use secretly and at rare intervals, as for that he had no leave. He showed them the extent of their prison, and left them two or three sheepskins to form a bed. Whether at this time Lazurac really cared if his prisoners perished or not, or whether he intended to force the prince into entreating his brother to deliver him at any cost, certain it is that the few visits of this good Samaritan were all that kept hope, nay, life itself, in the wretched prisoners. The hopeless darkness, the terrible inaction, and the damp, dark atmosphere, broke down both health and spirits. Some, to add to the misery, were seized with fever, and lost their senses, raving wildly; and though Fernando was saved from this, he was never able to raise himself from the ground, and suffered terribly from pain and weakness. But through the three long months of that terrible trial he never uttered a complaint, save of his companions’ sufferings; and little as he could do for them, there was an influence of peace in the touch of his hand and the sound of his voice. There were times when, treated like brutes as they were, the animal nature awoke within them, and they were ready to tear each other to pieces in the bitterness of their despairing fury; other times, when they sought a kind of relief in wild ribald jests, and many long intervals of sulky, faithless despair; when even Father José’s prayers and encouragements were unavailing. Then the voice that was always gentle, the words that were always pure, the faith that saw beyond the dungeon walls, would woo them to a better mind; and the love they bore him helped them to hold to the love of God; and when, now and again, by the faint light of their little lamp, Father José took of the good Majorcan’s bread and wine, and celebrated the Holy Eucharist, as long ago it had been celebrated by martyrs and confessors in dens and caves of the earth, they felt the power of that Holy Presence, and attained to something of the martyr’s spirit as well as the martyr’s fate.

Chapter Twenty One.

The Feast of Flowers.

“Go, bring me showers of roses—bring.”

Flowers—flowers everywhere; one blaze of colour through the royal gardens of Fez. Was not the young King Abdallah about to marry the Princess Hinda, daughter of a neighbouring potentate, and had he not vowed that since she loved flowers better than anything in the world, flowers she should have, specimens of every flower in his dominions! Lazurac might rule over people and prisoners as he would, but he must provide flowers for his boy sovereign, and workmen to plant, deck, and wreath his gardens within the space of a few hours with every flower under heaven. Round every column and arch were twined ropes of roses, oleanders, and arums, in limitless profusion. Crowds of girls tied the wreaths, while the slaves brought them by hundreds and festooned them from tree to tree. And so, because hands were short, or perhaps to insult them still further, the Portuguese prisoners were released from their dungeon and brought out once more into the light of day, to hang up rose-wreaths for the king’s *fête*.

But although food had been given them and somewhat more decent clothes, and they had been allowed to wash off their prison-stains before meeting the eyes of their fellows, they sat blinking at the light and staring at each other, feeling as if they were the ghosts of the men who three months before had entered that gloomy dungeon, so terrible had been its effect on them. As the slave-drivers perceived that even the strongest of them were really incapable of any active exertion, they were desired to sort the great heaps of flowers that had been thrown down in a shady spot, “and to feast their eyes on their master’s magnificence.” Soon they were told their work would be daily in the royal gardens.

At another time all would have chafed bitterly at so effeminate an occupation; but now air, light, and employment of any sort were so enchanting to them that these bearded European nobles picked away contentedly at the flowers, and Father José sorted the red roses from the white with positive pleasure, while young Manoel, who had failed much of late, fell asleep with a smile on his face; and Fernando, twining the flowers round his fingers, told how his mother, Queen Philippa, had described to him and to João how the maidens of England would deck a pole with flowers and dance round it on the first of May.

Suddenly rushing out towards them from an inner court, laughing and chattering, their veils pulled carelessly half over their faces, came a party of young girls.

"More flowers—flowers! Slaves, bring them hither!" cried the foremost, imperatively; then as the prisoners rose to comply, she recoiled with a scream at the ghastly figures that sat among the gorgeous summer flowers.

"Make your obeisance to me," said a Moor, coming up, as he struck Fernando across the shoulders with his staff; while Manoel, weak as he was, sprang at him like a wild cat.

"Ho, fetters here!—Villains, you resist?"

"No no!" cried the lady. "They cannot work so fast in fetters. The princesses want flowers—more flowers;" and the girls flew back to their garden, followed by some of the Portuguese.

The seclusion of the Moorish women was not so complete as to forbid occasional intercourse with the other sex, slaves especially; and presently the foremost girl came scudding back again to where Fernando lay, holding something in both her hands.

"Poor Christian," she said, "here is some milk for you. Muley is cruel to strike you. Shall I ask Princess Hinda to beg the king to cut his head off?"

Fernando had acquired enough of the Moorish language to understand her, and negatived this alarming proposal decidedly, while he thanked her for the milk, saying—

"I would not be so discourteous, lady, as to sit in your presence, but that I cannot rise."

"I suppose that is because they ill-use you," she said, sorrowfully. "Look," taking a heap of flowers and laying them beside him, "now Muley will think you have sorted those. What do they call you?"

"Selim," said Fernando; for though it was well known who he was, like all the rest he had a slave's name.

"Perhaps you will work for my princess," said the girl; "she will be kind to you."

"Leila, Leila?" cried a voice, and, snatching up a handful of flowers, she ran off in haste.

The preparations were soon made, and the *fête* proceeded, like a dream of Eastern splendour and profusion. Thousands of lamps, as the twilight fell, shone among the flowers. The slave-girls danced wonderful and graceful figures before the guests, and the Portuguese prisoners, with other slaves, held long garlands in a circle to enclose a space for the dancers, their pale, haggard faces showing in strange contrast to their surroundings. Zala-ben-Zala was the chief of the guests. As he walked round to survey the dancing, he paused opposite to Fernando and addressed him—

"So, slave?" he said, scornfully, "how like you this work? Is this fit service for a Prince of Portugal?"

"No," said Fernando; "nor fit treatment for a hostage, nor even for a prisoner of war, if so you choose to regard me."

"Will you now write and urge on your brother to deliver you—that loving brother who has let you pine in a dungeon rather than yield a fortress for your sake?"

"I will urge nothing on the King of Portugal," said Fernando, steadily; "nor are the sufferings you choose to inflict on me worthy to change the policy of a nation."

"You know not yet what those sufferings may be."

"Well," said the prince, calmly, "the worse they are, the sooner they will end in death, when your power ceases. You fear not death, Zala-ben-Zala, neither do I."

"There are those here that will break your proud spirit yet," said the Moor fiercely, as he went on.

But the prince's words had not been altogether without effect. If he died from the cruelties practised on him, the power of his captors was over, and their last chance of winning Ceuta was gone. Therefore it became their aim to make his life as wretched and degrading as it could be, but still a life possible to live; and none of the party could have borne many more days in their terrible dungeon. A wretched lodging was assigned to them in Fez, their food was of the coarsest bread, their clothes of undressed sheepskins, and all day they toiled as common labourers in the royal gardens, with multitudes of other slaves, Christians of all nations, degraded by their miseries till their Christianity and even their manhood was forgotten; while, mingled with them, were dark-skinned natives from other parts of Africa, ignorant heathens.

Miserable as this life was, in that beautiful climate it was so great an improvement on the Darsena, that the poor prisoners, except Manoel, regained much of their health and strength, and Fernando was usually able to get through the amount of toil required of him, and even not seldom to help his unhappy comrades. For the only use he made of

the consideration, which, as far as they dared, all the other slaves showed him, was to persuade them to live peacefully with each other, to bear each other's heavy burdens, and not, as some of the poor wretches were apt to do, curry favour with their masters by complaining of each other. When they saw Fernando endure blows and curses for neglected work rather than betray the weakness of those who worked with him, they were ready to listen to the words he spoke to them of One Who also had endured insult and cruelty, and Who was with them through all their weary days, and the first gleam of hope came to many of them from his voice and smile.

One day Fernando, with several others, had been carrying stones and earth for an embankment near the ladies' garden. Father José at some little distance was sturdily heaping up the burdens brought by the rest, murmuring Psalms to himself the while, Manoel slowly helping him. The times were good, for the mildest of their overseers was in charge of them, and they had passed the whole day without a blow to hurry their footsteps.

Presently Fernando beheld, leaning over the garden-wall, the same maiden who had given him the milk.

"Selim," she called, and Fernando put down his load of stones and came towards her.

"What is your will, lady?" he said, with an involuntary smile at the fair, childish face before him.

"My little green parrot has flown away over the wall; it is there by your working place; I want it back."

Fernando bowed, and returning, caught the parrot with so much ease as to surprise him, and brought it back to its mistress.

"It is safe, lady," he said.

"I am not a lady, I am a slave too," said the girl, fixing her eyes upon him.

"But your fetters are but chains of roses," said the prince.

"Tell me," she said, "which of the Portuguese prisoners is Dom Fernando?"

"He speaks to you now," said Fernando, a little surprised at her accurate repetition of his title.

Leila, for she it was, coloured deeply, a whole world of memories waking in her. She put her hand to her bosom and drew out a little ornament, which she laid on the wall before the prince. It was a gold cross set with jewels, and Fernando recognised it at once.

"You are Catalina Northberry," he exclaimed, and at the sound of the name so long unheard, the slave girl burst into tears.

"Oh, I had forgotten—I had forgotten," she cried. "But after the flower feast I heard the king tell how the Prince of Portugal was now his slave. And I can remember the fountain, and my lord Dom Fernando, who gave us the crosses, and Nella—Nella—a little girl like me."

"It is true, Señorita," said Fernando; "long have they wept for you."

"Hush! I am called. I will speak again with you," cried Catalina, running away hastily, while Fernando hurried back, lest his absence should be found out, rejoicing at the discovery; for surely he could manage that some intimation might reach Lisbon of Catalina's existence. Certainly if deliverance ever came for himself and his friends she might be included in it.

Chapter Twenty Two.

News From Home.

"And the days darken round me, and the years,
Among new men, strange faces, other minds."

The days passed on until October. Fernando saw no more of Catalina, though he still laboured in her neighbourhood; and no incidents broke his life of toil, till one day the Portuguese were sent for to the presence of the prime minister. It was part of the humiliation laid upon him that he was now and then, forced to appear in the midst of the splendid court in his slave's dress, his hands stained with toil and fettered, as they always were, except when actually engaged in working. But spite of all this, and though his stiff limbs moved slowly and feebly, there was no air of embarrassment, no consciousness of degradation. He walked up the great hall, and looked Lazurac firmly in the face, bowing to him with the courtesy of a superior, neither shrinking nor defiant.

Lazurac burst out in sudden accents of fury.

"Now, slave," he cried; "now you are wholly in our power. What is to prevent us from flaying you alive, beating you to death, in revenge for the perfidy of your countrymen? And now no fleets will sail to deliver you; we need fear no more from the vengeance of Portugal."

"And why?" said Fernando, as soon as Lazurac paused.

The Moor came and stood over him, his dark face convulsed with rage, a strange contrast, with his splendid dress and infuriated aspect, to his prisoner, whose clear calm eyes were raised to his without fear or falter.

"Because the king, your brother, has died while shilly-shallying over his intentions of freeing you. Here is the news of his death, and no word of keeping the treaty. Ha! I have moved you now!"

For Fernando staggered, and would have fallen but for Lazurac's rough grasp.

"My brother—my brother!" was all he could utter.

"Ay, there is a letter for you also; but the news is enough for you, rest content."

"I pray you give me the letter?" said Fernando, faintly.

Lazurac laughed scornfully.

"Have you no mercy—no pity?" cried Fernando. "Offer me any insult you will, but *give* me the letter?"

It was the first time his calm dignity had been moved to intreaty or anger; but now he flashed out suddenly—

"You do not dare to withhold it from me? Nay, nay, I would not anger you; only give me the letter?"

Lazurac drew out the letter, with Enrique's writing above the great black seal on the cover, and held it before his eyes.

"Kneel to me then; kneel to your master, and beg him of his favour to grant you your boon."

Fernando drew himself up for a moment, while the other Portuguese rushed forward and threw themselves on their knees.

"Give us the letter," they cried; "but spare this insult to our prince."

"Rise, friends," said Fernando, who had regained his self-control. "The shame lies not with me; and to my Master I kneel;" and he knelt, and for a moment raised his eyes to Heaven.

Lazurac flung him the letter, with a sense of gratified spite and hatred, and the prisoners were suffered to withdraw. What mattered the scene that had passed to Fernando; what mattered insult and hardship, compared to the sorrow and anguish of heart of reading of the beloved brother's illness and death! Tears such as all his suffering had never wrong from him flowed fast as he read, and for the first time he was unable to comfort and support his followers, who all knew that a much blacker cloud had fallen on them, and that their chances of deliverance were lessened by this blow.

"My son," said Father José, tenderly, "our beloved king suffered much grief and anxiety. We may think of him now in the rest of Paradise."

"Grief and anxiety which I helped to cause," sighed Fernando. "Doubtless it is well; but now, submission is hard."

And when the prince was thus cast down, the spirits of the whole party failed utterly, and one after another fell into disgrace with their tyrants, and suffered accordingly. At last, after a second night of tears and anguish, Fernando regained the mastery over himself, and before they started on their day of toil he called his friends around him, and thus spoke—

"My friends, I think we must put hope away. It was my dear brother's earnest wish to free us by ransom, by force, or even by the yielding of the Christian city, for which, for my part, I think our poor lives were a bad exchange. But what he could not do, our bereaved country in its hour of trial will fail to accomplish. So pardon me my share in your sorrows, my rashness first, and now that I cannot bring myself to beg our freedom at the price they ask. Could I but bear it all—could I but make in our own land such a home and rest as you deserve! But there remaineth a rest for us all, where my brother is gone before. So let us pray, my friends, that the will of the Lord may be perfectly fulfilled in us; let us in utter submission find peace at last. For there is an end to our trial, and a home from which we shall not be shut out."

And so Fernando wholly, and the others as far as they might, gave up the restless hope of freedom, and set themselves to bear the suffering of each day as it passed, not looking to the morrow. And so there came to them in the midst of their toiling, driven lives, some still and peaceful moments, some inward consolations that carried them through.

Their lives were very monotonous, chiefly varied by the sickness of one or other, often of Fernando himself, which held them solitary prisoners in the miserable, airless lodging where they dwelt, or by a different overlooker at their toil, or a change in the part of the gardens where they pursued it. Now and then, too, they saw their old friend the Majorcan merchant, who brought them little comforts; on which occasions Fernando's appetite was often found to fail, and he would beg some other to take his share.

They had very little opportunity of intercourse with the other slaves, by whom a chance word or look from Fernando was highly valued; but since the Moors were not all fiends incarnate, Fernando's faultless life and ready performance of all that was allotted to him won him some favour from his masters, and with some of them a little courteous intercourse. Their lot, with its toil, squalor, and hardship, was bad indeed, but enduring when not made worse by wilful cruelties.

Soon after the news of the king's death, Fernando and Manoel, alone of their party, were digging out the ground for some new fountains in the ladies' garden. Their overseer was a certain Hassan, the mildest of his race, and he was superintending the other prisoners at a little distance, sitting cross-legged on a bank, smoking his hookah.

Princess Zarah and her maidens were seated at some distance, watching the alterations. Manoel worked slowly, and paused often for breath.

"Rest, now," said the prince, "there is nothing to do here but what I can finish easily."

"I would gladly save your highness from doing one stroke of it," said Manoel, wearily; "but sometimes I think, sir, my sorrows are nearly over."

"If so, dear lad," said Fernando, with a smile, "the rest of us might envy you; sorely, as I, at least, should miss your face."

"But for you, my lord, I could not have held out so long," said Manoel, as, weak and faint, he sank down on the ground. The prince raised him in his arms, and looked round for help.

"Princess! princess!" said Leila, who was stringing beads for her mistress, "one of the slaves is fainting."

"It was very stupid of Hassan not to send men who can do their work. He should whip them when they are idle," said Zarah, indolently.

"Oh, princess! let me take him water; he will die!" cried Leila.

"If you like," said Zarah, putting a sweetmeat between her lips.

Leila seized a jar of water, and some fruit and bread, and came towards the prisoners. She looked frightened and shy; but held out the jar of water to Fernando, who bathed Manoel's face with it.

"He does not revive," said the girl.

"Yes! his eyes open!—Manoel, dear friend!"

But as Fernando looked in his face, he saw that the last hour was come, and Father José far away on the other side of the gardens. He laid Manoel down, with his head on a heap of turf, and kneeling beside him, made the sign of the cross over him, and repeated the Pater Noster, while a smile of peace passed over the face of the dying boy.

Beside them knelt Leila, brought there by her sweet impulse of pity. She clasped the cross still hanging within her dress, and the long-forgotten words of the prayer taught in her childhood rose to her lips. The words were hardly said, Fernando bent down to kiss Manoel's brow, when the end came, and with a long, gasping sigh, *one* prisoner was free.

"*He* is at rest," said Fernando, in thankful accents, though his lips quivered as he thought how much he should miss the special love which this poor boy had borne him.

Leila stood trembling beside him, hardly knowing that she looked on death, and Hassan, seeing something amiss, came hurrying down to them, and not unkindly summoned some of the other Portuguese to bear away their comrade, allowing Fernando to follow, while he called other slaves to finish their work.

Leila was surrounded by her companions, who pressed her with a thousand frivolous questions, more amused at the exciting incident than horrified at it.

Leila shrank away from them, and as soon as she found herself alone, sat down under a tree and tried to think—tried to remember.

Long ago a strange pang had shot through her, when she had recognised in the toiling slaves her fellow-Christians. And the sight of Fernando had awakened in her a whole world of recollections; had made her suddenly feel, as well as know, that she was not of kin to the soft luxurious life around her—her kindred were these wretched toiling slaves—her faith should be their faith—in their sorrows she, too, ought to suffer.

Leila could not have clearly explained this to herself; she could only feel the strong impulse that twice had carried her to the aid of a Christian slave in distress. And now an odd sort of instinctive respect for the prince, who had been the hero of her babyhood, rose up in her mind. She had been taught but little religion to put in the place of the forgotten faith she had learnt with her sister so long ago; and the only result of being a Christian that could occur to her was miserable slavery. A great terror came over her, she tried to wake as from a dream, and ran back hurriedly to her companions.

Chapter Twenty Three.

Loving Service.

"Stone walls do not a prison make,
Nor iron bars a cage;
A free and quiet mind doth take
These for a hermitage."

The streets of Fez presented often a motley mixture of passengers—merchants and traders of all nations mingling with the Moorish inhabitants and with the numerous slaves.

One morning, bright with all the glory of a southern spring, a tall young man, sunburnt, and carrying a merchant's

pack, was standing in one of the chief streets watching the passers-by. First was a dark Ethiopian, heavily fettered; then several of the lower-class Moors themselves; then a pair of slender, long-limbed Italians, trudging wearily beneath a burden too heavy for them. The trader accosted them—

“Can you direct me to the lodging assigned to the Portuguese prisoners? I would speak, if permitted, with the Prince Dom Fernando.”

“Softly, Signor,” said the Italian; “it is not so we obtain speech with friends. There is the lodging for your compatriots; but all day they toil in the royal gardens.”

“That wretched hovel?” ejaculated the stranger.

“Ay, and now I recollect one of the Portuguese told me sadly, but now, that their prince was sick, so he will be within. Maybe a bribe to their warder will gain you an entrance.”

Like one in a dream, the young man moved towards the entrance of the low stone building which his acquaintance had indicated, and accosted a Moor who stood before the door.

“I am servant to Paolo, a Majorcan merchant,” he said, “who is permitted to visit the prisoners. Will the King of his grace permit me entrance?” and he dropped a purse into the warder’s hand as he spoke.

“Well, may be, if you leave your pack behind you. Who knows what it may contain?”

“Willingly, so I may take these few dried fruits to my compatriots.”

The warder sullenly unlocked the door, and ushered the young merchant into a small low room, with no furniture save a few sheepskins thrown on the floor. On one of these, in a corner, lay a figure, worn and wasted, and dressed in a torn and ragged coat of the commonest serge. His eyes were closed as if asleep, and only the delicate outline of the features, and the fair hair, still tended more or less carefully, bore any resemblance to the Infante Fernando.

“Wake!—rouse up!” said the Moor with a rough push. “House up, slave!—here’s a visitor for you.”

The prisoner opened his large blue eyes and looked up languidly.

“Just a draught of water,” he said, faintly, “for my lips are parched with this fever.”

“My prince!—oh, my prince! My lord, my lord!—oh, wretched day, that I should see this! Curses on the ruffians. Oh, my dear master!” and down dropped the young merchant on his knees, sobbing, and covering the prince’s hand with kisses.

“What!—Harry Hartsed! Not a prisoner too?”

“No, no! Alas, alas!”

“Hush!” said Fernando. “Come, good Moussa, thou knowest I am to be trusted. Withdraw but for a few minutes.”

“Well—’t isn’t much harm can be done. I’ll get you that draught of water, since a tamer set of birds I never had in cage.” And locking the door behind him, Moussa went out.

“That man is often kind to us,” said Fernando; “but oh, Master Hartsed, what brings you here?”

“I come—I have sought your highness for months—that a word from you might right me. But oh! what are my wrongs to this? Oh, my lord! let me but share your prison, that I may wait on you and tend you. Alas, alas!”

“Nay, nay,” said Fernando, “I have no lack of loving tendance, and to-morrow I hope to be at my work again, for this is but a passing sickness, and at night my poor friends return to me. But when were you at Lisbon? My brothers!—oh, Harry, you come from home?” and the gentle eyes grew wistful, and filled with tears.

“I come not now from Lisbon,” said Harry, “and I know not what is now passing there. My lord, when you were sick formerly, you would sometimes rest on my arm—so—”

“Thanks—thanks!”

The poor prince closed his eyes; the familiar voice and touch, unknown for so long, brought back a dream of home. Could he but sleep so, and know no waking in his dreary prison! It almost seemed for a moment as if, when his eyes opened, he should see Enrique leaning over him, and hear his loving greeting. Ah, never—never! till they met in Paradise! With a great effort he roused himself, for time was passing.

“But these wrongs of which you speak?”

Harry was silent. The boiling indignation in which he had quitted Lisbon, the rage and hate that had proved his own undoing, sank away ashamed; and it was very meekly that at length he told his tale—told of the false accusation, the quarrel with Alvarez, the anger of Sir Walter, the hasty banishment, adding, as he had never done before—

“My lord, had I been patient, it might have been otherwise with me.”

“Ah, dear friend, there is no remedy but patience for all the evils brought on us by our own rash folly. Repentance and patience. But now, have you tablets?”

"Yes, my lord."

"Then—your arm again for a moment, and I will Write—for Moussa will soon return." So saying the prince wrote—

"I, Fernando of Avis, declare that Harry Hartsed was my most faithful friend and servant, and that no charge of treason can be proved against him, and I beg my dear brother, Dom Enrique, to look once more into the matter."

"Go, Harry," said the prince, "at once to my brother. And now I have a matter to tell you. I have found Catalina Northberry, Sir Walter's lost child."

"My lord! Where?"

"Here, in the royal palace of Fez. She is the slave of the Princess Zarah; but happy and tenderly nurtured. Alas! I know not whether escape is possible for her; but she knows her name and has a kind heart. I dare not write of her; but you might, through Paolo, obtain speech with her, and take welcome news to Sir Walter," said Fernando, concluding with a smile.

Harry looked as if he could hardly believe in so startling a coincidence.

"But oh, my dear lord! your sufferings—this wretched place."

"I can but thank our blessed Saviour, and those holy saints who have followed in His steps, for the grace that has been given me so to meditate on their examples, and to remember their far greater sufferings, as to bear with somewhat less repining *my* share in the blessed cross. For what is it that I should bear rough words, or now and then a blow, when for my sake the Lord Himself was mocked and scourged?"

"And oh," thought Harry, with bent head, "what is it then that I should be misjudged?"

"And yet," said Fernando, "since our dear Lord knows how weak I am, and how hard it is to hold a firm heart amid slavery and cruelty, and without those whom I love, He holds me up with such a frequent consciousness of His presence, and such a blessed sense of His goodness, as is better than freedom and friends; so weep not, dear Harry, and bid my Enrique not to weep for one who has blessings of which he is all unworthy."

Harry could only bend down and kiss the wasted hands that held his.

"My lord, I have sinned in my fierce anger," he said; "I see it, now I know what my prince has to bear."

"You did always know, Harry, what was borne by the Prince of Peace," said Fernando. "But here is Moussa; maybe we shall meet again in the royal gardens; if so, pay me no respect—treat me as a slave."

Moussa here entered with a skin of water, with which he permitted Harry to bathe the prince's face and hands before quitting him, as he lay grateful and smiling, with a word of thanks to Moussa for his kindness.

When Harry found himself in the free air again, he staggered as if he would faint, and, hardly recovering, hurried away out of the streets of the town into a quiet spot, where he threw himself down on the ground, able to think of nothing but of the condition in which he had found the prince. When he quitted Lisbon, full of resentment and anger, he had at once resolved to seek the prince in his imprisonment, and obtain some evidence from him of his innocence. He was far too proud to go back to England with a dishonoured name, and though he believed Nella lost to him for ever, he could not bear to think that she should be taught to disbelieve in him. He was too angry to consider that his violent quarrel with Alvarez, rather than the vague charge against him, had been the cause of his banishment. After a long series of adventures, and some hardship and difficulty, he finally encountered the good Paolo, who undertook to obtain him speech of the prince, and provided the bribe for the warder. But not all the merchant's descriptions had prepared Harry for what he saw, and he could not recover from the impression. He hung about the place where the slaves were employed, and obtained speech of one or two of the Portuguese, who were all eager to hear a word from home. They were all more patient than the other poor slaves, and had evidently learnt something from the example of the prince, who after a day or two appeared again among them, working feebly at his humble toil; a sight that nearly drove Harry crazy.

Chapter Twenty Four.

Restored.

"Laila rushed between
To save—
She met the blow, and sank into his arms."

Thalaba.

Meanwhile Leila mused much over the death of Manoel. The dim visions of her childhood were too far away to be attractive. Even Nella, though a tender thought to her, was vague compared to the maidens by whose side she had played for years. The notion of a father was utterly strange to her—too strange to be attractive. She loved the princess, who had been on the whole kind to her, with the devotion of a loving nature; and she shrank timidly from the unknown world without the palace walls.

"To be a Christian" hardly came before her in the light of an obligation; she knew nothing of Christianity but a few words of prayer, which she did not understand, and the sign of the cross, made instinctively, to which she could

scarcely attach a meaning. She was frightened by the call to become something so new and strange. Her feelings were dormant and uncultivated. She was happy enough; why should she change?

Then there rose up before her the one figure who had come to her out of the mists of darkness, the enslaved prince. *Her* friends oppressed *him*, and she thought with a shudder of the ill-treatment she had witnessed. If she was a Christian too, was it not a shame to lie there on her soft couch, to eat sweetmeats, and play with flowers, while he suffered such cruel pangs! Strange contradiction!—it was not freedom, a father or a sister's love, that made her feel that she was a Christian, but the stripes and the fetters of her fellow-slave.

Still this was but a feeling; and this poor child was no heroine, no deliverer of her race, but a little soft, spoiled, tender creature, who had lived all her days on sweetmeats and caresses.

But a great desire possessed her to hear what the prince would say to her about that unknown world of which she had been lately thinking; and with a view to getting an interview with him, she set herself to watch the slaves as closely as possible. She soon perceived that it was a bad time for the Portuguese. The mild Hassan had been succeeded by an overseer named Jussuf, whose cruelties were frightful, and the poor prisoners could do nothing so as to escape his blows.

One day, as she stood by the garden-wall watching, with a fascination that grew every moment more painful and more intense, Fernando detached himself a little from the others, and, unobserved for a moment, rested the heavy load under which he staggered against the wall. The little gate was unfastened, for some work had been going on within; and, with sudden courage, Leila, pulling her veil over her face, pushed it open, and touched the prince's arm.

"They are not looking. Come inside and rest," she said.

Fernando was almost fainting; he yielded unthinkingly, and putting down his burden of heavy stones, dropped down on the grass.

"Oh, you will die, as the other slave did," cried Leila, in terror.

"No, lady," said Fernando, recovering himself; "this rest has revived me. I have sought to speak with you to tell you that I have been enabled to send home a message to your father, telling him of your safety; and I doubt not that he will find means to offer such a ransom as may restore you to your friends."

Leila trembled.

"My lord," she said, "I am afraid to be a Christian."

"Ah, do not think," said Fernando, "that the cross would bring on you such suffering as you see in these poor slaves; or, if so, it is in the service of a Master Who endured infinitely more for His followers."

"Like you," said Leila.

"Nay," said Fernando, "yet if I could reach that likeness—"

The prince had risen to his feet, and stood leaning against the gateway. Leila sat on the grass. She had pushed aside her veil, and was looking up at him with her clear blue eyes shining through half-shed tears. Suddenly Jussuf's heavy hand fell on Fernando's shoulder, striking him down to the ground again.

"Dog of a Christian!—what do you here?" he cried, striking blow after blow.

With a sudden impulse Leila rushed forward, and threw herself on her knees beside them.

"I too am a Christian!" she cried, and before Jussuf could stay his hand, the heavy blow intended for his victim, fell on Leila's head, and stretched her senseless on the grass.

"Coward and villain!" cried the prince, all his knightly manhood roused, as with sudden strength he sprang up, and for once returned the blow.

All passed in a moment. Leila's screams had brought both the other women and the slaves and overseers without to the spot, and Fernando's hands were pinioned, and he was dragged away before he had time to see whether Leila's senses returned to her. He bitterly blamed himself for having yielded to her proposal, for the incident brought far severer restrictions on himself and his companions, and he feared much suffering on the poor maiden herself; and many were the prayers he offered that she who had been impelled to so brave a confession might not be forced into denying the Faith which she scarcely knew, and that this tender, innocent child might not have to endure such suffering as tried the uttermost strength of grown men. Leila, when she revived from the stunning blow, was dizzy and faint; but when her princess questioned her, she answered boldly, that she knew the slave Selim to be the Prince of Portugal, and that she herself was a Christian lady—she could not bear to see him beaten.

Whereat the princess angrily reminded Leila that she too was but a slave, and sentenced her to a whipping—not very severe—for her disobedience and folly. Leila *was* a slave, and she took the stripes as her due, and cried at their smart, then kissed her mistress's hand, and begged for pardon; and the princess indolently forgave her, and bade her go and work at her cushion.

"But do not weep," said she, "for Ayesha is growing prettier than you, and if you cannot laugh and sing to amuse me, I shall let Jussuf marry you as he wishes. I told him you entertained me, and I would not spare you."

"Oh, princess!" cried Leila in an agony, "I love you; let me stay with you."

"Well, sing then, and learn some pretty dances; you are tiresome when you cry."

But Leila's efforts failed to please. She was no longer a little soulless plaything. Thoughts of her distant home, of her prince's sufferings, yearnings after that unknown Saviour, Whom he followed, filled her heart, and her eyes grew absent and her lips sad. She fretted, and her feet were less light, her voice less ringing.

"I shall let Jussuf have her," thought Zarah; "they are not so pretty and amusing as they grow older. Ayesha is only fourteen."

In the meantime Harry Hartsed left Fez in company with Paolo, and before many weeks were over found himself on the stormy promontory of Sagres, telling his tale to Dom Enrique himself.

There Enrique had retired, and amid plans for navigation, observations of the heavens, and constant efforts to improve the mathematical instruments with which they were carried out, endeavoured to forget the distracting disputes between Dom Pedro's party and that of the queen. Nevertheless he was never deaf to the call of duty, and succeeded on the whole in keeping unimpaired both his brotherly love and his loyalty to his young nephew, through all the petty spite and false accusation of that miserable time.

He listened with great attention to Harry's story, and then said—

"I think, Master Hartsed, that in the soreness of our hearts we neglected to inquire sufficiently into the vague story that so angered you. But it is ended; for a wretched soldier not long since made confession that he, and he only, was aware of the traitor's intention on that fatal night, and being sentry, permitted him to pass the outpost. But I will come with you to Sir Walter Northberry and confirm this tale."

"I thank you, my lord. Dom Alvarez is doubtless—is doubtless—"

"Dom Alvarez and Sir Walter are no longer friends, since Dom Alvarez, with his family, has joined the party of the queen. Sir Walter is one of those who wish for my brother's regency. His betrothal therefore is at an end."

"Oh, my lord, I never hoped—I never dreamed of hearing this," cried Harry so ecstatically, that a smile broke over the prince's grave face.

"Well, Master Hartsed, you shall come with me to Lisbon. I offer you again a place in my household, and doubtless Sir Walter will understand how matters have sped, especially when you bring him such good news."

"My lord, I can never thank you."

"I ask but this, this precious writing," said Enrique, sorrowfully, as he laid his hand on the tablet.

"Oh, my lord, is there no hope of a deliverance? I would give the last drop of my blood to save him!"

Enrique shook his head.

"Sometimes," he answered, "I am thankful that he does not know the intrigues and the meannesses that have kept him where he is, and all the light of my life with him. Well," added the prince, as if to himself, "he is winning a martyr's crown, and I must do that work in the world to which I am called. But you love him."

And with a smile of exceeding sweetness Enrique rose and held out his hand to Harry, as if that love was to be a bond between them.

He kept his word. When they came to Lisbon, he took on himself to tell Sir Walter how completely he considered Master Hartsed's character to be cleared from the doubt cast on it. He showed Fernando's precious writing, and prepared the father for the revelation of Catalina's existence.

And so it came to pass that one day Nella was called away from her embroidery, and found herself once more in the presence of her old friend, and heard that he had found her lost sister.

Nella had passed but a dreary time of late; but she was of a hopeful nature, and certainly had found it hard to regret the quarrels that parted her from her unwelcome suitor. She had learned too, by the endurance of a real grief and loss, to be more patient of the rubs and the dullnesses of daily life, just as Harry had learned patience by the sight of suffering so far exceeding his own.

Both were changed from the impetuous boy and wilful girl, who had laughed and disputed little more than a year ago. But their hearts were unchanged towards each other, and Dom Enrique's influence soon induced Sir Walter to consent to a union which ensured his daughter's happiness and gained a faithful adherent to the Regent's cause.

But first there was great joy at hearing of Catalina's safety, and Dom Enrique aided Sir Walter in offering a ransom large enough to insure her freedom, and it was sent to Fez by trusty messengers. It came at the right time; Leila had been bidden to consider herself the promised bride of the terrible Jussuf, and all her tears and intreaties had availed nothing.

The princess was tired of her, and when a sum of money large enough to purchase a ruby on which she had set her fancy was offered, Jussuf having at the same time fallen into disgrace for neglecting some trifling order, Leila, with hardly a farewell, scared and half reluctant, was handed over to the unknown Christians who were to conduct her to Lisbon.

She was passive in the bewilderment of change and novelty; her few words of Portuguese failed her utterly; her

father's welcoming kiss made her tremble and hide her face; and though she returned Nella's embraces, and smiled when her sister dressed her in clothes like her own, and called her Kate, it was with a bewildered surprise.

Dom Enrique asked to see her, knowing enough of the Moorish tongue to question her as to all she could tell of his dear brother; and when she saw him she threw herself at his feet and kissed his hand, with an abandonment unlike indeed to Nella's stately greeting.

But Enrique won from her the story of the blow she had borne for Fernando's sake, and thenceforth she was to him an object of entire admiration and reverence.

In order that she might learn the duties of her religion and accustom herself a little to the life of a Christian lady, she was sent to a convent, and there she was far more at home than in her father's house, learned to speak Portuguese slowly and with difficulty, and practised with great docility all the observances required of her.

The nuns would fain have kept so apt a pupil altogether, and Catalina was not unwilling: the outer world was too strange to be a happy one.

But she went home on the occasion of her sister's marriage, and there her beauty, equal to Nella's, and the soft gentleness that distinguished her manner from the bride's gayer, franker air, attracted the notice of Nella's old suitor, Dom Alvarez, whose friendship, in some new turn of court intrigue, was now sought again by Sir Walter.

Here was Nella's face, without Nella's untamable English spirit, and the young Portuguese thought the face none the less fair for the deficiency. He asked Catalina in marriage, being assured, he said, that she was a good Christian and a gentle lady; and Sir Walter, glad to be quit of this perplexing maiden, at once agreed.

Catalina showed no unwillingness, and perhaps her gentle passiveness agreed better with Portuguese notions than ever Nella's lively will could have done. She was loving and dutiful, and in the love of her children she was happy, knowing little and caring less for the political ambitions and intrigues which formed her husband's life, simply believing that his part must be the right one.

Eleanor Hartsed looked differently on life, and perhaps her clear and steadfast nature helped to point the right path to her husband in the troublous days in which their lot was cast, for Harry was too much attached to Dom Enrique to desert his adopted country, and the great prince never ceased to mark with a peculiar favour those who had been among the last to love and serve his beloved brother.

But Catalina never forgot to pray for the captive prince who had taught her what it was to be a Christian; and Harry Hartsed, amid civil strife and political passion, cherished to his dying day the precious memory of having seen in the very flesh the "patience of the saints."

Chapter Twenty Five.

Victory.

"It is not exile—rest on high;
It is not sadness—peace from strife;
To fall asleep is not to die;
To dwell with Christ is better life."

In the meantime the slow years went by for the prisoners of Fez and brought no change in the main features of their lot. One or two, like the poor young Manoel, sank and died, and for these the survivors could but give thanks; but still Fernando lived on and endured. Perhaps the voluntary self-denials to which he had accustomed himself in earlier years made him better able to bear these later hardships; but certainly for seven long years he bore his cruel lot so firmly and so calmly as to win the respect even of his jailers, while his fellow-captives loved him with such entire and devoted affection that they could hardly be miserable in his presence. They leant on him with a dependence strange towards one who indeed could not defend them "from the least insult of the meanest foe."

Long years of hopeless slavery did not as a rule raise the character or ennoble the life. Many of the poor Christian slaves were degraded by the tyranny under which they suffered to a lower level than the masters who oppressed them, and became faithless, cowardly, and brutal. For oppression does not of itself make men heroic. It is much to say of the Portuguese that as the years went by they grew more patient, more manly, and more Christian; while to Fernando the blissful end of his sorrows shone ever nearer and more bright, till his daily trials seemed hardly felt for the inward light that shone on them.

Perhaps this strange content defeated the intentions of Lazurac, or perhaps Fernando's increasing weakness and helplessness made him fear that he would soon lose his captive, and with him his hold over the Portuguese nation; but Fernando was one day suddenly separated from his companions and confined in a separate prison, the reason alleged being that he was unable to perform the toil exacted from him.

This was the cruellest stroke that had ever fallen on them. They felt utterly lost and forsaken, and for days could have no news of him, till at last the more compassionate Hassan pointed out to them the dungeon where he was imprisoned, and showed them a grating through which it was possible, not indeed to see him in the darkness, but to hear him speak, and then they heard his, "Ah, dear friends, this is joy indeed. You are still free to move; and well, I trust, and patient?"

"But you, my son, my dear son," cried Father José, for once inconsiderate, as he pushed aside Dom Francisco and

pressed his face to the grating, "have you food and tendance?"

"My father, I think I have not much more to suffer; I think I have never yet been grateful enough for the love that has been with me all these years. To-morrow you will come again?"

For trial had not changed the loving, clinging nature; it was the same Fernando who, long years ago, had wept at the thought of life without the beloved Enrique, who now, while he uttered no murmur and patiently endured this last, worst suffering, felt that the loss of his dear companions would kill him.

"Our Blessed Saviour was forsaken by His friends, while I am but separated from mine," he thought, and rays of comfort stole into his soul; but he was very ill, and growing weaker every day, and his heart, though never rebellious, was very faint. Yet every day he had a cheerful word for his visitors, rejoicing in their comparative freedom, while to them the moment at the grating was the one point in the whole day.

At last one day his door was opened, and two figures entered instead of one, and in a moment Father José knelt beside him.

"My son, I am here," he said, in a trembling voice—

And Fernando answered—

"My father, oh my father, pray for me, for my spirit fails me. I am unworthy, weak and unworthy still!"

"Well, my dear son, our good Lord knows your weakness, for He has sent me to be with you to the end."

He raised Fernando in his arms, shocked and grieved at the change since they had parted, at his wasted frame, and face burning with fever; while, wretched as had been the food, air, and accommodation of their former lodging, they were comfortable compared to what he found in this dark and dismal place.

But Fernando looked up with the old sweet smile.

"See," he said, sadly, "how my faithlessness is rebuked. I feared to die alone, not trusting in my Saviour, and He sends my best earthly friend to be with me."

The sufferings of those weeks of loneliness had evidently been most severe, for the fever that had attacked him frequently confused his senses and peopled the lonely dungeon with frightful visitants while he was troubled by a sense of the failure of the trust and faith that had hitherto supported him.

But the good priest's care lessened somewhat his physical sufferings, and his prayers and words of comfort brought back once more hope and peace, and at intervals Fernando had much to say.

"When I think," he said, "of what have been the trials of the saints, I feel how little I have had to bear. Never have I been without such loving service as is given to few. Our very jailers have been less harsh than they might be; some, even, have been kind. Our poor fellow-slaves have made me happy by saying that my words lightened their burden, and, though with no choice of mine, my presence here has saved Ceuta to the Church: and this as a reward for the rash folly that would choose my own way of service. And now, when my poor weak spirit failed. I have the blessing of your presence. Our Lord is very merciful; for such trials as I have read of, I think, would have been more than I could bear."

"God's grace, my son, is strong enough always to support our weakness," said Father José, unable to help believing that there was at least as much saintliness in this humility as in the stern fortitude of a stronger nature.

"Yes," said Fernando, "that is my one comfort for those I leave behind. My poor companions! in their love they will grieve for me. You, father, must be their support, as you are mine."

"My son, they will remember your constancy," said Father José, "and—and—give thanks for your deliverance."

"I would I could see them once more, to bid them take courage."

And when it was indeed certain that the captive prince was dying, this favour was granted, and his fellow-prisoners were admitted for one last farewell, their bitter grief hushed, their anger stilled, by the wonderful peace on his wasted face and the light in his shining eyes.

"My Lord is indeed with me, and has given me the victory," he said. "In *this* way, at least, will freedom come to us all."

And then, with much effort, as each knelt beside him, he spoke a word of the peculiar trials of each, knowing how one shrank from insulting words, another dreaded bodily hardship, a third pined especially for home: commending them all to Father José's care; and when he saw that the worst trial for all was grief at his loss, he said, simply, that the life seemed to have been taken from him with the loss of his dear brothers; but he had found a Better Friend still, and so would they. And so, with aching hearts, they left him; and, after a night of restless pain and fever, a great quiet fell on him, till, towards evening, as the end drew near, he lay—

"In calmest quiet, waiting his release.
'Lord, now Thou lettest me depart in peace,'
Were the last words which he was heard to say.
Upon his left side turning, as the day
Slow sinking now with more than usual pride,

Streamed through the prison bars a glory deep and wide.

“When the last flush had faded from the west,
When the last streak of golden light was gone,
They looked, but he had entered on his rest;
He, too, his haven of repose had won; -
Leaving this truth to be gainsaid by none,
That what the scroll upon his shield did say,
That well his life had proved—*le bien me plait.*”

So died, on the 5th of June, 1443, Fernando of Avis, the Constant Prince—“So good a man,” said the young king of Fez, “that it is a pity he was not a true Moslem.”

And a tall tower was erected over his grave as a monument to his patience and to the triumph of the Moors over his countrymen.

Years went by, and at last the few poor survivors of that little band, Father José among them, were ransomed and released; but the body of Fernando still rested in an infidel grave.

His brother João was killed in battle. Pedro fell in a civil war, after a life which, spite of some errors, had, on the whole, been noble, conscientious, and loyal; and the only survivor of the five loving brothers was Enrique, the great navigator, the first of the discoverers of the modern world. The young Alonzo, Duarte’s son, grew up into a brave and prosperous sovereign, and, in another war with Fez and Morocco, took captive two sons of the king of Fez. Long before this the memory of the captive Fernando was revered as that of a saint and a martyr by the men whose lukewarmness and indifference had caused his death; and now the only ransom demanded for the Moorish princes was the body that, for thirty years, had been in the hands of his enemies.

And so, in 1473, Enrique sailed once more for Ceuta, and there received from the hands of the Moors the body of the beloved brother of his youth, which, with solemn funeral services, was shortly laid in the Abbey of Batalha, where Enrique has rested beside him for many a long year, while Christian services of prayer and praise have risen from the city of Ceuta, over which the Crescent has never been lifted again.

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