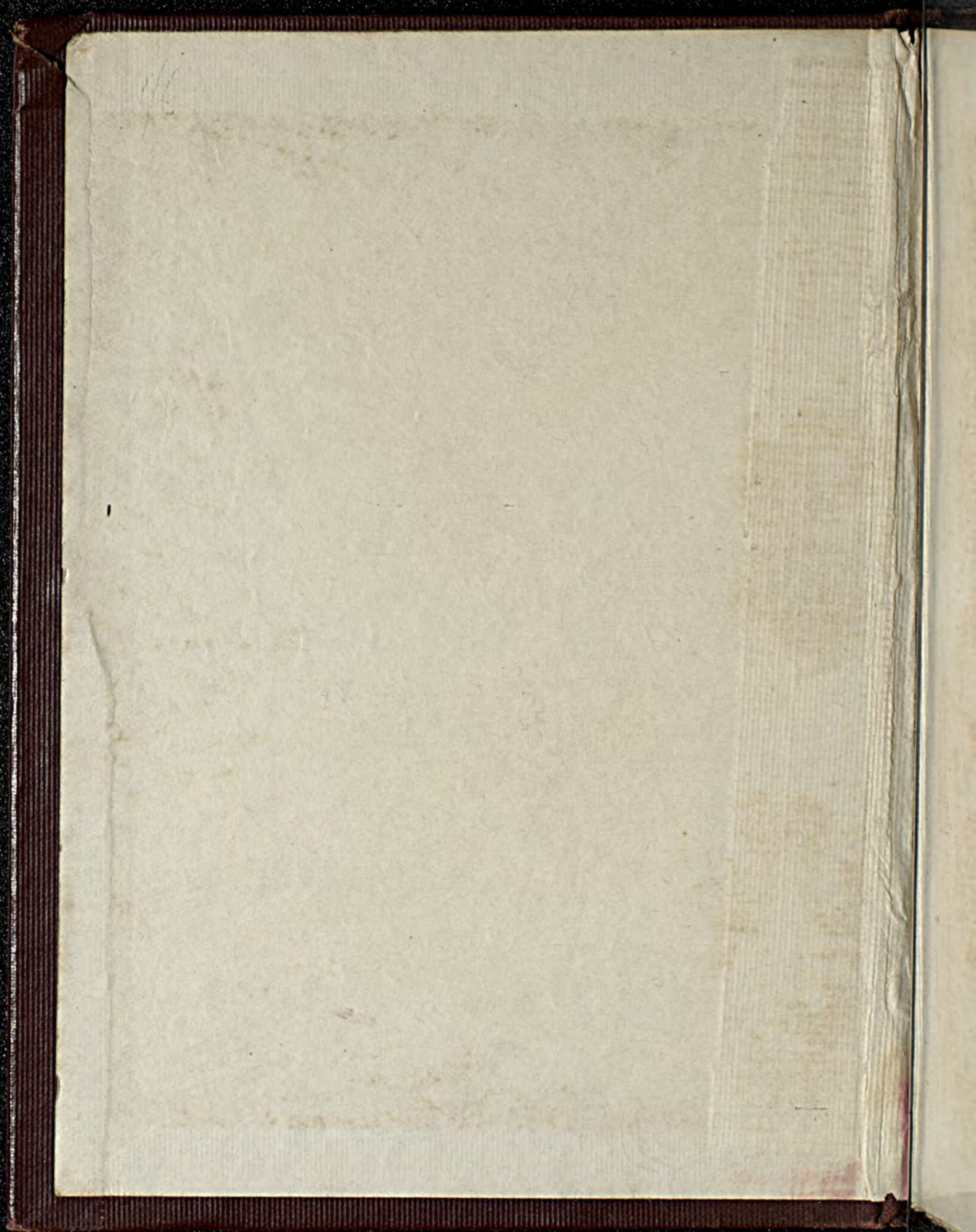
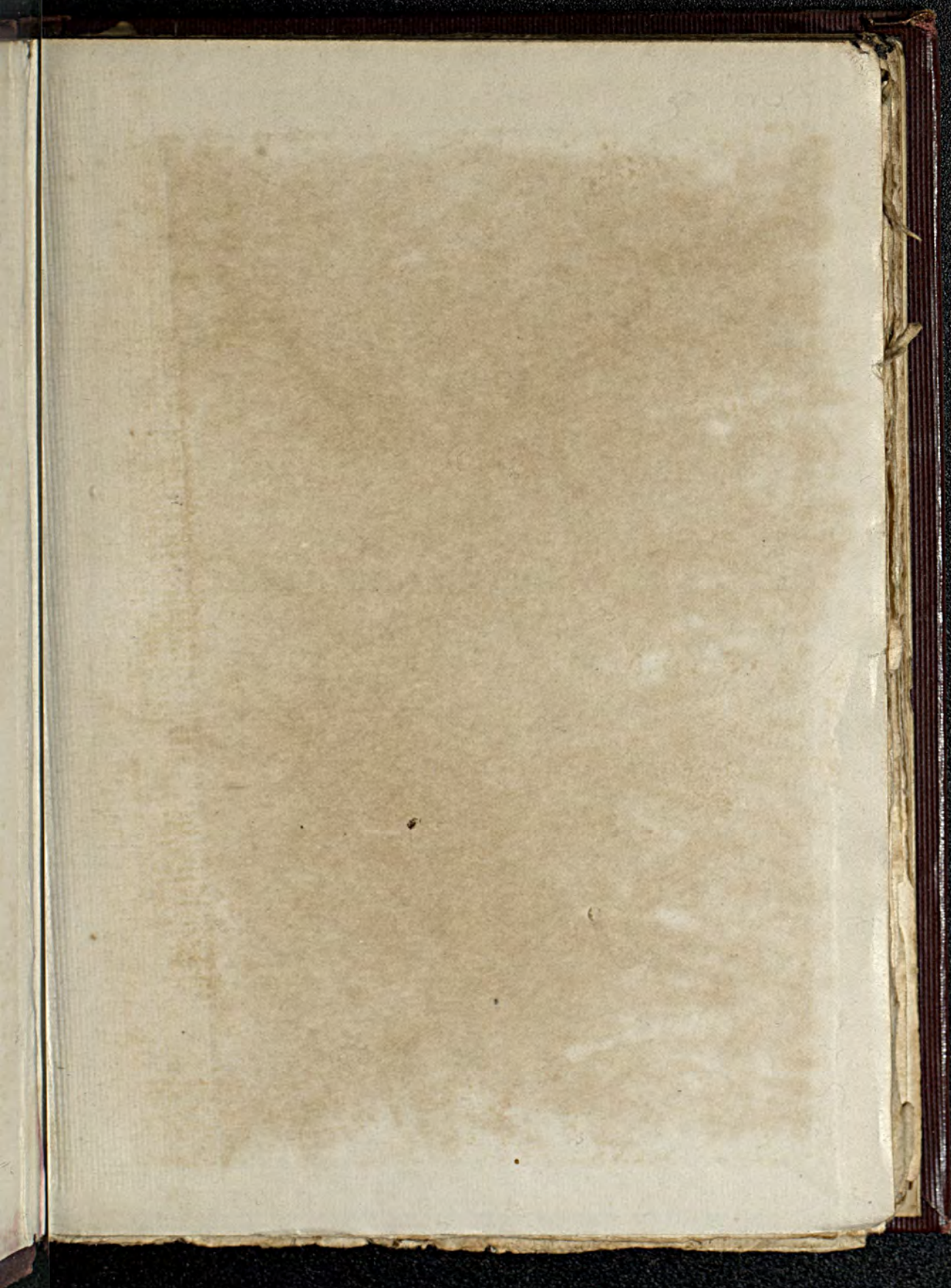


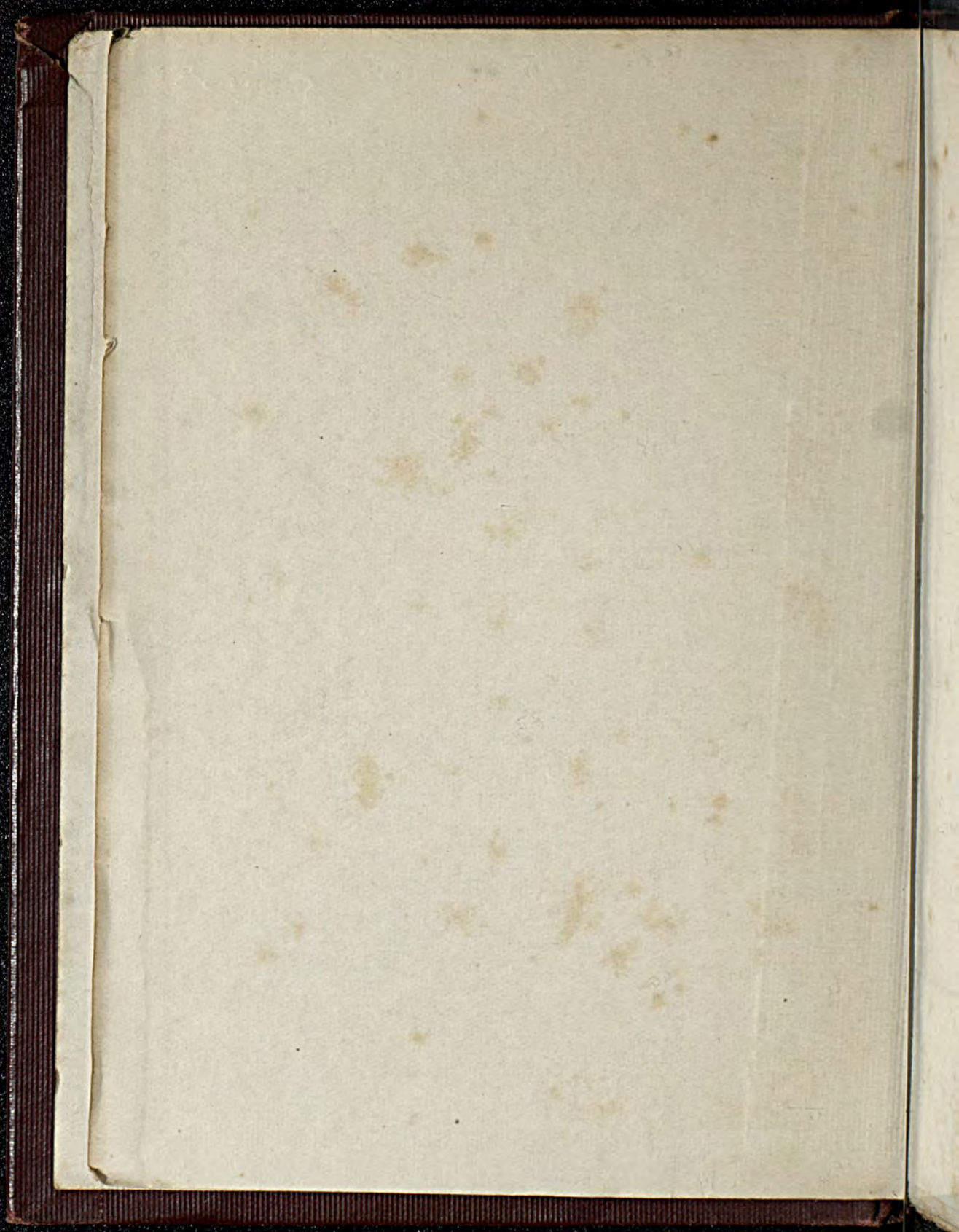
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* * * *



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TERRIBLE TALES

(SPANISH)

THE GOLDEN BRACELET

I

SHE was beautiful—beautiful with that beauty which makes one mad ; beautiful with that beauty which strikes one as supernatural, but yet is such as one never ascribes to the angels in one's dreams. It was a diabolic beauty, such as the Evil One gives to such as are to work his purposes on earth.

He loved her—loved her with a love which knows no curb nor limit. He loved her with the love which seeks delight and finds nought but pain, with that love which assimilates itself to felicity, and yet, notwithstanding, is such as heaven inspires in a man in expiation of a crime.

She was capricious—capricious and extravagant, like most women.

He was superstitious and valiant, as were all the men of his time.

S

B

She was called Maria Antunez.

He, Pedro Alfonso de Orellana.

Both were of Toledo, and both of them lived in the town in which they had been born.

The tradition which deals with their remarkable history has descended to us through many years, but it tells us no more respecting who its heroes were.

In my character of a faithful chronicler, I shall not add a word of my own for the purpose of better introducing them.

II

He found her one day in tears and said to her—
'Why do you weep?'

She dried her eyes, and looking at him fixedly, sighed and commenced again to weep.

Pedro, astonished, approached Maria, took her hand, and leaning on the Arabic balustrade whence the beautiful girl had been watching the current of the river, he again asked her—

'Why do you weep?'

At the foot of the building the Tagus rolled, fretting itself against the rocks on which the imperial city is situated. The sun was sinking behind the neighbouring mountains, and the mist of evening floated around like a delicate azure veil. The monotonous murmuring of the water alone broke the deep stillness.

'Do not ask me why I weep, do not ask me. I should not know what to reply, nor if I answered you would you comprehend me. There are desires which lie hidden in women's hearts which are not re-

vealed even in a sigh—foolish dreams which fly through our imagination; which cannot find expression in words; incomprehensible phenomena of our mysterious nature which a man has no power to conceive of. Do not, I beg of you, ask me the cause of my sorrow. If I were to tell it to you I daresay you would but laugh.'

Having spoken these words she bent down her head, and he again repeated his question.

The girl remained obstinately silent for a while, but at length she said to him in a low voice broken by sobs—

'Do you wish it? I am about to tell you of a foolish thing, but that does not matter. I will tell it you since you so wish it.

'Yesterday I went to church. They were celebrating the festival of the Virgin. Her image, placed in the centre of the altar, upon a ledge of gold, shone like burning coal. The notes of the vibrating organ swelled, echoing, echoing through all the church, and in the choir the priests were singing the *Salve Regina*.

'I prayed and prayed, absorbed in religious thought, when mechanically lifting my eyes they fell upon the altar. I do not know how it was that my eyes fixed themselves upon the image—no, not upon the image, but upon an object which till then I had never seen, an object which, by some inexplicable attraction, absorbed all my attention. Do not laugh! This object was the golden bracelet worn by the Mother on the arm on which reposed her divine Son. I tore my eyes away, and bent them down in prayer. Impossible! My eyes involuntarily returned to the same place. The lights from the altar, reflected in the thousand faces of the diamonds, were multiplied in a wonderful fashion. Numberless sparks of lights—

red, azure, green, yellow—danced around the precious stones like a whirlwind of fiery atoms, like a bewildering dance of spirits of flame, fascinating by their brilliancy and their terrible restlessness.

‘I left the church, I came home, but I did so full of thought of what I had seen. I threw myself down to sleep. I could not. The night passed, but the thought never quitted me. In the morning my eyes closed themselves, and, would you believe it? even in my sleep there passed before me a woman—a woman brown and beautiful, wearing a bracelet of gold and of diamonds. A woman! Yes, but it was not the Virgin whom I adore and before whom I bow. It was a woman—a woman like myself, who laughed at me and seemed to mock me. “Do you see it?” she appeared to say, pointing to her bracelet. “How it shines! It looks like a circlet of stars stolen from the sky during a summer’s night! Do you see it? Well, it is not for you, and it never shall be, never, never! You may have others, more beautiful, richer, if such is possible, but this which sparkles in a manner so fascinating, so fascinating—never, never!” I awoke, but the vision remains ever fixed in my mind, it is there like a burning nail, diabolic, not to be withdrawn, an inspiration no doubt of Satan himself. Well, then? Why are you silent, and why do you hang your head? Does my foolishness make you dumb?’

Pedro, with a convulsive movement, clutched the hilt of his sword, lifted his down-bent head, and said in a low voice—

‘What Virgin was it that wore the bracelet?’

‘That of Sagrario,’ replied Maria.

‘That of Sagrario!’ repeated the young man in a voice of terror, ‘that of Sagrario in the cathedral!’

The tumult of passion that raged within him showed itself in the motion of his features. He was buried in thought.

'Ah! Why was it not worn by some other?' he went on, loudly, passionately. Why did not the archbishop wear it on his mitre, the king on his crown, or the Evil One himself bear it in his hands! For you I would have torn it from them at the price of my life, or at the loss of my soul. But from the Virgin of Sagrario, from our patron saint—I, I who was born in Toledo. It is impossible, impossible!'

'Never!' murmured Maria, in scarcely perceptible tones, 'Never!'

And she commenced to weep again.

Pedro fixed a stupefied look upon the current of the river—upon the current which slowly went on, ceaseless, before his straining eyes, murmuring against the foot of the building—against the rocks on which stands the imperial city.

III

THE cathedral of Toledo! Imagine to yourself a forest of gigantic palm-trees which, interlacing their branches, form a colossal magnificent roof, in the shade of which lurk, living with the life that genius has given to them, a multitude of carvings of things, imaginary and real.

Figure to yourself an indescribable mingling of shadow and of light, mixing and blending in the corners of the nave, while the rays of colour stream from the stained windows. There the light of the lamps struggles and loses itself in the shadows of the sanctuary.

Figure to yourself a mountain of stone, immense like the spirit of our religion, sombre as its traditions, enigmatic as its parables, and then you will have but a feeble idea of this eternal monument of the enthusiastic faith of our ancestors, upon which the folk of centuries have poured out, in emulation, the treasures of their belief, of their inspiration, and of their art.

In it dwells the silence, the majesty, the mystic poetry, and the religious awe opposing themselves to worldly thought and the mean passions of the world.

Consumption is checked when one breathes the pure air of the mountains, and irreligion should be cured by breathing the atmosphere of faith.

But however great, however imposing the cathedral may seem to us at whatever hour we enter its mysterious and sacred precincts, never does it produce so profound an impression as on those days when in it are displayed all the splendour of religious pomp, when its altars are covered with gold and precious stones, its paths with carpets, and its pillars with hangings.

Then, when a thousand silver lamps throw around streams of light; when the air is laden with a cloud of incense, the voices of the choir, and the notes of the organ; and the bells in the tower make the building tremble from the lowest depths of its foundation to the highest point of its crown, then may one comprehend, feeling it in one's heart, the tremendous majesty of God who dwells within us, in the spirit by which one breathes, filling one with the reflection of His omnipotence.

A scene such as we have described might have been witnessed on the occasion when the last day of the great octave of the Virgin was being celebrated in the cathedral of Toledo.

The religious feast had brought together a vast congregation of worshippers; but the crowd had now dispersed itself in all directions. The wax tapers were being extinguished in the various chapels and on the high altar, and the great gates of the church clattered on their hinges, closing themselves behind the last Toledan. Then, from out of the shadow emerged a man, white, more ghastly than the figure on the tomb upon which he leaned for an instant in order to master his emotion. He waited a moment, and then glided cautiously to the screen which separated the choir. The light of a lamp shone upon him as he stole by.

It was Pedro.

What had passed between the two lovers before he could summon resolution to put into execution a scheme the very thought of which had made his hair bristle with horror, no one will ever know. There, however, he stood, ready to carry out his audacious scheme. In his restless gaze, in the trembling of his limbs, in the large drops of perspiration which stood upon his forehead, was written the nature of his thoughts.

The cathedral was deserted—quite deserted, and all was profound silence.

Nevertheless at times there could be heard confused sounds. Perhaps the creaking of the timbers or the murmuring of the wind. Who knows? The high-strung senses of the imagination see and hear, in its exaltation, things which do not exist. However that may be, near him, afar off, sometimes behind him, sometimes in front of him, there seemed to be stifled sighs, the rustling of vestments sweeping upon the ground, the sound of steps which came and went without cessation.

Pedro, with an effort, went on his way. He came to the screen and took his first step towards the great altar. Around this portion of the building are the tombs of the kings, of whom the statues of stone, the hand on the hilt of their swords, seem to watch night and day in the shadow of the sanctuary where they lie till eternity.

'Onward!' he whispered in a low voice, and he would have gone on but he could not. It seemed as if his feet were glued to the stone pavement. He cast down his eyes, and his hair bristled with horror. The floor of the chapel was composed of large dull sepulchral stones. For a moment he thought that a hand, icy and fleshless, held him to the spot with an irresistible force. The dying out lamps, which glittered in the background of the nave like stars lost in clouds, swam before his eyes; the statues on the tombs, the images on the altar, seemed to move, and the whole place with its granite arches and its pillars of hewn stone appeared to reel.

'Onward!' said Pedro again, beside himself, and he went on towards the altar. He climbed up it until he came to the pedestal on which stood the Virgin. Around him was a dream of chimerical and horrible forms. All was dark or dim light more dreadful than darkness itself. The Queen of Heaven alone, over whom streamed the soft light of a golden lamp, appeared to smile, tranquil, loving, serene in the midst of such horror.

Then, however, that smile, mute, immobile, which had calmed him for a moment, in the end inspired him with terror—a stranger terror, a deeper terror, than any he had ever yet felt.

He strove to recover himself, and turning away his eyes so that he should not see the image, he put

out his hand with a convulsive motion, and tore away the golden bracelet, the pious offering of a saintly archbishop—the golden bracelet that was worth a fortune!

The thing was in his possession. His nervous fingers clutched it with a supernatural strength. Now he had only to fly—to fly with it. To do that, however, it was necessary he should raise his eyes, and Pedro dared not look. He dared not look upon the image, upon the kings at their tombs, upon the demons on the cornices, upon the grotesque figures of the columns, on the shadow and the rays of light which, like white gigantic phantoms, slowly moved in the background of the naves, peopling them with terror-striking mysterious beings.

At last, opening his eyes, he threw a look around, and a sharp cry broke from his lips.

The cathedral was full of forms—of forms which, clothed in strange garbs, had come down from their niches, and filled the whole place. They looked at him with their empty eye-sockets.

Saints, nuns, angels, demons, warriors, dames, pages, cenobites, and clowns, crowded and mixed together in the nave and up to the altar. At its foot officiated, in the presence of the kings kneeling on their tombs, the marble archbishops whom he had but lately seen lying immovable on their graves, while, crawling over the flagstones, creeping up the pillars, sitting on the dais, hanging from the vaults, living like the worms of an immense corpse, were a whole world of granite reptiles and animals, fantastic, deformed, horrible.

He could no longer resist. His temples throbbed with a fearful force. A mist of blood floated before his eyes. He uttered a second cry, a cry harsh, half human, and fell fainting on the altar.

When on the following day the sacristans discovered him at the foot of the altar, holding still the bracelet of gold in his hand, seeing them approach he cried out, with a peal of hideous laughter—

‘For her! for her!’

The man was mad.

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THE MIRROR OF FRIENDS

I WAS the only and beloved child of parents who bestowed upon me an excellent education. No sooner had I mastered the first elements of learning than they sent me to the famous university of Bologna, under the guardianship of a particular friend called Federico, one of the most wealthy merchants in that city, and universally known and respected. He had a son exactly of my own age; nor did the resemblance between us end here; it extended equally to our features, character, and manners. Add to this that our student's dresses were alike. We were not unfrequently accosted the one for the other. My reception by Federico's father was like that of his own son, with whom, indeed, I soon became more intimate; our studies and pursuits were the same, and the same apartments were assigned us.

This acquaintance gradually ripened into a more perfect friendship, and we were soon seldom to be seen out of each other's company. It seemed as if we had only one mind, and everything, even to our most secret feelings, was mutually communicated.

Four years had elapsed without any interruption of our youthful amity and regard, when one day it was my fate, in passing along one of the principal streets, to fix my eyes upon a beautiful and richly-

attired lady looking from a balcony, the mere sight of whom excited such emotion in my soul that I felt as if bereft of life in her absence. The lovely vision was ever before my eyes—I was enslaved, impassioned, and no longer master of my own mind.

It would be idle, however, to dilate on the growth and progress of my new passion; it is enough that the lady was not insensible to its extreme devotedness and intensity, and returned it with scarcely less fervour; her soul seemed to have caught the strong and all-absorbing contagion that preyed on mine, and she felt the deprivation of my absence as much as I felt hers. There was only one circumstance at all painful in this our first and sudden love; and it was, that my lovely Laura insisted upon its being kept wholly secret, and not unfolded even to my nearest and dearest friend.

We had not long enjoyed the freshness and felicity of our passionate vows and wishes before Laura's father, sensible of the advantage of such an alliance, and being on intimate terms with the family, made proposals to the parents of Lisardo, my friend, to bestow his daughter's hand in marriage and cement the union between the families by still stronger ties. There lay no difficulties in the way; the proposals were accepted, and by none with less hesitation than my young friend Lisardo. Laura and I were the only persons who had cause for regret; although, situated as we were, we could not make known our wishes. We trusted rather to fortune than to the risk of proclaiming our secret correspondence; but not without experiencing, as will shortly appear, the ill effects of such secret proceedings, with all those doubts, and fears, and agonies of suspense felt most deeply by those who most truly love. I adored

Laura, yet not more than I valued and esteemed my friend. His visits became more and more frequent; our very resemblance rendered my risk the greater; often I fancied Laura smiled upon him, and, spite of the most virtuous resolutions, the pangs of jealousy shot through my heart. With the most fascinating manners, and being often in her presence, Lisardo pressed the advantages he thus enjoyed; and I shortly after heard that the period of his intended nuptials was approaching. What were my emotions—the fierce struggles between love and duty—upon hearing this intelligence? and from the lips of my rival, yet my dearest friend. My sense of honour, my obligations to him and to his family, forbade me to cross his path; but still I felt that I could never vanquish, never survive this first and fatal passion of my breast.

I had nothing left but to die; yet my virtuous education, and my principles, seemed to cut off and prohibit this last resource. I could not even tear myself away from the spot; and such was the intensity of my suffering that it at last manifested itself to all in a deep and settled melancholy, soon followed by a severe and dangerous illness. To me this was a relief; the anxiety and attentions of my friend Lisardo were incessant; he hardly ever left my couch; all which only aggravated my distemper; and in a few weeks the physicians despaired of my life. Such was my friend's affliction, that he no longer thought of celebrating his marriage on the appointed day; and singular as it may seem, I feel convinced that it was this resolution on his part that saved me from a premature grave. Yet I long lay a prey to cruel sufferings, not the least of which was the necessity of concealing the source of them

from Lisardo, which I now regretted that I had at first done. He too loved her; could I wish to inflict all that I suffered upon him? Besides, Laura had obtained my promise not to reveal our early vows to any living being, and from this promise she had never released me. Her wishes and feelings were dearer to me than my own life; our stolen interviews should never first be revealed by me. Her silence seemed to say that she loved Lisardo, and must have forgotten her earliest vows.

While in this state of suspense, my friend one evening approached my bedside, and addressing me in a more earnest and affectionate tone than usual, he said,—‘Now, my friend Ricardo, you know with what pleasure I had looked forward to see you grace my approaching nuptials with your presence. But since you continue thus confined to a sick chamber I have ceased to dwell with the same delight upon the celebration of a love festival that cannot be gladdened by your eyes. Such in truth is my concern, that the esteemed and beloved object herself,—my own Laura, no longer fills my thoughts as heretofore, being busied rather with devising plans how best to divert the deep sadness that preys upon your mind. To do this, believe me, I would adventure the most precious thing I possess.’

I thanked him, and added that he could give me no greater pleasure than that of his company, which ever cheered and consoled me.

‘Then why,’ he replied, ‘should you sigh so deeply as you speak thus; unless there be some thing beyond what my society can relieve? Confide in me, I entreat you, and on the faith of a loyal friend, I will make every effort, as I said, to procure you the desired relief.’

'You are, indeed, kind,' I then replied, 'but the cause of my suffering is, alas! irremediable; and, since you could not, though you knew, remove it, is it at all proper on my part to unfold it to you?'

'What evil,' he interrupted, 'can there possibly exist that calls for so much secrecy? Surely you show too little confidence in one so sincerely devoted to you; and who may well doubt your friendship, if you persist in disguising the real truth.'

'Nay,' replied I, 'doubt not the perfect sincerity of my regard; there is no one from whom I would less willingly conceal all I know.'

'But you compel me,' exclaimed Lisardo in anger; 'and you must now either consent to unfold the cause of your continued depression, or see our intimacy broken off from this time forth.'

Unable longer to withstand solicitations and threats like these, I came to the resolution of confiding to him the whole; no less to comply with his request than to relieve my mind from the painful secret which oppressed it. This I did in the fullest and most undisguised manner, excusing myself for not having earlier revealed my sad story by pleading the injunction of Laura to that effect.

He listened in perfect silence till I touched upon this last topic, when he first interrupted me by saying, 'Yet I must still complain of your little faith, inasmuch as not even the love of woman would have shown itself more true and loyal than my friendship for you. More than this; I should have been enabled to promote your wishes; while by your obstinate silence you ran the risk of losing every chance, and of rendering me the cruel instrument of all your sufferings, without becoming in the remotest degree culpable, either in your eyes or in those of

the world. Henceforth, however, consider yourself as freed from your cause of sorrow, for you only shall become possessed of the hand of Laura. It would be unreasonable in me to desire to marry one who is already betrothed, and I assure you, that I should not hesitate to give her in exchange for the restoration of your health. Be of good cheer, therefore, and recover with all speed that we may proceed to put our intended design into effect.'

It would be vain to attempt to describe the excessive joy that thrilled my heart on hearing these words. It seemed as if all my sufferings had miraculously ceased, and the only painful sensation was that of having too unworthily estimated the generous and noble character of a friend capable of such true greatness and self-denial. Not a word of gratitude could I utter; my eyes were riveted upon the ground; and I can only recollect that, in attempting to give utterance to my feelings, I burst into a flood of tears.

He threw his arms about my neck knowing the cause of my emotion, and then said—'It is all well, Ricardo; I have no cause to complain, and you ought not to think so, as it would seem by this extreme delicacy of feeling you really do. In that case even, you are pardoned, if such additional proof of my regard for you be at all wanting to set your mind at rest. Try then to get well as soon as you can, for I feel interested in settling everything to your satisfaction as speedily as possible.'

Hearing him speak thus, I ventured to mention the many difficulties that seemed to stand in the way of my availing myself of his generous design—'For how, my dear friend, can we prevail upon Laura's parents to transfer their affection from you to a mere stranger, of whose character they are almost wholly

ignorant?' His answer was—'Are you well assured of the affections of Laura—does she sincerely wish to become your wife?'

Being assured that she did, he continued: 'Seeing it is so, we have nothing to fear; and what we cannot effect by dint of reason with the parents we must contrive to bring about by art. You are aware how very nearly we resemble each other in person, so as even to deceive, at times, our most intimate friends. Now here lies the best chance of our future success.

'The marriage is intended to be celebrated in this very house, and not until evening, thus favouring my plan, which is this:—you will consent to remain in your room, as if confined by sickness, till the hour arrives. I shall then come and pay you a visit unobserved by the rest of the family, and there dismantling myself of my bridal attire, I will remain in your place; while you assume mine, arrayed as the bridegroom, and claim the hand of your beloved Laura, who having first loved you, will justly become your own. The late hour, and our resemblance, will sufficiently favour the intended happy result. In order, moreover, to avoid anything like imposition upon your beloved Laura, it will be preferable to inform her of our intention. When the parents afterwards learn the truth they will become reconciled to what cannot be helped. You must first, however, recover your good looks, lest we should otherwise be discovered; and until you be perfectly restored, I will invent some excuses or other to delay the period of my intended marriage.'

This ingenious yet harmless device was much applauded by me; and my gratitude to the best of friends—at once my physician and my benefactor—

knew no bounds. I lost no time in communicating our plan to Laura, reporting every particular ; and had the delight of ascertaining that she entered fully into all our feelings, expressing herself in the most lavish and grateful terms at this unexampled act of virtuous love and friendship.

Such was its effect upon my health that within a very few days I felt myself wholly a different being, and without the least traces of illness remaining in my appearance. Indeed, I was already equal to the task of assuming the character of Lisardo, who instantly fixed upon the day to be appointed for his marriage. When the happy morning arrived I feigned extreme illness, and my friend affected a wish to delay the ceremony to another day. But this not being complied with on the part of Laura's parents he was easily induced to acquiesce, so that before evening the bride made her appearance at the house of Federico, my friend's father, and Lisardo came to announce to me the long-wished-for intelligence. What were my sensations as he began to disrobe himself of all his bridal grace and gallantry, to bestow them upon me ! I would have resisted but it was too late ; it was the work of a moment, and with a cheerful air my friend assisted and encouraged me. He then gently compelled me to leave the room, and proceeded to assume my place. I joined the bridal party in an elegant apartment below stairs. There I took the willing hand of my Laura, and we pledged our mutual faith before the holy man with equal sincerity and rapture, in the presence of the bride's relatives and friends.

And whose, on the ensuing morrow, were the first congratulations I received ? Those of our noble friend and benefactor, to whose apartment I hastened

the moment of quitting my own. He embraced me, and we next began to consult respecting the best means of coming to an amicable explanation of the whole affair; and at length determined on going instantly to my friend's father, Federico, in whose high worth and prudence we had every reason to confide. Besides, he loved me little less than his own son, and would have no difficulty in reconciling the parents and friends of Laura to the idea of receiving me in the place of Lisardo. Upon seeing us he expressed his surprise when he beheld me, and not his son, arrayed in the bridegroom's dress, and kneeling to receive his pardon and blessing. We then gave him an exact account of everything as it had passed. Here, however, his surprise gave way to a flush of passion too evident to be concealed. The idea of not having previously been consulted, and of his son's having resigned so lovely a bride and so wealthy an alliance, one indeed every way so desirable, without his permission, was certainly trying to his feelings. At the same time he was aware of the powerful influence of Laura's friends, and that they would by no means submit even to the appearance of such an affront. Yet he concealed his fears at the time, and having checked the first sallies of his indignation, he merely observed—'Your friendship, my son, must assuredly have been very great; such an action displays at least some generosity, if not magnanimity of mind. For Lisardo, doubtless, had the hand and fortune of Laura in his own power, which he as freely relinquished in his friend's behalf. This, as far as regards yourselves, may perhaps be right; but in respect to Laura's parents, it will be looked upon, as all these secret proceedings generally are, as neither more nor less than unjustifiable imposition.'

'These difficulties,' replied Lisardo, 'are precisely what we wish to consult you upon, and if possible to remove. To your greater prudence we look for safety in the approaching storm—to conduct our adventurous little bark of friendship to its desired haven in peace. No one so well as yourself can display the amiable and brilliant qualities of my friend Ricardo, to the eyes of Laura's parents. Be persuaded, then, dear sir, to forgive us, and to render us some assistance in this our singular and very unpleasant dilemma.'

My friend's father, somewhat softened, if not flattered, by our humble and appealing demeanour, at length consented to take upon himself the task of imparting to Laura's father and her other relatives the curious predicament in which we stood. This he did in so cautious and admirable a manner, exaggerating my qualities and showing the advantages of the alliance, that both the father and his friends expressed their satisfaction and their willingness to accept me as their relative. The excellent Federico next wrote to my own parents, who though at first surprised and shocked, no sooner learnt the particulars than they set out for Bologna, bearing with them an immense assortment of rich jewels and other costly presents, much to the taste of their new relatives. They soon became delighted with the surpassing beauty, grace, and discretion of my Laura; and after residing at Bologna about a month, we took our leave of my friend Lisardo and his excellent father, in order to return to our native place.

From the period, however, that we quitted Bologna, during more than two years, I was extremely uneasy at receiving no tidings of Lisardo, notwithstanding the most urgent and repeated inquiries. In the

course of my researches I again visited Bologna, where the only intelligence I could gather was of the death of his father and my dear friend's final departure from that city. This redoubled my anxiety, for alas! what could I now think? Had my friend repented of the sacrifice made in my favour; had he been more passionately attached to Laura than I had from his conduct been led to suppose; and had he been unable to vanquish this deep-rooted attachment? In the midst of these suppositions, I lost no time in endeavouring to trace his route; but all without avail. Still unwearied by disappointments I continued the pursuit, in the course of which I visited all the chief cities, the states, and seaports of Italy.

Upon reaching Naples for the second time, and at length thinking of my return home, I beheld, on entering one of the chief squares, a large concourse of people assembled as if to witness some grand public spectacle. I succeeded in getting through part of the crowd, so as to extend my view; and perceived that the preparations were being made for an execution. It was for the crime of homicide, and the insignia of death were already presented to my eyes—the sword, the sand to receive the blood, and the executioner at his post. In a few moments afterwards the criminal was brought forth, and took his station upon the sand in front of the executioner; a priest, administering consolation, being seen on either side of him. His features were deadly pale, yet noble and undaunted. I turned away my eyes—a strange sensation came over me as if some dream had suddenly recurred to my mind; and I again raised my eyes and fixed them upon his countenance. At that moment it chanced that our eyes met: a slight flush suffused those white and deathly features. I started,

for I knew *him* then, and uttered a loud piercing cry as a thrill of horror ran through my frame, and I felt as if sinking into the earth. As I lay supported in the arms of some persons near to me I heard my name pronounced by a voice which, though long a stranger to my ear, confirmed all that my worst fears had told me. It was that of my friend Lisardo—of the criminal on the scaffold before me. Great God! yes it was Lisardo. He it was who now called me—who vainly tried to stretch forth his pinioned arms to embrace me. At that sight my terror and surprise vanished. Starting from my swoon, I felt the strength of a giant as I sprang forward, exclaiming—

‘I am the murderer! that man is innocent! Unbind him, and add not another murder to one deed of blood.’

Before I had finished these words I was already at my friend’s side, and held him clasped in my arms. But suddenly recollecting myself I extended my hands towards the Sbirri, who stood round the spot, when the gaoler instantly came forward and bound my hands. All this seemed the work of a moment; it acted like an electric shock upon the surrounding people, who gave vent to their feelings in mingled murmurs and applause; while my friend and myself stood lost to every feeling save that of delight, but ill-concealed, of meeting each other once more.

One of the magistrates now came forward, and perceiving the tumult had somewhat subsided gave orders for the dispersion of the mob; at the same time directing that both Lisardo and myself should be conducted to the public prison.

All we petitioned for was, to be permitted to remain in the same place of confinement until the affair should be further investigated; and this, after

some difficulty, was granted. What were our feelings upon finding ourselves alone with each other. The first motion of Lisardo was to throw himself at my feet and thank me as the preserver of his life.

'But, alas,' he continued, 'at what a sacrifice—at what a terrible risk! In accusing yourself of a heinous crime, you have done worse than preserve my life—you have accused the innocent—ah, why not have let justice take its course?'

'Justice!' I exclaimed with surprise; 'I never dreamed of inquiring . . . it is impossible.'

'What,' replied Lisardo, 'do you believe that I am not guilty?'

'Can I believe otherwise?'—at the same time fixing my eyes more intently upon his face.

'Then,' he exclaimed in a tone of heart-felt delight, 'you are still my true friend—my Ricardo—I am indeed the victim of injustice—and I will now give you the whole of my sad eventful history, until I became reduced to the very last stage of human wretchedness and disgrace. Ah, Ricardo! within two months after you left Bologna, my dear father died. Though he stood high in credit his wealth had never been great; and some unfortunate engagements had so far involved his affairs that on a full settlement of his accounts, only a small surplus remained. When he went his credit and influence died with him, and I was left much like the poor bird in *Æsop*, shorn of all his splendid feathers.'

'You would naturally suppose the friends and relatives of your Laura would now have congratulated themselves on my not having become her husband. It was just the reverse. When they saw me in difficulties, instead of assisting, they took the opportunity of wreaking their revenge upon me for the imagined

slight, and became my bitterest enemies. In short, I was soon compelled to leave my native city with the poor wreck of my fortune—a few jewels—all that my creditors had left me, and take my chance in the wide world before me. Only four days after having left Bologna, in passing the outskirts of a thick wood towards evening, I was unluckily set upon by robbers, who cruelly despoiled me of every article I possessed, leaving me hungry and naked to proceed on my way.

‘In this extremity I directed my steps towards a little village, a short way distant, where the people out of compassion gave me these wretched garments in which you now see me. Henceforth I was compelled, in order to support life, to beg my way from place to place.

‘Often did the idea of our former friendship cross my mind with a feeling of anguish I cannot express. My pride had hitherto borne me up against fortune; and forgive me, my dear friend, but I had resolved to endure any degree of hardship, rather than appear in the form of a suppliant before one with whom I had always appeared on a footing of perfect equality, and who, moreover, conceived himself something indebted to me. But now this foolish pride was completely subdued, and I sighed to reach the place of your residence, spite of my misgivings that poverty was ever considered despicable and loathsome, and that even I might not escape the contempt along with the pity of my former friends. Yet even this last solace of seeing you once more before I died seemed to be denied me; for to sorrow and unheard of sufferings sickness was now added, and for months I lay in a public hospital, lingering between life and death. Nearly two years had elapsed since I left

Bologna ; I knew nothing of your place of residence, and was unable to have reached it if I had. How often did I sigh for death, and think of different means of ridding myself of so wretched an existence. But the cup of life's bitterness was not yet full ; I had to drain it to the very dregs ; and it was you, my Ricardo, who administered it to me, though——'

'I ? Impossible—utterly impossible !—I have sought you everywhere. I left no means untried to discover you.'

'Were you not at your own country residence only a very short time since ?' inquired Lisardo.

'I was ; but set out again almost immediately in quest of you.'

'True,' rejoined Lisardo ; 'yet you saw me near your own villa ; I begged alms from you, and you deigned not to stop and bestow them ; but rode on, pointing to the menial who followed you to relieve my wants, which he did according as my dress seemed to require.'

'Heavens ! do you mean to sport with my feelings—my honour ?—no, it is only a jest—such a thing is quite incredible.'

'No ! it is quite true,' said Lisardo : 'I threw myself across your path, I begged alms, and wished to give my name ; but with an angry look that shot through my soul, you bade me apply to your servant, and begone.'

'Oh ! God forgive me then, if I did. Yet I remember something of the kind. Heaven's ways are very wonderful ! And could that mendicant have been you ?'

'It was indeed,' replied Lisardo ; 'and when, after all my sufferings, I thought myself despised by my only and best friend—not considering how greatly

I must have been altered in this strange disguise—it is surprising that I did not die of grief upon the spot. I turned my steps I knew not and I cared not whither; but at the end of some days I chanced to reach the spot where I was last found. I had no fear that fortune could have anything worse in reserve for me, but I was mistaken. I found an ancient cavern that seemed to offer me some refuge against the inclemency of the season, and there I took up my melancholy abode. I had not observed on entering the dead body of a man, near which I was early the next morning found slumbering by some peasants of the district, who awoke me rudely, at the same time pointing to the corpse of the murdered man. I gazed on the terrible spectacle, yet was compelled to feel how far more horrible must be my own situation which taught me to envy even such a lot. "Yes," I exclaimed, "thou art at rest, and never canst thou feel the agony which I now suffer. Would to heaven that I could now exchange my place for thine. I should so have brought these human sorrows to a final close."

'I had little leisure, however, to indulge in lamentations over my unhappy lot. The ministers of justice were at hand, whom, instead of avoiding, I met with a joyful and serene aspect in the hope that my sufferings would not endure much longer. Upon being accused of the murder I thought it useless to make any defence; but submitting myself quietly into the hands of justice, entreated to be brought to the nearest dungeon, and to be allowed the luxury of a little bread and water before my trial. This was charitably granted to me, and the rest you know.'

'Yes, and most happy and fortunate do I esteem myself in having arrived in time to rescue your dear

and precious life, and to devote my whole existence to your future welfare.'

'You have already,' replied my Lisardo, 'more than repaid me by risking your life, which you must no longer persist in. That is too great a sacrifice for the one I made in presenting you with her who was about to become my own wife. She first loved you; I had no title beyond what chance and fortune gave me to her, and your coming forward to save me is an act of pure disinterested generosity, such as I had no right to claim. I absolve you, therefore, dear Ricardo, from all responsibility as regards my lot; and when I come seriously to reflect, believe me you are but rendering me an ungracious service by wishing to prolong my days. Alas! I have lived but too long. I have known enough of human life, and the very consciousness of the terrible evils and fatalities to which it is ever liable would continue to haunt me amidst the utmost security, and to embitter with past recollections and future fears my remnant of existence. Go, therefore, and recall your ill-judged words,—accuse not yourself of a foul crime in the vain hope of saving me. Hasten without loss of time, confess the real truth to the good chaplain of this prison, and he will take your deposition before the authorities, who will then set you free. My days are numbered,—I have not long to live.'

'Never! never!' I exclaimed, 'I would rather die a thousand deaths!'

'Remember your Laura,' said Lisardo; 'I am a lonely and useless being,—a burden and a blot upon this goodly earth.'

'For your sake I would sacrifice both wife and boy,—all I hold dearest in the world. Give me only your former love and confidence, my Lisardo.'

The tears started to his eyes, but ere he could reply a tumult was heard without,—our prison door opened, and a messenger suddenly announced the discovery of the real murderers, the same who had robbed Lisardo, whose clothes and jewels were discovered upon their persons.

These joyful tidings, which at once vindicated the character of Lisardo, and rescued me from the perilous situation in which I stood, were nevertheless attended with the same unhappy fatality that seemed to have pursued my friend's footsteps, and turned every occurrence into a source of unhappiness whithersoever he went. It was, however, the last trial he was doomed to bear,—the sudden revulsion was too much for his exhausted frame. He gazed most earnestly in my face a few moments, uttering a deep sigh, and then would have fallen had I not caught him in my arms.

'I am dying,' he cried in a faint voice. 'Oh, forgive me, my dear friend, and ask Laura to forgive me!'

'Forgive!' I exclaimed, 'Oh, talk not thus,—talk not of leaving me now.'

'Yes, forgive! for I have never ceased to love Laura, your wife,—fondly, passionately loved her, as when I first—last saw her. Say I died for my error—my crime against you and her,—but I lost her, and all else went to wreck,—nothing without Laura.'

These were his last words.

He expired in my arms, and though I have since supported life for the sake of her he loved, its dearest enjoyments have nothing in them half so sweet as the fond hope of rejoining the sainted spirit of my friend 'in another and a better world.'

THE GREEN EYES

I HAVE wished for a long time to write something respecting the above.

Now that the opportunity presents itself to me, I write the title in large characters at the head of my paper, and give my pen free course.

I believe that I must at some time have seen those green eyes as I have described them in this legend. I cannot say whether or not it was in a dream. I am afraid I have not the power to paint them such as they were—sparkling, transparent as the drops of rain which stand upon the leaves of trees after a summer shower. However, I rely upon the imagination of my readers to fill up the voids in what I may call this rough sketch.

I

'The stag was wounded—it was wounded, there can be no doubt of it. One can see the traces of its blood upon the brushwood of the mountain; and in leaping over the low bushes its limbs have dragged. The young señor has commenced with a skill which others only attain when they are leaving off. During

forty years on the mountains I never saw a finer blow. But, by Saint Saturio, the patron of Soria, prevent the deer passing by the side of those green oaks! Urge on the dogs! Blow your horns with all your force, and dig your spurs into your horses' sides. Do you not see that the beast is directing its course to the fountain of poplars? If it gets there before it falls we must give it up as lost.'

The hollows of Moncayo repeat, echo answering echo, the clamour of the horns, the baying of the hounds, the cries of the pages pursuing the chase with new ardour, the confused beat of the feet of men, horses, and dogs, as all hurry on in obedience to the command of Iñigo, the chief huntsman of the Marquis d'Almenar. They take their course to the place pointed out by him as that from which it is most likely they will be able to cut off the deer's retreat.

All, however, was of no avail. When the fleetest of the dogs came to the grove of oaks, the deer, panting, and the foam dropping from its mouth, had already flashed by like an arrow, and had entered the bushes bordering a path which led to the fountain.

'Stay, stay, every one,' cried Iñigo. 'It is the will of heaven that the beast escape.'

The hunters stopped, the horns were mute, and the dogs, restrained by the voices of the huntsmen, came unwillingly back.

At that moment the hero of the festivity, Fernando de Argensola, the eldest son of Almenar, joined the group of huntsmen.

'What is the matter?' cried he, angrily, to the huntsman, his rage showing itself in every feature of his face, and darting in furious glances out at his

eyes. 'What are you doing, you idiot? Do you not see that the beast is wounded? It is the first that has fallen under my hand, and you draw back from the chase, and let it be lost and go away into the forest to die! You must know that I came to kill deer, not to feed the wolves.'

'Señor,' murmured Inigo between his teeth, 'it is impossible to carry the chase farther.'

'Impossible! Why?'

'Because this path,' replied the huntsman, 'leads to the fountain of poplars—the fountain of poplars in whose waters dwells an evil spirit. He who dares to disturb their current pays dearly for it. The beast will by this time have already reached their bank, and you could not come there without bringing some terrible misfortune on your head. The hunters are the kings of Moncayo, but kings who pay tribute. Every beast which flies away to that mysterious fountain is a beast lost.'

'A beast lost! I had rather lose my father's lands; I would rather Satan had me and mine than allow that deer to escape from me—the first that has been wounded by my weapon, on the first day of my hunting! Do you see it! Do you see it! We can at times see it from here. Its limbs falter; it is running slowly. Let me go! Let me go! Take your hand off my bridle or I will throw you to the ground! Who knows but that I may be able to overtake it before it comes to the fountain? and if it should come there, why, the fiend take the water and its inhabitants! On, Relampago! On, my horse! If you bear me up to it I will have my diamonds set in your golden frontlet.'

Man and horse dashed on like a whirlwind.

Inigo looked after him till he disappeared amongst

the thicket. Then he looked around him. All, like him, remained silent, still, and filled with terror.

'Señors,' said he at length 'you have seen what took place. I struggled with him till I was in danger of being beaten down under his horse's feet. I did my duty. Against the evil one valour will be of no avail. The huntsman may come so far with his cross-bow, but only the priest with his holy water may go farther.'

II

'You are pale ; you walk silent and sadly. What has happened to you ? Since the evil day in which you went to the fountain of poplars in pursuit of the wounded deer, one would think some malignant hag had bewitched you with her poisonous philtres. You no longer go to the mountain, preceded by the rushing hounds, and your horn no longer awakens the echoes. Every morning, taking your cross-bow, you set off alone, deep in the thoughts which are consuming you, betake yourself to the thicket, and remain there till sunset. As the gloom of night falls you come back again to the castle, pale and weary, and I in vain look for the game I expect you to have killed. Why do you spend the tedious hours so far away from those who most love you ?'

While Iñigo spoke thus, Fernando, absorbed in thought, mechanically hewed with his mountain dagger at the ebony bench on which he sat.

After a long interval of silence, the stillness being only broken by the sound of the knife as it glided over the smooth surface, the young man addressed

himself to his servant, as if he had not heard a word of what he had been saying.

'Inigo, you who are old, you who know all the caverns of Moncayo, you who have always lived on its sides pursuing wild beasts, you who have more than once in your hunting excursions reached its very summit, tell me, did you ever by chance meet a girl who lives among the rocks?'

'A girl!' cried the huntsman, surprised, and looking fixedly at his master.

'Yes,' said the young man. 'A strange thing has happened to me, a very strange thing. I thought to keep the matter a secret for ever, but it is not possible for me to do so. It burns in my heart and shows itself in my face. I will therefore tell you all. You may assist me to unravel the mystery attaching to a being who seems to exist for me alone, for no one else appears to know anything respecting her, no one else has seen her, no one else is able to give me any information respecting her.'

The huntsman, without opening his lips, drew his seat close to that of his master, never the while once taking off him his wide-opened eyes. The other, having collected himself, proceeded as follows—

'Since the day when, in spite of your predictions of evil, I followed the deer to the fountain of poplars, and then came up with it by its waters, I have felt possessed with a desire for solitude.

'You do not know the place. Imagine, then, the fountain lying in the hollow of a rock, the water trickling, dropping, drop by drop, upon the green floating leaves of the plants which grow around the border of the fountain's basin. As they fall the drops are shining as golden balls, and as they pass

through the air they are accompanied by notes of delicious music. They unite and flow over the turf, and murmuring, murmuring, they produce a sound similar to the hum of bees about to alight upon a flower. They flow along a sandy channel, forming a rivulet; they beat upon the obstacles in their path; they are thrown back; they leap on; they flow, as it were, laughing, breathing, until they come to a lake. Into that lake they pass with an indescribable murmur—sighs, words, names, songs. I know not what, in the murmur of the stream as it falls into the lake, I do not hear—what I hear as I sit, feverish and melancholy, upon a rock, against the foot of which lies the water of the mysterious lake. There it forms a deep place, and the surface is unstirred even by the breeze of the evening.

‘All there is full of awe. Solitude, with its thousand unrecognisable sounds, reigns all around filling the mind with an ineffable melancholy. From the shadows of the silvery leaves of the poplars, from the hollows of the rocks, from the water of the lake, the invisible spirits of nature seem to speak to you, and to recognise a fellow-being in one possessed of the immortal spirit of man.

‘When you see me, early in the morning, take up my cross-bow and set off for the fountain, do not think that I betake myself to the place in search of game. No. I go to sit by the border of the lake, to look into its waters—for what? I do not know. It is a madness. The day that I arrived there, mounted on Relampago, I thought I saw in the depths a strange thing—very strange—the eyes of a woman.

‘Perhaps it was a straggling ray of the sun which had penetrated into the water; perhaps it was one

of those flowers which float in the middle of the deep water in which they are born, and of which the calix is like an emerald. I cannot tell. However that might be, I seemed to meet a glance fixed upon me, a glance which aroused in my heart an absurd longing not to be realised, a longing to meet with one who had eyes similar to those I saw.

'Filled with this desire, I have betaken myself, day by day, to the same spot.

'At length, one evening—I thought it must be a dream, but no, it was a truth, for I spoke to her several times, just as I now speak to you—one evening I found, sitting in my place, and clothed in a robe which flowed down to the water of the lake and floated on its surface, a girl, beautiful beyond conception. Her hair was golden, her eyelashes sparkled like flashes of light, under them glanced restlessly the eyes I had seen. Yes, the eyes of the girl were, in very truth, those eyes that had so long dwelt in my memory, the eyes of an inconceivable colour, eyes that were——'

'Green!' cried Inigo, in a voice of the greatest terror, and starting up from his seat.

Fernando in his turn was surprised, hearing him express before himself what was in his mind. With a mixed feeling of anxiety and pleasure, he asked—

'Do you know her?'

'Oh no!' cried the huntsman. 'Heaven save me from knowing her! But my father, when he has forbidden me to go to the lake, has told me many a time that the spirit, ghost, fiend, or woman, which inhabits its waters, has eyes of such a colour. I beseech you, by the love of whatever you hold dearest on earth, never to go again to the fountain of poplars. One day or another you will fall a

victim to her malice, and expiate by death the fault of having disturbed the waters of the fountain.'

'By what I love best,' murmured the young man, with a sad smile.

'Yes,' went on the old man, 'by your ancestors, by your parents, by the tears of her whom heaven destines shall be your wife, by the love of your servant who saw you born——'

'Do you know what I love best in the world? Do you know for what I would yield up love of father, the kisses of her who gave me life, and the caresses of all the women who live upon the earth? For a single glance, one single glance of those eyes. How then can I promise not to seek them?'

Fernando spoke these words in such a tone that the tears which sprang to the eyes of Inigo took their course in silence down his cheeks, save that, in a sad voice, he exclaimed—

'The will of heaven be done!'

III

'WHO are you? Whence do you come? Where do you live? Every day I come here to meet you, and yet I neither see the horse on which you came here, nor the servants who might bear you in your litter. Put aside for a while that mysterious veil in which you are enveloped as in a shade of night. I love you, and whether you be noble or not, I will be thine, thine for ever!'

The sun had gone down behind the height of the mountain, and the shadows were advancing with great paces over its sides. The breeze sighed among

the leaves of the poplars beside the fountain, and the mist, creeping up, creeping up from the surface of the lake, commenced to wrap itself around the rocks on its margin.

Upon one of those rocks, upon one which seemed ready to totter into the depths of the water, was the heir of Almenar—trembling, his image reflected on the surface of the lake, kneeling down at the feet of his mysterious loved one, seeking in vain from her the secret of her birth.

She was beautiful—beautiful and pale, like a statue of alabaster. One lock of her hair fell upon her shoulders, and glided amongst the folds of her veil like a ray of the sun making its way amidst clouds; and from under her sparkling lashes glanced her eyes, like emeralds set in a mounting of gold.

When the young man had ceased to speak she opened her lips as if to utter some words; but a sigh alone came from between them, a sigh, feeble, plaintive, like that of a little ripple, crushed by a breath of wind, dying away amongst the reeds.

‘You do not answer,’ said Fernando, seeing his hopes prove vain. ‘Do you wish that I should believe what I have heard spoken of you? Oh no! Listen. I wish to know if you love me. I wish to know whether I may love you, whether you are a woman—or a spirit——’

‘And if I were?’

The young man hesitated for an instant. The cold perspiration stood on his brow. His eyes dilated and were fixed with greater intensity upon those of the girl. Fascinated by the phosphorescent brilliancy of the eyes that met his, he cried in the transport of his love—

'If you were such I should love you—I should love you as much as I do at this moment. It is my destiny to love you even beyond the limits of this life, if there be a life beyond it.'

'Fernando,' said the girl, in a voice like music, 'I love you still more than you love me, a proof of which is that I, a pure spirit, condescend to love a mortal being! I am not a woman such as those of earth, but one fit for you who are so superior to all other men. I live in the depths of this lake, like its waters, fugitive, incorporeal, transparent. I talk with its murmurs, and I live in its ripples.'

'I do not chastise him who dares to trouble the fountain where I dwell. Instead of that, my love recompenses him for being a mortal inaccessible to vulgar superstition, and capable of comprehending my strange mysterious tenderness.'

While she thus spoke, the young man, absorbed in the contemplation of her bewildering beauty, and drawn on as it were by some imperceptible power, advanced more and more to the border of the rock.

The spirit with the green eyes went on—

'Do you see the limpid depths of the lake, the plants with large green leaves which wave to and fro in the waters? In that abode such happiness shall be thine as you have never dreamt of in your wildest ecstasy, such as no other can offer you. Come! The mists from the lake float sadly around us, enveloping us as in a pavilion of flax; the ripples call us with their incomprehensible voices, and the wind chants among the trees the hymn of love; come—come!'

The night cast its shadows around, the moon was reflected in the surface of the lake, the mist was wafted around by the gentle breeze, and the glancing

green eyes sparkled in the shadow like the deceptive fires which hover about the marshy water.

'Come! come!' Those words sounded in the ears of Fernando like a conjuration. 'Come'—and the mysterious figure called him to the edge of the abyss, over which she appeared to hang in air. She seemed to offer him a kiss—a kiss! Fernando took a step towards her—another; he felt her delicate, twining arms around his neck, and on his lips a cold pressure—a kiss of snow; he hesitated, advanced, and fell into the water of the lake with a dull sad sound.

The water leaped up in sparkling drops, and then closed above him, its silver circles widening, widening, until they died away upon the bank.

A TERRIBLE ADVENTURE

WHAT I am about to relate to you is not a fiction, nor is it by any means a story. It is merely the relation of an adventure, an adventure which has until now remained unrelated.

In the month of March 1828, I was travelling in Cordova with my brother in consequence of a nervous affection, from the assaults of which I could only find relief in change of scene. The doctors had recommended me, in order to prevent a return of my illness, to take sea baths either at Malaga or at Cadiz. Accordingly, towards the middle of June, we made our preparations to set out. My brother, his wife, and myself, composed the little party. We travelled in a carriage, a mule carrying such of our luggage as we could not find room for in the vehicle. Our route was not the shortest, but we had chosen it for the sake of taking up my sister-in-law, who had never been at Seville or at Cadiz, and who eagerly longed to see the sea, and the theatres, the assemblies, and all that various artificiality which is so wearisome to the dweller in towns, but which has so many attractions for those who live in thinly populated parts.

My brother had married the daughter of a landowner of Aquilar, rich in the possession of olive trees and excellent farms in the neighbourhood.

Concha was an ordinary enough girl, of confined ideas and modest tastes. She had seen but little, and was very young in her ways. Her skin was of extreme whiteness, her eyes and her hair were a splendid black. Her aquiline nose, delicately shaped, gave a certain refinement to her face. Her mouth was just a little large, but this was compensated for by the pearly teeth which it revealed. Her figure was harmonious and well developed without being large, and her manner and bearing were very pleasing. The women thought her just a little too pale, and the men thought her very pretty. My brother had married her for love, and she sincerely returned his affection. In brief, it was a happy match. With eight months at Cordova, and four at Aquilar with her parents, Concha had a fine life of it. The cares of her household occupied her while my brother was away upon his business. So their life passed, if without any delirious pleasure, certainly without weariness or pain.

We left Cordova at ten o'clock in the morning. The sun was bright, the sky clear, but the heat was insupportable. Having travelled across country, we came at night-fall to the village where we were to meet Antonia, our new companion, on our route. Antonia was the reverse of the picture of Concha. She had blue eyes, and a plump face which at times was scarlet. She was what one terms a merry companion, one whose only desire it was to be married, but who had never been so fortunate as to meet with one who aspired to her hand. I sat between the two girls in the carriage, the old springs of which made a horrible noise. We were happy enough, but the heat of the day rendered us stupid, and when we came to Carpio, where we were to pass the night, it

was with a sensation of exquisite pleasure that I escaped from the monotonous movement of the carriage, and the wearisome tinkling of the bells on our mules.

The inn at which we alighted had certainly not a very satisfactory aspect. The large yard of the miserable building was at the time full of persons of very various appearance.

The innkeeper came out. He was a fat disagreeable-looking fellow, like all innkeepers from Cervantes' time to the present day. At first he received us with no great pleasure, but, when he found that we had brought provisions with us, and that we had the look of well-to-do folk, he laid aside his sour looks, lowered his eyebrows, and handed us over to the care of his niece, a pretty girl who seemed singularly out of place amongst such miserable surroundings. The landlord turned away, and, seating himself on a farrier's bench beside the door, once more took up his greasy cards and resumed his game with some soldiers. The girls took possession of their little apartment, and then we all went to visit the Moorish fort which commands the town, while they prepared something for us to eat at the inn.

Half an hour later we returned to the inn. The game was finished, the court full of people, and in a corner was the pretty niece or servant, whose presence in such a place had so much excited our surprise, knitting stockings. As we entered we saluted the assembly, and took our place in the middle of it. It was composed of a little troop of soldiers of the Prince's regiment who had been sent down in pursuit of some robbers; of a serjeant, with great moustaches and a snappish countenance, who was in command of the detachment; of three mule-

teers of La Mancha, who appeared to be on very friendly terms with the innkeeper, their compatriot; of the village farrier; and of a man whose air and garb made one waver in one's judgment as to whether he was a farmer or a smuggler. He wore a mountain sombrero, with a wide velvet ribbon decorated with four hempen tufts, a black embroidered coat, a vest of black cloth with silk fringe and tassels, blue breeches garnished with silver buttons, boots with spurs, and a red girdle into which was thrust a poniard, the ivory handle of which was inlaid with coral. He appeared to be about thirty-four years old. His figure was agreeable and well-proportioned, while his face was browned by the sun, and his restless eye scanned with a defiant glance those who were about him. I do not know how it was, but my interest was not long in centering upon this man. In spite of his being short of stature, he appeared to be at once so easy and so dignified that I could not help giving him a good deal of my attention. When our eyes met his were full of such raillery and authority as quite confounded me.

'How are things going, my old Antonio?' asked one of the muleteers of the farrier.

'Very badly, Master Cruzes. We want forage, and our beasts are near perishing of hunger. I myself should like to go to Cordova to sell some sheep I have, but, with those robbers closing all the roads, one is better at home.'

'Are there robbers in these parts?' asked my brother, with a careless air.

'No, señor,' answered the sergeant. 'It is only a troop of eight men who have committed several robberies of late. They come and go like Pedro in his inn, and I am not able to do anything against

them while I have only the four soldiers you see. I do not care to expose the men to the chance of being killed by the rascals, who unite and scatter with wonderful tact. To catch them with certainty we want horsemen and not such raw fellows as these. They have a wonderful knowledge of all the country around. However, the captain is coming down with twenty men, and then we shall be able to do something.'

'What captain?' asked the dandy with the red sash.

'Why, the captain, certainly,' replied the sergeant. 'A brave man to the tips of his fingers. He has been three years tracking brigands. His name is Don Roque Comares, and he already knows José Maria.'

'José Maria!' cried the muleteers and the soldiers in one breath.

'Yes, señor, José Maria. He met him some time back two leagues from Ecija, and would have settled him with his poniard had not the brigand shot at him with his pistol, wounded him in the arm, and thrown him down. He was at that time lieutenant in the first company of the first regiment, and he was afterwards made captain of the second company.'

'And when does he come down?' asked the dandy, who had paid great attention to the sergeant's words.

'I am ordered to wait here four days for him, but I do not expect he will be so long.'

The dandy started involuntarily, and his eyes glanced around to see if any one had observed him. Our eyes met. He leaned against the carriage and played with the hempen tufts in his hat.

'So much the better!' said he with great cool-

ness, 'for we shall then be the sooner quit of this plaguey brigand. A man who has a little, and who wishes to look after his business, ought to be protected in the possession of what he has, and should be permitted to take his way without having a *credo* eternally in his mouth. Your pardon, caballero,' said he, addressing my brother, 'can you tell me what is the hour?'

'Nearly eight o'clock,' replied my brother, referring to a magnificent watch which had once belonged to my father, and which he had received from a cousin, an old auditor in Mexico.

'Eight o'clock! How time flies!'

And rising from the carriage he got ready to leave. At that moment we heard the noise of horses' feet, and almost immediately the Captain Don Roque Comares entered at the head of his company.

'Good-evening, caballeros,' said the newcomer, abandoning his horse to his servant, while the soldiers led their beasts to the stables. 'It has been deucedly hot to-day, and I was in a hurry to get here. What news, Sergeant Perez? Where is the band?'

'Yesterday José Maria left Ecija in order to rejoin his comrades. Where he is now heaven only knows.'

'Ecija!' cried the captain furiously. 'Think of that, señors! The men we are in pursuit of find refuge in the very towns, and fellows of their own stamp hide them so that the corregidores and the alcades never get a glimpse of them. These folk say that we soldiers are good for nothing, and that we spend all our time in the inns! *Caramba!* the head of José Maria would be worth something. It was he who gained me my first uniform as a commander.'

'Señor captain,' said the dandy, with a mocking smile, 'you would do well to look briskly about you

if you would catch him. They say he is a sly fellow with some courage. The sergeant has been telling us the story of a struggle in which you took part, a whole heap of things——'

'We shall look about us,' replied the captain, regarding for the first time the cheerful-looking stranger, who leaned against a post beneath the lantern which lighted up the court, smoking his cigarette and apparently taking but little interest in the conversation. The light from the lantern fell around him without lighting him up—coming from above the rays exaggerated and distorted his features, some of which were hidden by the shadow of his hat.

One might for an instant have fancied that the captain recognised the stranger. A spasm of fear seemed to manifest itself in his look, but he soon collected himself and said, in a lively tone—

'What are you doing here?'

Then turning to the landlord, he said—

'Who is this man?'

'A traveller, captain,' replied the man, in a measured voice, advancing and putting his hand to his hat; 'a traveller who knows the roads and who awaits the departure of your company in order to avail himself of its protection on the way to Cordova, which place I much want once more to visit.'

'I seem to know you,' said Don Roque. 'I am sure I have seen you somewhere, and your appearance is suspicious.'

'We have certainly met before. You are not deceived as to that. Two years ago we met at the fête at Mairena, where you won heaven knows how much from me to one farthing I gained from you. I pay my respects to you. Here is my passport.

I think the honourable company has no need to be ashamed of my society.'

The agreeable remembrance of the winnings melted the suspicious expression on the brave captain's face, and after having looked carelessly at the passport, which bore the name of Juan Serrano, dealer in corn, he refolded it, apologising for having troubled the stranger, and stroking his great moustache.

Concha came to tell us that dinner was ready, and as we wished to start on our journey at two o'clock in the morning, in order to avoid the heat of the day, we saluted the company and went to our room. As we passed by the door of the stableyard we saw Master Juan Serrano talking in a mysterious manner with the pretty servant, in the shadow of a retired corner.

'Love upon the road,' said I to myself, and, after having dined heartily, I went to bed, where I was soon fast asleep.

At half-past one they called us, while our servant got ready the chocolate. The full moon was shining down upon the courtyard. The muleteers were still asleep, but the dealer in grain was up, and, with the assistance of the landlord, was engaged in harnessing his steed, a bay pony of middle size, but of admirable proportions. His harness was good without being showy. By the side of the saddle hung a fine carbine ornamented with silver.

I saluted him, and on his recognising me, we entered into conversation.

'You will take some chocolate with us,' said I.

The stranger politely refused, but my brother, who chanced to join us at that moment, repeating the invitation, he at last agreed. My brother was a strange fellow. Serrano had interested him, but

during the breakfast the dealer in corn was obviously striving his best to conceal how entirely opposite were his tastes.

'Is it not true there are robbers between here and Ecija?' asked my sister-in-law anxiously.

'No, señora,' replied the corn-dealer, 'but the roads are not so over safe, and it will be most prudent to travel till daylight without bells on one's mules.'

'Bah!' said my brother. 'José Maria is now somewhere else. It is a long time ago since he appeared on the road to Seville.'

'Still,' persisted Serrano, 'it is always well to be on one's guard. If I were able I would go with you, but I must leave at once. I feel sure, however, that we shall meet again.'

The corn-dealer retired, making a graceful bow to the ladies and shaking me by the hand. I gave him a cigar, and we separated very good friends. The driver stowed away the trunks and the small packages which ladies always drag about with them on a journey. We entered the carriage, and by the bright light of the moon continued our journey to Ecija. We talked about the folk at the inn, and especially about Serrano, whose energetic and fierce lineaments had excited no little interest in us. My sister-in-law was not a little alarmed by the mysterious advice he had given us, which she could not forget; my brother thought him a jolly fellow, and Antonia considered him handsome. So we chatted, waiting for the day to break. Concha was afraid. She thought she saw shadows far off among the olives.

'It is the olive-trees moved by the wind,' said her husband.

All of a sudden my sister-in-law uttered a cry of terror.

'Ah! heaven! Here they are!'

And she shrank back trembling.

It was perfectly true.

'Halt!' cried a voice.

The driver pulled in the mules. I put my head out at the carriage-door, and, by the light of the moon, I saw, with terror, that the carriage was surrounded by a band of mounted brigands.

II

WE remained for some minutes in cruel uncertainty. It all seemed to us like a dream. The driver sat motionless, the postillion stopped the mules; we others sat huddled in the carriage, and nothing occurred to awake us from the stupor which seemed to paralyse us. We heard some indistinct words addressed to the driver, and he commenced to again urge on his beasts, and leaving the high-road, the carriage entered a thick grove of olive-trees, bordered by ditches, in one of which we were near being upset. None of us opened his mouth. Concha held my arm, and grasped it from time to time convulsively; Antonia sighed; my brother restlessly looked about him.

For half an hour we went along a strange road. The pale light of the moon, struggling with the first rays of the rising sun, showed to us the band of brigands who escorted the carriage riding on either side of it. Unable to divine what our fate would be, without arms with which we could defend ourselves, my brother and I looked about us trembling, filled with the utmost apprehension, if

not for ourselves, at least for our unfortunate companions.

'Stop!' cried a harsh voice.

The mules were pulled in, the driver leapt to the ground, and in a few seconds the head of a ferocious-looking brigand appeared at the door. His hat concealed his eyes, his long beard was all dishevelled, and the stolidity of his face caused us to feel anything but reassured.

'Alight, one after the other,' said he, knitting his thick brows.

I got out first. In an instant the robbers had secured me with bands of rushes collected from the ditch, and bound me to an olive-tree, side by side with our miserable driver, who, doubtless accustomed to all sorts of accidents, appeared very much unconcerned at the misadventure. As to the postillion, he was talking in a very friendly manner with some of the bandits—a pretty sure proof that he was amongst old acquaintances.

The servant as she got out of the carriage was greeted by the troop with many jesting words, and when the wretched girl commenced to cry the merriment of the scoundrels was redoubled.

Fire flashed from the eyes of my brother, and his very lips grew white as he looked around him from the carriage and saw this ominous sign of the treatment to which his wife might be subjected.

'Alight, caballero,' rudely cried a robber of miserable appearance.

My brother got out of the carriage. It was evident that he was prepared to resist and to throw himself upon the brigands.

'Hullo! are you up to some wickedness this morning?' cried the brigand; and swinging his

carbine he struck my brother such a blow with it as laid him on the ground. The others secured his hands and bound him to another tree.

I felt a terrible sickness of heart. The sight of my brother defenceless like myself, his head bowed; the sight of that wretched gang which crowded around the door of the carriage to see my sister-in-law alight; the vague presentiment of some terrible catastrophe, all this made me tremble at once with fear and rage combined. I would have given the rest of my life to be free, with a poniard in my hand. In vain did I try to break the cords that held me. They seemed to grow the tighter the more I struggled.

Concha alighted half dead, but when she saw her husband she uttered some lamentable cries.

'Be silent,' said the brigand, taking her by the arm, and pushing her towards the ditch where, her head between her hands, she set herself to weep. Antonia, pale as death, glided to her sister. The two women were overwhelmed with grief, and the robbers themselves seemed to pity them. The chief of the band called to his followers to ransack the carriage.

'Let us take it easy,' said he, turning away, and not seeming to be at all interested in our presence.

'Señor Luc,' said one of the men, placing himself in front of him, 'would it not be well for one of us to go and seek the captain?'

'Why? José Maria will not return to-day. For my part, I believe he has gone off to discover some other mode of obtaining a living. Look at the number of days he has been away. Are you not satisfied with me, fools?'

'Yes, master,' cried a young robber. 'You give us more wine than the captain did, and we live very

pleasantly. You are our lieutenant, and we ought to obey you without a murmur.'

The response of the young fellow was not, it was plain, much to the taste of his comrades, who remained silent when Luc put his question.

The trunks taken out of the carriage were scattered all around. Robes, dresses, all our baggage lay ransacked and in disorder, and each of the brigands seized on what he most fancied. In one of the baskets were some bottles of Montilla wine which my sister-in-law was carrying as a present to one of her friends at Cadiz. One of the men very quickly discovered this, and the miserable fellows having hunted up the remains of a ham, some bread, and some fruit that we had brought with us, improvised a by no means contemptible breakfast. The bottles were emptied one after another, and Luc urged the others on in their drinking. Nothing loath to follow his suggestion, they at length began to drink various toasts. The lips of my brother, trembling automatically, furnished the only sign of his being alive.

While these things were passing around me I had recovered my calmness, and began to reflect. It seemed to me impossible that the band which surrounded us was that of José Maria, which had always been celebrated for the spirit of gentility and the strict discipline shown by its members. As I looked more attentively at the faces of the wretched fellows I could recognise the frank bold faces of robbers distorted by drunkenness. The thievish eyes and the evil look of Luc, however, made me tremble. I could not understand how the villains could be so calm in their procedure, knowing that the country around was held by soldiers of the Prince's regiment.

New toasts succeeding distracted my thoughts. The band became riotous in their jollity. All of a sudden I heard a whistle, and a new person appeared upon the scene. At sight of him all became silent and abashed.

'The captain, the captain,' at length cried the robbers, joyously. 'José Maria.'

And they crowded round him affectionately.

I remembered him at once. It was the dealer in corn whom we had met at Carpio. Juan Serrano and José Maria were one and the same person.

He looked at that moment more like an enraged general than the leader of robbers. With his feet he overthrew the bottles and trod the scattered spoil into the ground. Looking around him he saw our pitiable plight, and an expression of sorrow passed over his face as his eye fell upon Concha. He turned round to Luc, who sustained with courage the fierce glances of his eyes.

'Did I then command you to behave thus?' cried José Maria, quivering with rage. 'José Maria's band does not insult women and maltreat men. If we are driven for our living to the highways it is not to do evil. I know you, and I have known you for a long time, Curro. I know that at this moment you have in your pocket a promise of pardon. You have made these men drunk in order to excite them to commit a crime, and so that you may lead them to the gallows. You forgot that you had to deal with me.'

He made a sign, and Luc was in an instant surrounded by his companions. He would have seized his carbine, but José Maria snatched it from him, and drawing, with incredible swiftness, the poniard from his girdle, he plunged it thrice into the traitor's

heart. Luc fell murmuring a curse, and the most profound silence succeeded this scene of death.

'Fools,' said the captain, slowly wiping from his front some drops of blood which had fallen from his poniard, 'is this the manner in which you behave while I am absent? I have a good mind to leave you to the soldiers, who are on your track.'

One could in truth hear afar off the noise of a detachment of cavalry.

'Go,' cried he, 'let each one give up whatever he has taken. He who hides even a piece of ribbon shall reckon with me. Put all in order.'

Without a murmur, without showing the least displeasure, the very men who a short while since seemed ready to murder us hastened to set the baggage again in the coach. All was put back, a little mixed, to be sure, but then the fellows were excited by fear of the soldiers, whose approach they were every moment expecting.

'Loose those gentlemen,' cried José Maria.

In an instant we were free. The captain came to us.

'It is late. Time flies,' said he. 'It is necessary to go on. I beg a thousand pardons for the conduct of these foolish fellows. They are good folk, but that wretch misled them,' and he pointed to the body of Luc.

A cry of joy broke from the lips of the brigands when José Maria said—

'To horse! Take the bypath, and await me at the farm of Deza.'

It was time. The sound of horses' feet grew more distinct every moment. The robbers did not, however, wish to leave their captain behind them.

'Go at once,' said he to them once more. 'Let no one follow me. I am safe here.'

He described to them the road they should take. In the twinkling of an eye all had vanished in the depths of the wood of olive-trees.

In the warmth of our greeting we urged José Maria to save himself.

'Be calm,' said he smiling.

Mounting his horse he accompanied us from the spot, endeavouring in a thousand different ways to efface from our minds the remembrance of what we had passed through.

Some moments afterwards we were met by the brave Captain Comares.

As he was upon the march a farmer had come to him and informed him that he had seen our carriage disappear in the olive wood in a very suspicious fashion.

We told the captain that we had been attacked by the robbers, but that the corn-dealer had most valiantly rescued us, killing one of the most formidable of the gang, and putting the others to flight. Don Roque grasped the hand of our deliverer, and ordered his soldiers to carry off the body of Luc, in order to expose it to the sight of the people.

'Which way did they escape?' asked Comares anxiously.

'That way,' said José Maria, pointing in exactly the opposite direction to the right one.

'Let us push on, my men, in pursuit,' cried Don Roque to his soldiers.

We wished them luck, and dashing the spurs into the sides of their horses they rode off.

'You will have nothing more to fear,' said José Maria to us. 'Heaven grant that you may forget what you have suffered to-day.'

He refused all offer of our service.

'We shall one day meet under more happy circumstances,' said he, holding out his hand, which we shook cordially.

He seized the reins, spurred his horse, and plunged into the wood.

We arrived without accident at Ecija. There my brother's wife was ill for some days in consequence of the fright she had had. Afterwards we went to Cadiz. In the midst of our greatest gaiety, Concha would tremble like a leaf at the mention of brigands, and Antonia also, for her part, trembled a little, but she sighed involuntarily as she thought of the distinguished air and generous behaviour of José Maria.

THE PASSION FLOWER

ONE summer's evening, in a garden of Toledo, a young girl, good and beautiful, told me the following singular story.

When she had explained to me the peculiar formation of the flower which gives its name to this legend, she kissed the petals and the pistils of the flower, one by one, as she pulled them apart.

If I had the power to tell to you the history of the unhappy Sarah as it was told to me, with those sweet tones and that pretty candour, you would be as much moved by the story as I was myself.

However, that is not possible, but I will tell you as much of the story as I remember at this moment.

I

IN one of the most obscure and winding alleys of the imperial city, adjoining, and hidden, so to speak, between the high Moorish tower of an ancient parish church and the time-stained blazoned walls of a noble's mansion, stood a house, crumbling, gloomy, wretched-looking as its tenant the Jew, Daniel Levy.

The Jew was rancorous and vindictive, but he was still more crafty and hypocritical.

According to common report he was possessed of great wealth, but one might see him all the day through sitting in the dark doorway of his house, repairing and piecing the metal chains of old belts or of cast-off harness, such as formed an important part of the traffic among the vagrants of Zocodover, hawkers, and poor grooms.

In spite of his hatred of the Christians and of all belonging to them, he never passed near a person of rank or a dignitary of the cathedral without ostentatiously raising the greasy cap which covered his bald yellow head. Never did he receive a customer in his shop, a common thing with him, without bending himself almost double, lavishing at the same time humble salutations accompanied by wheedling smiles.

The smile of Daniel was proverbial in all Toledo, and his meekness knew no limits, in spite of the taunts, the tricks, and the practical jokes of his neighbours.

The lads in vain tried to enrage him by throwing stones into his shop; in vain did the pages and even the men-at-arms of the neighbouring palace endeavour to put him out, hurling at him the most opprobrious names; in vain did the pious old women of the parish make the sign of the cross as they passed before his door, as if they had seen Lucifer himself in person. Daniel smiled all the same, a strange indescribable smile. His lips, thin and tightly meeting, extended themselves beneath the shadow of his very long nose, curved like the beak of an eagle, and if his eyes, small, green, round, and almost hidden under his heavy eyebrows, shot forth glances of restrained malice, he went on otherwise impassible, striking with his little hammer the iron

of the anvil on which he was repairing, apparently paying no heed to aught else, one of the thousand worn-out trifles in which he dealt.

Above the door of the Jew's shop, in the middle of a tile framework of various lively colours, was an Arab window, a relic of the old architecture of the Moors when in Toledo. Round about the stone fringe-work, and up the little marble column which divided the window into two equal portions, climbed one of those trailing plants which hang, green, full of sap, and vigorous, about the darkened walls of decaying buildings.

In that part of the house which was dimly lighted up through the narrow panes of the window, the only opening in the mossy, crumbling wall which bordered on the street, lived Sarah, the much loved child of Daniel.

When the neighbours of the quarter passed before the shop of the Jew, and by chance saw Sarah behind the blind of the Moorish window, and Daniel sitting before his anvil, wondering at the beauty of the young girl, they would cry—

‘Who would believe that such a beautiful shoot could come from such an evil stock?’

In truth, the beauty of Sarah was very bewitching. She had large eyes, surrounded by a dusky circle of black lashes, within which the bright sparkle of her beaming eyes glanced like a star in the sky on a dark night. Her lips, of a bright rose, seemed as if cut in velvet by the invisible hand of a fairy. Her skin was white, pale and transparent, like the alabaster statue on a tomb. She was scarcely sixteen, and her face already bore the imprint of that sweet sadness peculiar to young people of precocious intelligence; already did her bosom heave, and from her

lips escaped the sighs which announce the birth of vague dreams.

The richest Jews in the town, attracted by her wonderful beauty, had come and asked her in marriage; but, insensible to the homage paid her by her worshippers, and paying no heed to the counsels of her father, who pressed her to choose a companion before he should leave her alone in the world, the young girl made no response, and would give no reason for her strange conduct, save that she desired to preserve her freedom.

One day, however, one of those who had endured Sarah's disdain till he was weary of it, and who had noted her customary sadness, thinking that this last must certainly show the presence of some secret in the girl's heart, came to Daniel, and said to him—

'You are aware, Daniel, that our young men talk about your daughter.'

The Jew for a moment lifted his eyes from his anvil, ceased the monotonous blows with his hammer, and, without showing the least emotion, asked his questioner—

'What do they say of her?'

'They say,' said he, 'they say—what do I know?—many things—among others that your daughter is in love with a Christian.'

The disdained suitor of Sarah stopped at that moment to judge of the effect of his words upon Daniel.

Daniel again lifted up his eyes, looked fixedly before him for an instant without saying anything, and then recommenced his interrupted work.

'Who shall assure me that such talk is not mere calumny?' said he.

'He who has seen them talk more than once in

this very street, while you are taking part in the secret meeting of the rabbis,' went on the young Hebrew pertinaciously, wondering that his suspicions and his confirmation of them did not seem to have any effect upon Daniel's mind.

He, without stopping in his work, looked at the anvil upon which, having put his hammer aside, he was polishing the metal clasp of a piece of armour with a small file. He began to speak in low tones to himself, huskily, as if his lips were mechanically giving utterance to the ideas which crossed his mind.

'Eh! eh! eh!' said he, laughing in a strange diabolical fashion, 'does then a dog of a Christian think of carrying off my Sarah, the pride of the tribe, the crutch on which my old age shall lean? And you think, you others, that he will succeed? Eh! eh! eh!' he went on, smiling all the time, while the file ground and bit more harshly into the metal with its steel teeth. 'Eh! eh! "Poor Daniel," will my folk say, "he dotes already. Why does the weak old man love the girl, so young and so beautiful, if he cannot preserve her from the covetousness of our enemies?" Eh! eh! eh! Do you think now that Daniel is asleep? Do you think now that if my daughter has a lover—and it is possible she has; that if that lover is a Christian, wishes to lead her astray, and has led her astray—all which is possible; that if he agreed to fly with her—a very easy thing—and that they fled to-morrow, for example—a not impossible thing—do you think that Daniel would let himself be so robbed of his treasure? Do you think he would not be revenged?'

'But,' said the young man, interrupting him, 'do you know then——'

'I know,' said Daniel, rising and giving him a

slight tap on the shoulder, 'I know more about it than you who know nothing, and will know nothing till the hour comes for all to be told. Good-day. Tell your brethren to meet together. This night, between one and two o'clock, I shall come to seek them. Good-day.'

As he spoke thus, Daniel pushed his visitor gently out into the street. Then he slowly gathered up his tools, and commenced to close, to bar, and double bar the door of his little shop.

The noise the door made as it struck against the posts, and the creaking of its hinges, prevented him who went away from hearing the rustle of the blinds as they quickly closed, the Jewess at that moment leaving the recess at the window.

II

It was the evening before Good Friday, and the inhabitants of Toledo, after having taken part in the service in their magnificent cathedral, had either gone to sleep, or were recalling, as they sat around the fireplace, legends such as that of the *Christo de la Luz*, which, having been stolen by one of the Jews, left behind a track of blood, thanks to which the criminal was discovered, or the history of the *Santo Niño de la Guarda*, on whom the implacable enemies of our religion renewed the cruel passion of Jesus.

Throughout the town there reigned a profound silence, only interrupted now and then by the far-off voices of the night-watch on guard around the palace, or by the sighing of the wind, blowing around the

weather-cocks on the towers, or murmuring in the tortuous winding of the streets.

Moored to a post near the mills, which seemed as if incrustated on the base of the rocks bathed by the Tagus, and upon which the town is built, floated a little boat, the owner of which was watching the approach of a person to the bank. This person came with some difficulty down one of the narrow paths which led from the heights to the river. The man in the boat looked on with some impatience.

'It is she,' he murmured between his teeth. 'This night all the fiends' race of the Jews seems to be on the move. Where can they have agreed to meet with Satan that they run to my boat when there is a bridge so near? No, no; they are up to no good when they take such pains to avoid the men-at-arms of San Servando. Still I make money by it. Let every one see to his own affairs. The rest is nothing to me.'

As he spoke thus to himself, the man sat in his boat and, getting ready his oars, as soon as Sarah, who was the person he had seen approach, had taken her place in the craft, he pushed it off from the bank and commenced to row to the other side of the river.

'How many have gone across to-night?' asked Sarah of the man when they had left the mills behind them, speaking as if referring to something they had previously been talking about.

'I am not able to count them,' he replied. 'A regular swarm. One might think that this was the last night on which they would ever meet.'

'Do you know what business they have in hand, and with what object they have left the town at this time?'

'No, I do not; but they evidently await the

arrival of some one who is expected to come to-night. I do not know why they await him, but I doubt whether it is for any good.'

After this short conversation Sarah remained for some moments in profound silence, as if seeking to collect her thoughts.

'There is no doubt,' she thought to herself, 'my father suspects my love, and prepares to take some horrible vengeance. It is necessary that I find out where they are, what they are about, and what they propose to do. A moment of vacillation will be ruin.'

She rose, and as if to clear away the horrible doubts which occupied her brain, she passed her hand across her forehead, which her anguish had caused to be covered with beads of cold perspiration. At that moment the boat reached the bank.

'Good fellow,' said the beautiful Jewess, giving some pieces of money to the boatman, and pointing to a narrow winding path which ran serpent-like between the rocks, 'is not that the path they went by?'

'Yes, that is it; and when they reached the *Cabeza del Moro* they disappeared to the left. Only the devil and they know where they went to afterwards,' answered the boatman.

Sarah proceeded in the direction he had pointed out. For some minutes he watched her appearing and disappearing in the obscure labyrinth of the rocks, dark and jutting up in peaks. Then when she had reached the summit known as the *Cabeza del Moro*, her dark form appeared for a moment against the azure background of the sky, and then for the last time she vanished amongst the shadows of the rocks.

III

IN going along the path which to-day leads to the picturesque chapel of the *Virgin del Valle*, within two stones' throw of the summit known in Toledo as the *Cabeza del Moro*, one came, at the time of which I write, to the ruinous remains of a Byzantine church, built before the conquest of Spain by the Arabs.

Around it in its grounds, the limits of which were marked by various stones scattered about upon the soil, sprang up briars and parasitic plants, in the midst of which lay half hidden, here the broken-off capital of a column, there a large stone roughly carved with representations of interlaced leaves, horrible, grotesque mouths, or exaggerated human figures. The side walls of the chapel alone remained standing, with certain arches, ruinous and covered with ivy.

Sarah, having arrived at the point mentioned by the boatman, hesitated for a few moments undecided as to which way to take. At length, guided as it were by a species of supernatural instinct, she went on with a firm and resolute step towards the deserted ruins of the chapel.

Her instinct had not, indeed, deceived her. Daniel, now no longer smiling, Daniel, no longer the debilitated and humble old man he usually seemed, was there exhaling as it were hatred from his little round eyes. He was surrounded by a crowd of others, all, like him, thirsting to satisfy their hatred of one of the enemies of their religion. As he stood there he seemed to be more than one man, giving orders to some, animating others in their work, making, in fact, with a horrible carefulness, every preparation for the consummation of the terrible

work over which he had brooded for days and days, while he hammered so calmly upon his anvil in his shop in Toledo.

Sarah, who, under the darkness had arrived unnoticed at the entrance of the church, could with difficulty suppress a cry of horror at the sight which there met her eyes.

The red light of a wood fire threw upon the walls of the building the shadows of the infernal circle. Some were busy in raising up a large cross; some were occupied in plaiting a crown of the twigs plucked from the thorns; others were sharpening on the stones the points of great iron nails.

A terrible thought passed through her mind. She remembered that she had often heard her race accused of mysterious crimes. She vaguely remembered the terrible history of *Niño Crucificado*, which she had always regarded as a great calumny, invented by the people in order to allow them an opportunity of abusing and vilifying the Hebrews. Now, however, she no longer felt any doubt. There, before her eyes, were the horrible instruments of martyrdom, and the fierce executioners but awaited their victim.

Full of a holy indignation, burning with a generous rage, and animated by an immovable faith in the true God whom her lover had made known to her, Sarah, unable to any longer contain herself, breaking through the bushes which hid her from their sight, presented herself suddenly at the entrance of the building.

When they saw her the Jews gave a cry of surprise, and Daniel, taking a stride towards her, with a threatening air, asked in a hoarse voice—

‘What do you do here, wretched girl?’

‘I have come to tell you to your faces,’ she said in a

firm resolute voice, 'the wickedness of your infamous work. I have come to tell you that you will in vain await the victim for the sacrifice, unless, indeed, you satisfy your thirst for blood on me, for the Christian for whom you wait will not come, having been warned by me of your snares.'

'Sarah!' cried the Jew, red with rage. 'Sarah, you do not speak the truth. You cannot have carried your treachery so far as to have revealed the secrets of our mysterious rites. If it is true that you have revealed them, you are no longer my daughter.'

'No. I am no longer your daughter. I have found another Father, a Father full of love towards His children, a Father whom you nailed on a cross of infamy, and who died on it to redeem us, opening for us the gates of heaven for eternity. No, I am no longer your daughter, for I am a Christian and am ashamed of my origin.'

At these words, pronounced with that resolute energy which heaven alone puts into the mouth of martyrs, Daniel, full of rage, threw himself upon the beautiful girl, dashed her to the ground, and, seizing her by the hair, dragged her, as if he were possessed by an evil spirit, to the foot of the cross, which seemed to open its fearful arms to receive her.

'Here,' said he to those about him, 'I hand her over to you. Do justice on this wretched girl, who has betrayed alike her honour, her religion, and her brethren.'

IV

ON the following day when the bells of the cathedral filled the air with their vibrations calling the people

to worship, and the worthy citizens of Toledo amused themselves, shooting with crossbows at Judases stuffed with straw, just as nowadays is done in some of our villages, Daniel opened the door of his shop, according to custom, and with that eternal smile on his lips commenced his salutations to those that passed by. He hammered as usual upon his anvil with his iron mallet. The blinds, however, of the Moorish window where Sarah used to sit were opened no more, nor did any one ever again see the beautiful Jewess seated in the recess ornamented with bright-coloured tiles.

After some years had passed a shepherd brought to the archbishop a flower, the like of which had till then never been seen, a flower in which one could find a representation of all the instruments used in the crucifixion of the Saviour—a strange mysterious flower which had grown up and unfolded itself among the mouldering walls of the ruined chapel.

On steps being taken to inquire into the origin of such a strange flower, it is said that search being made in the old chapel the skeleton of a girl was found there, and buried with it were the different instruments represented in the flower.

Whose the bones were could never be discovered, but they were preserved with much reverence during very many years in the chapel of San Pedro el Verde, and the flower, which has since been widely propagated, is called the Rose of the Passion.

THE THIRTEENTH

IN 1827 Don Antonio Diaz Manrique, commander of cavalry, received an order to search out and punish a band of smugglers who infested the neighbourhood of Ronda. The scandal had become so great that the Government thought that terror was the only means by which it could arrive at the bottom of the long series of outrages that this band had committed. Detachments of soldiers were sent to all the villages, and a decree was published containing the names of the members of a military commission which was to judge all contraband offences. The president of the commission was authorised either to summarily put his sentences into execution or to suspend the punishment until the matter had been reported to the minister.

Towards the middle of the month of July the commandant, Manrique, was at home when they brought to him for his signature an order for an execution.

'What is it?' he asked of his adjutant.

'It is an order for the execution of the smuggler Andrés Bueno, whom a sergeant captured a short while ago on the mountain.'

'Where was he going?'

'He said that he was going to see his brother,

the boatswain of a schooner which arrived a few days ago at Cadiz, but every one knows that it was he who brought the cargo of tobacco which we seized upon the road to Malaga. Shall we shoot him ?

'All right. Take it.'

He took the order of execution and signed it.

When he was alone once more and thought over what had passed, he was not long in repenting that he had so hastily condemned to death a man who was, perhaps, after all innocent. He rose and went out to delay the execution, but he had not taken more than twenty paces before the sound of a discharge of rifles struck upon his ear. One moment later he found himself in front of the body of his victim. It was that of a young man tall and of a good countenance, and he wore the ordinary Andalusian dress. Having looked at the body for a short time the officer withdrew, sick at heart at what had happened.

Amongst the spectators of the horrible scene was the brother of Andrés Bueno. The execution having taken place he departed to find the widow of the dead man, and to breathe deep threats of vengeance against his murderers. Hardly had he entered the house when some one tried the handle of the door.

'It is the priest,' cried one of the children running to open it.

As he came in he discovered the boatswain occupied in cleaning a pistol, while the two eldest children of the dead man melted a leaden bar, letting the drops fall into a bucket of water so as to form bullets. The wretched widow sat opposite the fire looking at these preparations with a dry eye.

'Are you then preparing death ?' said the priest in a severe voice, and looking towards the brother of Andrés Bueno.

'They have killed my brother in cold blood, my innocent brother,' replied the sailor, without ceasing to rub the rusty weapon he had in his hand.

'A Christian,' said the priest, 'ought to chase from his heart the thoughts of vengeance. Heaven defend us from shedding blood. It is necessary that we should leave to heaven the task of punishing the guilty. An unceasing remorse in this life, and an eternal chastisement in the next will do justice on those who commit such crimes on earth.'

He dwelt for a long time on his good theme. The sailor now and then raised his head and bowed it in sign of his assent to what he urged. From time to time he hazarded a few words. At length the words of the priest appeared to make some impression upon him. He stopped in his work, seemed to think for a moment, and said all of a sudden—

'I think, after all, you are right. Conscience itself will avenge me. I promise you I will never lift my hand against him to shed his blood.'

That same evening the commandant was sadly thinking over the events of the morning when his aide-de-camp came abruptly into his room, his face white, and his features convulsed. He gave the commandant a letter sealed with black wax. It contained these words—

'Andrés Bueno died the thirteenth July 1827.

'The commandant, Don Antonio Diaz Manrique will die on the thirteenth July 1828.

'Twelve months.'

There was nothing else save an undecipherable signature.

'Who brought this letter?' asked the commandant.

'Andrés Bueno,' announced the aide-de-camp in a voice hoarse with emotion.

'Andrés Bueno is dead! You are mad!'

'I took part in his execution, and I was present when his body was cast into the ditch at the cemetery, and as I believe that one day I shall have to render an account to heaven of my words, I will swear that it was the same man who gave me that letter.'

Diaz Manrique was not superstitious, but this mysterious letter nevertheless inspired him with some inquietude. However, he expected it would all pass away in a few days, and indeed five days after he had quite forgotten the incident.

On the thirteenth of August he was at Malaga, and his wife came to him to give him a letter which she said she had received from a pale tall man. This second letter was precisely like the other, except that the number of months was now reduced to eleven. Diaz Manrique, when he had read it, felt his terror reawaken. His remorse was again renewed, and the voice of his burdened conscience assured him that there was something supernatural in this event. He had told no one of his intention to visit Malaga, where he had arrived on the preceding night. Who in the world, then, could have been able to divine his intentions and thus throw himself in his way at such a moment? A vague but continual uneasiness took possession of him. He lost his appetite and could not sleep. In his endeavour to forget he plunged into all manner of excess, but nothing was able to free him from dismal thought. Anguish never quitted its hold upon him.

On the thirteenth of September he was at table surrounded by old friends, and was about to drink the health of a lady when a servant put into his hand

a letter sealed with black wax. The commandant changed colour and fell back unable to speak a word. Then, pretending that he was taken suddenly unwell, he rose and left the room. The next day he left Malaga, saying that he was going to hunt in the forest. He took but one servant with him.

No idea of pleasure or diversion again entered the mind of Diaz Manrique. He had come to look upon pleasure as a dream of a past time which would never more return. All that he could hope for was a passing consolation, a momentary forgetfulness of his sorrow. He sought it in bodily fatigue and in the activity of a life in the country. But the memory of the fatal volley never left him for a moment. A wounded figure was ever by his side, and his eyes ever sought for it.

Thus passed the month of September, and so passed the succeeding months.

One day as Diaz Manrique was returning from a long excursion on the mountain, overcome with fatigue, he passed along a narrow path which ran by the side of a little brook. At a turn in the road he suddenly came upon a man at the foot of a hill, who pointed with his hand to a rock, near which the commandant must pass. Diaz Manrique looked closely at the man. His features were those of Andrés Bueno. The commandant's hair bristled, his hand mechanically sought his carbine—and he fired. A smile of contempt passed quickly over the lips of Bueno, who, without making any movement, still pointed to the place. A few seconds afterwards the apparition disappeared as if by enchantment. When Diaz Manrique came to the spot pointed out to him, he there found a letter telling him that he had now only six months to live.

After this meeting the commandant no longer doubted that there was something supernatural in his strange adventure. His terror and his suffering redoubled, and it was with mortal dread that he saw the day arrive upon which he should receive a new letter.

The terrible day came, and Diaz Manrique saw the night approach without anything of an extraordinary character having occurred. At last he hoped the enchantment might be broken. He went home joyously, and was passing over a lonely bridge on his way, when a man met him who seemed disposed to bar his passage. He recollected that the old man was one whose eldest son had recently been condemned by the commission as a smuggler. His house had been visited by the soldiers, ransacked from top to bottom, and then completely demolished. The old man had been by this plunged into the deepest misery. Diaz Manrique asked him to let him pass, but the old man, without moving, looked fixedly at him, and said—

‘I was waiting for you.’

‘You were waiting for me?’ cried the commandant. ‘I have nothing to do with those who are defrauding their sovereign, and are idle vagabonds.’

‘You are wrong. Listen!’

Diaz Manrique felt his blood rush to his forehead.

‘No one insults me unpunished!’ he cried. ‘Take one of these pistols and defend yourself.’

‘Why?’ said the shepherd, ‘everything I have in the world has been harshly taken away by you. Since then my life has been very miserable, and I scarcely know how to live. I have never fired a pistol, though I once upon a time carried a firelock

like many others. For all that, however, I should certainly kill you if I wanted to do so. The advantage is all on my side. The hand of a murderer always trembles.'

'Does my hand tremble?' cried Manrique, full of rage.

The old man smiled disdainfully, drew a paper from his pocket and gave it to the commandant.

'I have fulfilled the message with which I was charged,' said he, with an affected calmness. 'Well, then! does not your hand tremble now?'

Diaz Manrique soon learnt from whom the letter came. His limbs trembled under him and he fell fainting to the ground. When he had recovered his senses the old man had disappeared, but a short distance off the commandant saw the sombre figure of Bueno coldly regarding him.

It would take too long to tell of all the attempts made by Diaz Manrique to deliver himself from his persecutor and to dissipate the gloomy thoughts which took possession of him. He travelled through all Andalusia in a vain attempt to thwart the delivery of the fatal letters which, however, never failed to reach him on the thirteenth of each month, in spite of all his efforts to keep secret the place of his abode.

At last he resolved to seek refuge in Lisbon with one of his sisters, married some years back to a Portuguese merchant. He embarked in a trading vessel, and he felt himself freed from an overwhelming weight when he saw the coast of Spain left behind him in the distance.

In the middle of the night the sea commenced to swell, and a short time after so terrible a storm arose that the vessel was in danger. Diaz Manrique stood

on board watching the sailors occupied in taking in the sails when, all of a sudden, by the dim light of a star, he saw Bueno among them. Passing by the commandant, Bueno, making his way to the ladder leading to the cabin, dropped at his feet a letter sealed with black wax. It is impossible to describe the despair which then overwhelmed the wretched fugitive. He recognised that every effort was useless, and that the last resource to which he had clung with such desperate hope had now failed him.

When he arrived at his sister's house so greatly was he changed that she could hardly recognise him. His haggard features were ghastly with the hue of death, while he was wasted with the fever which consumed him. Instead of the young man of merry disposition whom she had in time past known, the merchant's wife saw before her a man prematurely aged, sad, restless, rarely speaking, whose face was never lighted with a smile. Astonished at such a change, she on several occasions in vain interrogated her brother respecting the cause of his sadness. Weeks passed away thus.

One evening as they returned together from the theatre San Carlos, his sister began anew to urge him to make known to her the cause of his continual sorrow. Diaz Manrique heard her for a while in silence.

'If some remorse preys upon you, my brother,' said she, 'the best course you can pursue is to follow the dictates of our religion.'

'Ah!' replied Manrique sadly, 'I cannot pray to God. Even that consolation is refused me. There now remains not a day before I disappear from this world, and my persecutor ever follows me, step by step. This evening at five o'clock I shall be but a

corpse, and yet I am not able to pray, so far is my spirit removed from that consolation! Look, look to the right,' continued he, as his whole frame shook, and he pointed to a tall man who slowly walked along the other side of the street.

It was necessary for Diaz Manrique to be carried to his brother-in-law's house. He was so weak he could not walk.

His sister, persuaded that his strange malady arose in great part from some delusion of the imagination, had a watch placed at the head of his bed, and this she took care to put half an hour forward. As the fatal moment arrived the condition of the sick man grew worse; but when the hand of the watch pointed to five o'clock without anything occurring, he in part recovered himself and began to rally. Soon quick footsteps were heard in the neighbouring room, the door opened, and a man abruptly advanced to the bed. Diaz Manrique raised himself on his pillow, threw his eyes upon the stranger, and fell back dead.

It was the brother of Andrés Bueno.

'What do you want here?' cried the merchant angrily.

'I am,' said the man, 'the boatswain of the vessel in which Don Antonio came hither. We are about to sail again, and I came to ask him if he had any message that he wished me to deliver at Cadiz or at Ronda.'

THE EFFECT OF BEING UNDECEIVED

SIX leagues from the court of Spain is situated the splendid town of Alcala, which, being interpreted, means Castillo Ricco, from the circumstance of its being ennobled by having given birth to so many distinguished citizens. Its aristocracy is very ancient; and in the time of Leovegildo, King of the Goths, it already boasted a grand cathedral, as we learn from Father Juan de Mariana, in the fourth book of his celebrated history. Its climate is almost the finest in Europe; its public edifices are numerous and noble, and the character of its schools such as is known to the whole world. Finally, it is the work of that holy prince of the church, Cardinal Ximenes de Cisneros, who founded this our celebrated university upon the model of that of Paris.

Alcala, moreover, is watered by the pleasant river Henares, so celebrated by poets, which runs through a delightful and refreshing public walk, ornamented with beautiful trees and flowers.

There arrived at the university about the time of which we are speaking a young cavalier called Theodore el Galan, or the Gallant, such was the extreme spirit and loftiness he displayed on every occasion. Nature had been prodigal to him in all her gifts, no less of mind than of person; a com-

bination which is too rarely met with, inasmuch as we often find prudence allied to parsimony, beauty to silliness, ignorance to wealth, and plain features to superior taste and intellect. It was the good fortune of Theodore to combine only the best of these qualities; wealth, valour, judgment, and kind and courteous manners. As these, too, in youth are found seldom unaccompanied with some noble pursuit or passion—the favourite object of ‘high thoughts seated in a heart of courtesy’—there was one which fired the secret soul of Theodore, and seemed to him as the beacon by which he steered his path through the rough and tumultuous voyage of life. This was his adored Narcissa, a lady of distinguished family and fortune, and still more celebrated for her virtues and her beauty. It was not to be expected that Theodore would carry away such a prize without opposition; he had a formidable rival in Valerio, a young noble of still higher birth and fortune than he could boast.

In the eyes of the lady’s father, these were no despicable advantages, but in the estimation of Narcissa herself, and that of the friends by whom she was surrounded, Theodore had every title to superior attention and regard. To counterbalance this, however, the artful Valerio had gained over to his side one of Narcissa’s favourite companions, and the whole of the domestics were in his interest. Narcissa, it is true, was attached to Theodore, and by no means relished the company of his rival. The graceful bearing and distinguished gallantry of the former excited her admiration and won her love; but her pride and reserve had left her lover hitherto a stranger to his good fortune.

Valerio, on the other hand, by no means despaired.

He was extremely cautious in his conduct, and while he daily made advances in the parent's favour, took care not to incur the risk of the daughter's refusal.

But Theodore was only anxious to declare his love; and one evening, having observed Narcissa leave the house unaccompanied, he instantly joined her. As he approached she happened to drop her glove, which, on presenting to her, he pressed to his lips, at the same moment inserting a letter in it as he gave it to her. She received it with a smile, and then feeling what it contained, a deep blush suffused her countenance. She beckoned him away as she hid the glove in her bosom, and fearful of exciting her father's anger, Theodore hastily retired.

On returning home Narcissa eagerly perused the contents of her lover's note. 'I have ever heard,' it ran, 'that those who love are bold and fearless as the lion; yet how I dread the very thoughts of your displeasure; how I tremble when I approach you, fearful of raising my eyes to yours, lest one look of anger or disdain should flash from those bright and beauteous orbs. Ah, in pity would you turn them on me with sweet and heavenly beams, and temper the strange awe I feel in your presence, so that I might find words in which to dare to tell how wildly, passionately, I love—I adore you.'

Theodore was little aware that this eager expression of his feelings was altogether superfluous, that the heart of his Narcissa had before acknowledged him for its lord. Frequently did he pass great part of the night in the open air near her residence, heedless of the cold air, storm, or rain. For how could he tear himself away, so long as Narcissa deigned to gladden his soul by sweet converse, and his sight by lingering at her window during the 'witch-

ing hour of night?' Only with the dawn would he be seen stealing from her presence, with folded arms and lingering step, hoping, fearing, sighing, murmuring, exulting; in short, the very soul and expression of an impassioned lover. Often, too, would he seek to gratify his beloved with the 'concord of sweet sounds'; with music of the old and pathetic airs, such as we now no longer hear. Fed upon thoughts and tones like these, the passion of the beautiful Narcissa, overmastering every fear and opposition, stooped to solicit of her lover that he would unfold the secret of his love to her father, if it were true he loved her. The delighted Theodore was easily persuaded, for he felt that he was *his* equal, though not of her he sought, and confided in the strength of his love. Alas! he was doomed to be undeceived; for spite of his noble birth, his fortune, and deserts, he was opposed on the ground of that very gallantry which had acquired for him so brilliant a reputation at his adversary's cost. Yet since he had become attached to Narcissa he had wholly abandoned his former pursuits. He had grown gentle, studious, and eager to oblige all around him, the better to merit the love of one so good and beauteous as he felt she was. But her parents, apprehensive of his passionate disposition and eager spirit, received his proffers coldly, and in as gentle terms as possible informed him they had already selected another party, to whom they had promised their daughter's hand.

Theodore seemed thunderstruck at this reply. He retired without saying a word, and early on the same evening sought an interview with Narcissa. 'I have had a bitter struggle,' he said, in deep and mournful accents, 'to prevail on myself to see you

this evening. I did hardly think I could outlive the day, for to live without you is death. This very day I spoke to your parents. They assured me you were already betrothed to another; that they had passed their word; and that it was impossible for them to recall it. They had the heart to say this to the being who has loved you for years! I have lost you, unless you, my Narcissa—you—love like I do, and dare to put your affection to the proof. My God! I shall live to see you the wife of another; but if you have not deceived me, you will save us both from such a fate. Say only the word, and I shall be *your* own, *your* promised, *your* betrothed, spite of parents and all the world.'

'Theodore,' replied the lovely girl, 'if it be possible for parents to marry a child without her own knowledge then, then only can I be lost to you, for with my will and consent it never shall be done. Your love is worthy of me. Oh yes, more! deserving more than all I can do. Should my prayers and tears be of no avail, such is my affection that it could urge me to anything sooner than yield my hand to one from whom my heart recoils. While my parents forbear to use compulsion, however, I will do nothing to grieve them. You may confide in my word, in my heart more, Theodore, and God bless and protect you; a thousand times, dare I stay to say them, a sweet good-night.' More encouraged and consoled, her lover then took his leave, counting the hours and moments until he should again revisit his beloved.

About this time a brother of Narcissa's, a rash and headstrong young man, arrived at his father's house from his travels. On the ensuing evening, happening to see Theodore approaching, he conceived

it was incumbent upon him to compel him to retire, and he accosted him. Aware who he was Theodore bespoke him fair, anxious not to offend any one dear to his Narcissa, let alone a brother; but neither courtesy nor entreaties produced the least effect. The young man attacked him, and Theodore was compelled to draw in his defence. He retired at the same time without once taking advantage of his adversary, until imputing it to cowardice the brother grew still more enraged, calling on him by his name, and venting every opprobrious epithet at his expense. 'I am no coward,' replied the gallant lover; 'whoever says it is deceived—not to say he lies. I would not hurt you; you look too like your sister, whom I love to distraction. You know my name, and I know yours! forbear, sir, at your peril, and let me retire.' It was in vain he warned and besought him, till, tired almost beyond patience by the desperate onset, Theodore at length wounded him in the sword-arm to prevent yielding his own or taking his enemy's life. He then sought refuge in the nearest monastery to avoid the first burst of the father's anger, torn with regret and trouble at the idea of having offended the family and incurred the displeasure of her he adored, for he knew the whole would be laid to his charge.

During this interval Theodore's rival, Valerio, had not been idle; presuming upon the former's ill-fortune and his own merits he concerted with Narcissa's favourite maid, whom he had bribed into his interest, to be admitted to a secret premeditated interview, for which they had so artfully laid their schemes, as would put it out of the power, they flattered themselves, of the unfortunate lady any longer to refuse his suit. Accordingly one evening, as the unsuspecting girl was folding up a letter

addressed to her beloved Theodore, she suddenly saw the shadow of a man upon the side opposite where she was sitting, and at the same moment hearing a noise as if from the place of his concealment, she ran to the window in great alarm, and began to cry out for help. Her brother, who was within hearing, instantly rushed into her apartment with his sword drawn, and was only just in time to behold the figure of a man which that moment issued from a place of concealment and rushed past him. He was masked—and fired at the idea of his being Theodore, the brother pursued him, but he made his escape by leaping out of an open window into the garden, whence he got clear off. Unluckily for his rival, who had just then approached the house, the persons in pursuit mistook him for the man who had already made his escape, and seeing the alguazils at no great distance, the father and brother instantly called upon them to secure Theodore, as he had only that night broken into their house. He was instantly seized and conveyed into prison; and on their return home the father bade Narcissa prepare to depart for the residence of an uncle, where it was believed she would be more secure.

The indignation of Narcissa's family at the injury thus aimed at their honour, and which they laid to the charge of Theodore, was beyond bounds. They also accused him of having corrupted their domestics, and succeeded in impressing the same belief upon Narcissa, assuring her that they had surprised him as he was attempting to make his escape from the garden. Valerio thus triumphed in his malice, while the unhappy Theodore, a prey to grief and jealousy, was maddened with the idea that the person found concealed might possibly be some more favoured

rival. But what most confirmed his worst fears was the conduct of Narcissa's family, who now insisted that Theodore should instantly receive her hand, as the only means of repairing the wounded honour of the lady. The whole of her relations united in this demand, insisting on its fulfilment in the most haughty terms, all which made Theodore only the more recoil from it, eagerly as he had before sought a union with her. It was a bitter struggle, for he still maintained his innocence, and consequently some other person must have obtained admittance to the lady's room, for all which he was to be made answerable. He therefore refused to accept Narcissa's hand, dearly as he valued such a prize, until the real culprit should be discovered. Truth, honour, justice both to himself and to Narcissa, forbade it.

These tidings threw Narcissa into an agony of grief. She appealed to heaven against the injustice of Theodore, and, unacquainted with his motives, in the first burst of indignation she threw herself at her father's feet weeping, and entreating his forgiveness for having placed her heart's affections upon so unworthy an object. She prayed too for death, attesting her innocence in the whole of that unhappy night's adventure. She knew nothing of the treacherous transaction which had deprived her of all happiness and peace. This, however, soon came to light, for it was part of the traitor's project to confess it to the father, who, keeping it secret from his daughter, instantly sent for him, insisting, as he had done with Theodore, that he should wipe off the insult by marrying his daughter without delay.

In the tumult of her anguish and despair that unhappy daughter redeemed the pledge of obedience she had just given her father, and put a climax to

her misery by suffering herself to be conducted to the altar, pronouncing the fatal vow which must ever separate her from the object of her first choice. She became the wife of Valerio, whose cruel and malignant feelings only gave a keener edge to his success. What sensations, alas! were hers, when, after the storm of passionate indignation against Theodore had subsided, she was restored to reflection and found herself united to one whom she had never loved! It was a living death; but, as if not content with the affliction he had caused, her husband had the audacity to make public, under the plea of vindicating his wife's honour, that it was he who had been discovered in her apartment. Thus, too, was vindicated the honour of Theodore, who had already been released and made acquainted with all that had passed. We shall not attempt to describe his feelings, nor those of his lost Narcissa; both had become the victims of a consummate villain; and both vainly lamented in secret over the bitterness of their lot. 'Oh fatal haste,' exclaimed the unhappy lover; 'full speedily didst thou revenge thyself, Narcissa, on my imputed offence. Hadst thou but delayed one day, once seen thy Theodore ere this fatal error—these burning tears—these agonies of tortured love—hate—revenge—would not have been mine. But tremble, traitor! tremble both! for I must have a twofold revenge.'

By their mere intensity, however, these fiercer feelings wore themselves out and gave place to darker and gloomier, and then more fixed and resigned sorrow. Though often brooding over revenge, he seemed to have lost the power of action; and feeling he had revenge in his hands, he grew irresolute how to employ it. Poor Narcissa's fate was not less pitiable—she was consumed by secret grief. They

had never met since the fatal marriage; but after some interval Theodore resolved to seek an interview with her previous to inflicting the vengeance he still nurtured in his breast, and then abandon his native place for ever. But how should he effect this, for the jealous Valerio watched over his prize with the avidity of a miser over his treasure, and the vigilance and fierceness of a bird of prey. He accompanied her wherever she went, and arrayed her in the most splendid and costly attire, the better to enhance her dazzling beauty in the eyes of her admirers and to enjoy the secret satisfaction their envy excited.

What hope of Theodore obtaining access to one thus guarded? But what is impossible to disappointed love and despair? How deeply would he once have felt the humiliation of having recourse to the stratagem he now did. He doffed his courtly robes and manly dress, and disguised in that of a woman set himself to pry into the movements of Valerio; until one evening, observing him leave home on a visit to the court, he took the opportunity and sought admittance at the house. Without the least suspicion he was conducted into Narcissa's apartment, and found himself in the presence of her for whom he had suffered so much. What a trial for both! Narcissa begged the stranger to throw aside her cloak and be seated. 'Certainly, if you wish it!' At the sound of that voice Narcissa started, trembled, and fixing her eyes steadfastly on the stranger's face for some time, uttered a piercing cry, and fell into his arms.

'Alas,' she exclaimed, 'my Theodore, what have you done thus to risk the loss of life and honour—yours and my own? Have I suffered so little that you should add this last pang, the loss of your dear

life, to all the rest? for assuredly it were lost were you to be seen here. Away, away! for you know I loved—that it is you who steep my soul in tears and bitterness—wretched as I am—why did you ever love me?’

‘Would to God,’ replied Theodore, in deep hollow tones, ‘that it had so been, for keenly as I feel my wrongs, yours cut me to the very soul. I see it all. I came not to grieve you; I wish only to know one thing,—are you resigned to your lot, to live as you do; are you happy in your second choice? if so, I ought to bid you farewell, and no longer shed these unmanly tears. Is your lord as happy as he is fortunate, for treason hath won the prize? are you not his? are you not prepared to grant his smallest wishes, and to play the cruel tyrant only with me? Yes—do it, do it; and in return I will do things that shall make the world weep and wonder, for the power, the vengeance is mine. I brood over it day and night; the consciousness is sweet. I delay it for that; but when it comes it shall sweep you all like a whirlwind from the earth.’

It was long before Narcissa had power to reply; a flood of tears drowned her voice. At length she sobbed out, ‘My cruel parents married me, but they could not make me love, they could not make me forget you.’ ‘You love me then? tell me you yet love,’ cried Theodore, in an exulting tone, ‘that you were deceived—compelled—anything—only that you never loved Valerio, that you do not love the traitor now.’ ‘Never, never,’ said the lady bitterly; ‘you know I always loved you. It was my father, it was you, Theodore, who did it all; you refused to accept my proffered hand,’ and she covered her face with her hands and wept.

'Wretch, madman that I was,' exclaimed Theodore, 'but you know not how vilely I was treated, aspersed, dishonoured ; you know not all, or you would weep too for me. It is past—I was doomed ; let it be so. Only declare you yet love me, and I will forget all and bless you, for I still adore you.' 'Kill me, but do not ask me, Theodore ; I cannot, I ought not to tell.' 'What, what ?' inquired her lover eagerly, 'quick, tell me, or this night shall end my agonies and doubts.' 'How ? I love you, then,' cried the affrighted girl, 'fondly, truly love you, Theodore,' and her head sank upon his breast as she murmured the words. He pressed her madly to his bosom ; their lips met, and that moment seemed to repay both for all the sufferings they had endured.

Narcissa started from him. 'Hark ! I hear someone ; away, Theodore ; my love, we shall meet again.' He hastened away ; but he was no longer like the same being, full of anguish and despair, but rejoicing in thoughts of love and revenge. What new emotions, also, now shook the bosom of Narcissa. She dashed away her tears ; a bright beaming smile illumined her glowing face, too long a stranger there. She adjusted her flowing tresses, and rose with light elastic step, no longer the woe-worn being she had been. A new world seemed to open before her, and she instinctively claimed the right of being happy in it, as her own—her first vows were pledged to Theodore, and his, his only would she be.

He had no sooner left her than she sat down to write to him ; and she no longer tried to conceal the feelings which he had inspired, and which actuated her every thought. Before her letter, however, had reached Theodore, he received tidings of the death of a worthy relative, and being the sole heir, he was

required to set out instantly for Talavera. Desirous of despatching the affair, and returning as soon as possible, he dropped a few lines to Narcissa, announcing the event, and his speedy return. He then set out, while Narcissa, supposing he had received her letter, of which he said not a word, and eager to take measures for her joining him, instantly replied to his communication that she entreated he would not set out, and she conjured him not to leave her another day in her husband's power, if he really loved her as sincerely as he professed, and as truly, as distractedly as she now loved him. 'Were he once to depart without her,' she concluded, 'he might rest assured he would never again see her alive—never more his.'

To a woman who thus loved, who had so long loved, and in the power of a tyrannical husband who had obtained her hand by an act of cruel treachery, which she abhorred as much as she did the author of it, what a shock to her feelings when she heard that Theodore had really set out, and, as she imagined, in spite of all her prayers and entreaties, notwithstanding even her offer to accompany him and be for ever his. She now recalled to mind his former refusal to receive her hand at the peremptory injunctions of her father, and a strange suspicion flashed across her mind, even from what had recently occurred in that very chamber, that Theodore had possibly never intended to make her his wife, and sought her less from feelings of attachment than from pique and revenge against a more fortunate rival. Her agony was extreme; she felt she had been neglected if not scorned; her whole soul was up in arms against the supposed ingratitude of her lover; and she now almost congratulated herself that she was yet safe. Her pride came to her assistance; she had lived to

be scorned, she thought, by one for whom she would have sacrificed all her hopes here and hereafter, and after many tears and struggles she began to consider the subject in a more reasonable if not a more religious point of view. She could not die as she wished because she would live to return scorn for scorn, and show him, too, the neglect and indifference he had himself taught her.

While she was full of passionate grief and indignation, her husband, Valerio, returned home, and soon afterwards entered the apartment. Well aware of his own treacherous conduct, and what little title he had to her affections or regard, he felt that he had hitherto only been tolerated, if not hated by his own wife; and having already gratified his vanity by displaying her charms to the envy of the world, he now became eager, by every means in his power, of conciliating her, and inducing her by the most unwearied solicitude and kindness to forget what had passed. He knew he did not possess her heart; and as he now both admired and loved her, this had at length become the favourite object of his hopes and wishes in order to crown his good fortune and secure her safety and his own, by making himself master of her affections.

Nor did his usual good fortune forsake him here. He could not have addressed himself to the task at a more propitious moment. He brought with him a variety of the most costly and splendid presents, such as he conceived most adapted to gratify the elegance of her taste. He presented them with a delicate and humbled air; he then seated himself near her, and after a pause of some moments, he bent his knee to the ground, and with deep emotion besought her forgiveness, assuring her of his heartfelt contrition,

his remorse and sorrow at having so often given her cause to complain of his conduct. At the same time he declared his unalterable regard and attachment, his unceasing love, if she could only flatter him that the moment would come when, having expiated his offences by sincere regret for what had occurred, she would gratify him by the hope of a return. Narcissa was strangely surprised and affected; such language was new to her, but it was not the less agreeable at that moment. At any other it might perhaps have excited pain, if not vexation and disgust; but smarting as she then was under conflicting emotions of disappointed confidence, of duty, passion, honour, religion, this sudden appeal to her best feelings gave a new impulse to her being. Her husband was at her feet entreating her to forgive, to love him; and as if impelled to seek refuge somewhere from the bitter feelings she had sustained, she sought it in his arms, and, throwing herself upon his bosom in a burst of passionate tears, she forgave and blest him, entreating his forgiveness in return, if she had in aught injured him, and declaring she would never more allude to what had passed. Valerio stood, as if doubting the evidence of his senses, transfixed with pleasure and surprise. In a transport of gratitude and love he clasped his young and beautiful wife to his bosom; and from that moment their reconciliation was complete. Valerio, by practising the most unremitting kindness and attention, obtained the summit of his wishes in the full possession of Narcissa's affections, who often blamed herself that she had not before loved him, and that she could not now love him as well as he deserved. She no longer wept,—no longer thought of Theodore, or the cause of his neglect and absence, and in the new and virtuous

sentiment that absorbed her, she prayed he might never return.

Meanwhile the unfortunate Theodore had been pursued by the same unlucky destiny which had attended him from the first. After his arrival at Talavera he had written twice to Narcissa; but both his letters fell into Valerio's hands, and served to confirm him in the course he wished to pursue, of repenting of his previous faults and errors, and striving to obtain the affections of his wife. These he had now effectually secured, and he was beloved with an excess of tenderness and devotion that surprised even Narcissa herself, and made him one of the happiest of mankind.

On his return from Talavera Theodore sent a secret message to Narcissa to inform her of his arrival, and to complain of her never having answered his two previous letters. He received no reply; and on making further inquiries from those well acquainted with the parties, the invariable reply was that they were quite well—a pattern of benevolence and excellence to all around them—courteous, charitable, and beloved; most affectionately and passionately attached to each other; in short, one of the happiest couples in the place.

Reflecting on the short interval that had elapsed, this strange and astounding intelligence grated harshly on Theodore's feelings; nor were those of Narcissa less painful, though arising from a different source. She trembled only for the safety of her husband; and the violence of Theodore led her to apprehend some serious result. Yet she was resolved neither to speak nor write to him, and avoided going out of her house, or ever walking alone.

Stung with jealousy and rage at her continued

silence, from which he truly inferred that he was forgotten, Theodore exclaimed in the bitterness of his heart: 'Thou fickle woman, hast thou indeed so soon forgotten me? What love-spell hath he cast upon thee that hath turned thy abhorrence for him into love, thy love for me into abhorrence? Of what stream of oblivion hast thou quaffed? what sorceries have been practised to banish me so wholly from thy thoughts? Had I given occasion for such treatment it might appear just, but in what have I offended to deserve such utter indifference and contempt?' Thus lamented the unhappy Theodore, while the object of his reproaches was only anxious for the safety of Valerio, to whom she now became more devotedly attached than ever. At this period an incident occurred which produced a sudden and terrible change in the mind and feelings of Theodore; from that moment he no longer indulged in hopeless sorrow and sullen despair, but roused himself to fearful and desperate action. On returning one evening from the public walks which skirt the river, he heard the sound of mirthful voices approaching him, and suddenly turning into another path, he came opposite to the party. It was Narcissa accompanied by her husband and several of his friends; she seemed in the highest spirits, and it was her gay laugh which had first struck upon his startled soul, the same he had so often heard in the golden days of their young and happy love. He had instinctively fled from it; but it was only to come opposite the whole party, and to fix his eyes upon her face—upon the wife of the proud and happy Valerio, who joined in her free and careless laugh. Theodore stood rooted to the spot; mingled rage and horror shot from his eyes—all of injured pride—the blackest hatred, and the

bitterest reproach were concentrated in that one look. It met the eye of Narcissa, and smote on her heart like the bell that tolled her doom. She uttered a cry of terror, and would have sunk to the earth had not her friends hurried her from the spot. They passed on, but there stood the unhappy Theodore motionless as a statue, in the same attitude, his glaring eye fixed as when it met the basilisk glance of its enemy, his hands clenched in the same agony of rage and despair, and in his whole figure and expression, the picture of him writhing under the folds of the destroying serpents, yet defying and struggling with his doom, for the serpents of hatred and revenge were fast coiling around his soul. When he started from his trance he was no longer the same—the demon had taken possession of his soul. He was mad with hate and revenge, and his brain was busy with a thousand cunning projects how to inflict the speediest and most deadly retribution on the heads of his persecutors.

From this time he resolved to watch the motions of Valerio—to dog his footsteps wheresoever he went. Unsatisfied with any common mode of vengeance, he determined to make him feel the terrible destiny that hung over him, and with this view sought means to entrap him into his power. He took his station near where he knew his hated and successful rival was accustomed to pass on his way to his own mansion. Night by night he watched for him (it was not a deed to be perpetrated by day), till he should come by the entrance of the place he had fixed upon as the scene of the terrible catastrophe that was to close the gloomy tragedy of his life. This was a remote and dilapidated building apart from the more frequented spots, which he had engaged

for his especial purpose. There, disguised and armed, he awaited the favourable moment to dart forth upon his foe and drag him alive into its fatal precincts. It came, and swift as the winged vengeance of the thunderbolt, he seized upon his prey. Wounding him with a dagger in the neck, he then hurled him over the threshold, thrust a gag into his mouth, and bound him hand and foot with cords. The wound was not mortal, and under threat of instantly dispatching him, he compelled Valerio to write an account to Narcissa of his having met with a dreadful accident, and beseeching her to hasten to him, but wholly unaccompanied as she valued his life. This he had conveyed to the lady with the utmost secrecy and despatch, and it was not long before she made her appearance in extreme agitation and alarm. The door opened, and the features of the indignant Theodore met her startled gaze. She shrieked aloud and attempted to retreat, but it was too late; firmly grasped by the arm of Theodore, she was hurried forward into the apartment where lay the form of Valerio, pale, wounded, and in bonds. What an object for his fond and distracted wife! She flew towards him; she threw her arms around him, while bitter and piercing cries attested the agony of her feelings. But Theodore, excited to the utmost pitch of rage and jealousy at the marks of love and tenderness she displayed, lost sight of his previous intentions of inflicting the lingering torments of separation he had prepared for them. He rudely tore the weeping lady from her husband's arms, and after heaping upon her every epithet of scorn he thought could give a fresh pang to the soul of his once hated rival, he stabbed her before his eyes, and the next instant plunged the weapon still deeper into his own bosom.

It would have been an act of mercy first to have freed her husband from the horrors of that sight; but he was left alive, as if by a refinement of the cruellest revenge, in a state of suffering and distraction not to be described. He was thus found by some of the police of the city early in the ensuing morning, to whom, before breathing his last, he communicated the particulars of the fearful deed.

THE WHITE DOE

In a little village of Arragon there lived about the year 1300, almost solitary in his castle, a famous knight, Don Dionis, who having served his king in the wars against the Saracens, had come home to rest after the fatigues he had undergone, and to give himself up to the joyous pleasures of the chase.

One day it happened that this knight, whilst occupied in his favourite pastime in the company of his daughter, whose singular beauty and extraordinary whiteness of complexion had obtained for her the name of the Lily, as he was hunting the deer in the mountains on his land resolved to rest, during the heat of the mid-day sun, in a glen through which flowed a stream, winding its way gently and musically between its rocky banks.

About two hours had passed since Don Dionis had alighted in this lovely spot, and resting on the low grass in the shadow of an old poplar, and chatting amicably with his huntsmen over the events of the day, each related in his turn his adventures as a hunter. All at once from the summit of the steepest slope, borne on the murmur of the wind, which shook the leaves on the trees, could be heard the sound of a bell such as is worn by cattle. It seemed to come nearer and nearer.

Such a bell, indeed, it was. In a short time about a hundred lambs, white as snow, appeared making their way through the dense thickets of thyme and lavender, followed by the shepherd with a hood over his head, to protect him from the rays of the sun, and with his bag suspended from the end of a stick over his shoulder.

'In regard to extraordinary adventures,' exclaimed one of the huntsmen of Don Dionis, turning towards his lord, 'here comes the shepherd Stephen, who for some time has been going about madder than God naturally made him, which is saying a deal, and who can provide us entertainment by explaining to us the cause of his continual terror.'

'Well, what ails the poor fellow?' exclaimed Don Dionis, whose curiosity began to be aroused.

'No small matter,' replied the huntsman jestingly. 'The fact is that, without being born on a Good Friday or covered with the sign of the cross, and without being in league with the Evil One, as one might judge to be the case, without knowing whence or how, he has acquired the most wonderful gift ever possessed by man, Solomon always excepted, of whom it is said that he understood even the language of the birds.'

'And wherein does this wonderful gift consist?'

'In this. He says, and swears, and protests by all that is sacred on earth, that the deer that roam about these mountains have conspired to let him have no peace, and, funniest of all, that he has on more than one occasion overheard them discussing amongst themselves the pranks they were about to play on him. He says further, that when they have carried out their plots against him, he has heard the clamorous laughter with which they celebrated their success.'

Whilst the huntsman was proceeding with his narrative, Constance, for such was the name of Don Dionis's fair daughter, had approached the group. As she seemed curious to hear Stephen's extraordinary story, one of the men went to where the shepherd was watering his flock and led him to his lord, who, in order to relieve the poor youth's confusion and embarrassment, hastened to greet him by name, at the same time accompanying the salute with a kindly smile.

Stephen was a young fellow of about nineteen or twenty years, stalwart, with a small head deep set between his shoulders, small blue eyes, in which was a restless but abstracted look—like that of the Albinos, flat nose, thick open lips, white forehead, an otherwise sunburnt skin, and with hair which fell over his eyes and his face in coarse ruddy locks, like the mane of a horse.

Such was Stephen as regards personal appearance. You might safely say, without fear of contradiction by him or any one who knew him, that he was quite guileless, although somewhat suspicious and rough in his manner, like most peasants.

After the shepherd had recovered from his embarrassment, Don Dionis in the gravest possible manner, and evincing an extraordinary desire to learn the particulars of the event to which his huntsman had referred, addressed to him several questions which Stephen answered evasively, as though he were anxious to keep silent on the subject.

However, by dint of questioning on the part of the lord, and at the entreaties of Constance, who showed the greatest curiosity to hear the astonishing adventure of the shepherd, he was at length brought to bay and agreed to speak. Before commencing,

however, he cast around a mistrustful look, as though he feared to be heard by others than those present, and, after scratching his head three or four times as though to refresh his memory and to prepare his story, he at length began his narrative—

‘The fact is, señor, as a priest in Tarazona told me, to whom I went to consult about my doubts, you cannot with impunity play tricks with the devils, but by praying often and well to St. Bartholomew, who allows no liberties, one gets help, for God who is above is just, and ordains everything for the best.

‘Strong in this belief, I had determined never to breathe a word on the subject to any one for anything the world could offer me. However, I will do so to-day in order to gratify your curiosity, and should the Devil nevertheless set it down to my account and wish to plague me for my talkativeness, well, I have some holy sayings sewn in my coat, and with their aid I daresay that my staff will help me as before.’

‘On with thy tale!’ exclaimed Don Dionis, filled with impatience by an introduction which threatened never to come to an end, ‘leave all circumlocution and come to thy story.’

‘I am about to do so,’ replied Stephen calmly, after he had uttered a cry followed by a whistle, to call together the lambs which had scattered themselves over the mountain, but of which he had never lost sight. Scratching his head once more, he continued—

‘Your continual hunts, and the raids of poachers, armed with snares and crossbows, for some time nearly exterminated the game in these mountains, so that a deer was scarcely to be seen.

‘I was speaking about this, sitting in the porch

of the church after mass, with some peasants whom I used to meet there, when one of them said to me—

“Well, man, we know not how it is you never come across them, but we have never once gone into the fields without finding traces of them, and three or four days ago, not to go back farther, a herd which, judging from the tracks, numbered more than twenty head, grazed on a wheat-field belonging to our Lady of Romeral!”

“And in what direction did the tracks extend?” I asked, with the intention of meeting with the herd.

“As far as the thicket of Lavendels!”

‘This information I treasured well in my memory, and that very same night I concealed myself amongst the alders. As darkness began to set in I heard afar off and near at hand the cry of deer calling to one another, and ever and anon I felt the branches behind me moving, but, as much as I looked around me, the truth is, I could see nothing.

‘However, at break of day, on leading the lambs to water, I saw on the banks of the stream, about a stone’s throw from this very spot, and in a dense thicket of alder trees, so dense that not even at mid-day could the sun’s rays enter there, fresh traces of deer—broken branches of trees, the waters in the stream somewhat muddy, and what was oddest, among the tracks were the light footprints of two little feet, which, not to exaggerate, were no bigger than half the palm of my hand.’

As he said this, the youth involuntarily cast his eyes, as though seeking for some object of comparison, on the foot of Constance, who displayed from under her robe a pair of costly satin slippers. As Don Dionis and the huntsmen who stood around looked in the same direction, the fair girl hastily

hiding her feet exclaimed in the most natural manner in the world—

‘Oh no! unfortunately they are not so small. Feet of such a size are found only amongst fairies, whose history is told by the troubadours.’

‘Well, this does not end the story,’ continued the shepherd, when Constance had finished speaking, ‘for another time when I lay hidden in a thicket which I felt sure the deer would pass, towards midnight I was overcome with sleep, but not so heavily that I could not open my eyes the instant I perceived the branches were moved around me. As I have said, I opened my eyes, raised myself as softly as I could, and as I listened intently I heard confused sounds—murmuring which seemed to come nearer and nearer, strange singing borne on the wind, chants, laughter, and three or four voices, which I could not distinguish, as of persons chattering with one another loudly and merrily as village girls chatter when they return together from the spring, laughing and jesting with their pitchers on their heads.

‘As I gathered from the nearness of the voices and the rustling of the branches, which made a crackling noise as they parted to make a passage for the strange comers, the party were desirous to get out of the thicket to a retired place upon the mountain, close to the spot where I was concealed. Then I heard from behind me, as close to me as I am to you, another voice, fresh, delicate, and vibrating, which, my lord, said in clear distinct tones, for I am as sure of it as that I must die—

“Hither, companions, hither! Here is that brut Stephen!”’

As he reached this part of his narrative the bystanders could no longer repress the laughter which

they had long been at pains to check, and so giving rein to their merriment they burst out in a boisterous peal. Don Dionis was among the first to laugh and the last to cease, for in spite of his assumed dignity he could not restrain his merriment; whilst his daughter Constance, every time she looked at Stephen, so pensive and distracted, was fain to laugh till the tears came to her eyes.

On the other hand the shepherd, without paying regard to the effect produced by his narrative, seemed entirely confused and agitated, and whilst the huntsmen laughed at his gravity to their hearts' content he turned his head in all directions, visibly terrified, as though he were looking for something between the interlacing branches of the trees.

'What happened to you, Stephen?' asked one of the hunters, noting the increasing agitation of the shepherd, who directed his affrighted eyes now on the daughter of Don Dionis, now round about with a terror-stricken air.

'A very wonderful thing,' exclaimed Stephen. 'No sooner did I hear the words I have mentioned than, as I raised myself quickly in order to surprise the person who uttered them, a snow-white doe sprang out of the thicket where I was hid, and, making some enormous leaps over the young trees and mastich bushes, disappeared, followed by a flock of deer of natural colour. These, too, like the white one which led them, did not cry as deer, but laughed with a laughter the echo of which I will swear I heard this very moment.'

'Bah! Bah! Stephen,' exclaimed Don Dionis, laughing. 'Follow the advice of the priest of Tarazona — speak not of thy encounters with the deer lest the Devil deprive thee of what little intelligence

thou still hast, and as thou art furnished with holy sayings and knowest the prayers to St. Bartholomew, get thee back to thy lambs which have already scattered themselves in the glen. When the evil spirits that trouble thee return—thou knowest the remedy—the *Pater noster* and thy cudgel.'

The shepherd, after having stowed into his sack half a loaf of white bread and a piece of roast boar, and after having taken a swinging draught of wine which the knight had commanded one of the retainers to give to him, took leave of Don Dionis and his daughter, and hardly had he gone a few paces before he was busily using his sling and stones to collect his sheep together.

As soon as Don Dionis observed that the heat of the day had passed and the evening breeze had begun to shake the leaves on the poplars and to refresh the meadows, he ordered his retinue to once more saddle the horses. All being ready, he signalled to some to uncouple the hounds, and to others to blow the horns, and leaving the forest together they resumed the interrupted chase.

II

AMONGST the huntsmen of Don Dionis was one named Garcés, the son of an old servant of the family, and, on that account, the favourite of his lord. Garcés was of about the same age as Constance, and had been accustomed since his childhood to anticipate her smallest wish, as also to divine and to gratify her slightest whim. For her sake he spent his leisure hours in pointing the arrows for her cross:

bow ; he tamed the fillies which his mistress was to mount ; he broke her hounds in for the chase ; and reared her falcons, which he had provided with hoods embroidered with gold purchased in the markets of Castile.

Amongst the other huntsmen, pages, and attendants in the service of Don Dionis, his extraordinary zeal and the manner in which his superiors requited his services, naturally made him an object of envy ; nor did his devotion to his mistress escape the notice of the more malicious, some of whom even pretended to detect therein the signs of ill-concealed love.

And so, indeed, it was. The secret affection of Garcés needed no justification in view of the incomparable beauty of Constance, and cold, indeed, must have been his heart for him to dwell day by day in the presence of this rare lady insensible to her many and incomparable charms.

They called her the Lily of Moncayo for twenty miles around, and well did she deserve the name, for she was as white, as fair, and as spotless as a lily, and it seemed as though heaven had fashioned her, like them, out of snow and gold.

The nobles around, however, whispered that the fair Castilian of Veraton was not so pure in blood as she was beautiful, and that, in spite of her auburn locks and her colour of alabaster, her mother had been a gipsy. What truth there may have been in this rumour no one could tell, for it was known that Don Dionis in his youth had led a wild life, and that after he had fought for a long time under the banner of the king of Arragon, who amongst other honours had bestowed on him the lordship of Moncayo, he went to the Holy Land, where he roamed about for some years, returning at last to shut himself up in

his castle at Veraton with a little daughter who had doubtless been born in a distant land. The only one who knew anything about the mysterious descent of Constance was Garcés' father, and he had been a long time dead, without having ever revealed the secret even to his own son, who had often eagerly questioned him respecting it.

The gentle and melancholy yet lively disposition of Constance, the excessive fervour of her imagination, her extravagant caprices, even the peculiarity of her eyes and eyelashes, which were as black as night, whilst she was otherwise white and ruddy as gold, had helped to furnish occasion for gossip to her neighbours. And even Garcés, who went about with her so intimately, had come to be persuaded that his mistress had something strange about her, and that she was unlike other girls.

When Stephen told his tale Garcés was, perhaps, the only one present who followed the details of his incredible adventure with real curiosity, and though he, too, could not refrain from smiling when the shepherd repeated the words of the white doe, yet no sooner had Garcés and his company left the scene of their siesta than his thoughts began to assume the most fantastical forms.

'Doubtless this tale about the doe is a mere fancy of Stephen's, who is a complete idiot,' thought the young huntsman, as, seated on his powerful Andalusian, he followed step by step the palfrey of Constance, who also seemed somewhat distracted and taciturn, and who, riding aloof from the party, took scarcely any part in the merriment. 'Who knows though but that in what this poor imbecile tells us there may lie hidden a grain of truth?' the young man continued to himself. 'More wonderful things

have been seen in the world, and there may be such a thing as a white doe, for if we are to believe the songs of our country, St. Hubert possessed one himself. Oh, that I could catch a live white doe to present it to my mistress !'

Thus thinking and dreaming, Garcés passed the evening ; and after the sun had sunk behind the neighbouring hills, and Don Dionis ordered his people to turn back, as they came once more to the castle, he left them without being observed, and set off in search of the shepherd through the most lonely and wildest part of the glen.

The night had scarcely closed in when Don Dionis returned to his castle gates. Forthwith his frugal meal was prepared, and he sat down to it with his daughter.

'And Garcés, where is he?' asked Constance, as she observed that her huntsman was not present to attend on her as usual.

'We do not know,' the other attendants hastened to reply. 'He disappeared near the glen, and since then we have not seen him.'

At the same moment Garcés entered, breathless, the perspiration standing on his forehead, but looking as happy and as animated as possible.

'Pardon, señora,' cried Garcés, turning towards Constance, 'if I have neglected my duty for one moment ; but there, whence I come as swiftly as my horse would carry me, my only thought, as here, was to serve you.'

'To serve me?' repeated Constance, I understand not what thou meanest.'

'Yes, señora, to serve you—I have ascertained it. It is true that the white doe lives. Other shepherds besides Stephen have assured me of it, declaring that

they have seen it more than once, and with their help I rely on heaven and my patron saint, Hubert, that ere three days have passed I shall bring the doe, dead or alive, to you in this castle.'

'Bah!' Constance cried mockingly, amidst the laughter, more or less suppressed, of the bystanders. 'Do not engage in this night chase of the white doe. See, the Evil One has taken it into his head to tempt simple folk, and if thou art content to follow in Stephen's track, he will laugh at thee as he does at him.'

'Señora,' interrupted Garcés, with a choked voice, and suppressing the rage which the contemptuous merriment of his companions excited in him, 'I have not yet met the Evil One, and do not therefore know how he demeans himself, but I swear to you he may do everything but laugh at me, for such conduct I will tolerate from none but you.'

Constance knew the effects which her scorn had produced on the enamoured youth, but wishing to exhaust his patience to the utmost, she continued in the same tone—

'And what if, when thou art about to take aim, he greets thee with laughter similar to that which Stephen heard, or mocks thee; and what if, whilst listening to his unnatural laughter, thy crossbow should fall from thy hands, and before thou hast recovered thyself the white doe should have disappeared quicker than the lightning?'

'Oh!' exclaimed Garcés, 'be assured that should I have it within reach of my bow, though it tried all the arts of the juggler and spoke to me not only in Romance but in Latin, like Friar Manilla, it will not escape without an arrow in its body.'

At this point of the dialogue Don Dionis inter-

ferred, and, in serious tones which betrayed the irony of his words, he began to give the distracted youth some advice respecting his conduct in case he should encounter the Evil One in the shape of a white doe.

At every new conceit of her father, Constance fixed her eyes on the tortured Garcés and burst out in laughter, while the attendants followed the raillery with assenting looks and ill-concealed delight.

This was prolonged as long as the meal lasted, the credulity of the young huntsman affording the object for the general merriment, so that when the cloth had been removed and Don Dionis and Constance had retired to their chambers, Garcés remained for some time in doubt undecided whether he should, in spite of the raillery of his master, persevere in his project or give the enterprise up altogether.

'Tut, tut,' said he at length, rousing himself from his state of indecision, 'nothing worse can happen to me than what has already occurred, and should Stephen's story prove true after all, why, what a triumph will be mine!'

So saying he took his crossbow, not, however, before making the sign of the cross over his vizor, and shouldering his weapon he took his way through the castle gate and followed the path to the mountain.

When Garcés reached the glen and the spot where, according to Stephen's statement, the deer would make their appearance, the moon had slowly begun to rise behind the neighbouring mountains.

Although he was a good huntsman and master of his craft, yet before he could fix on a suitable spot from whence to watch the deer, he roamed about a considerable while, examining all the paths and crossways, the position of the trees, the unevenness of the

ground, the windings of the brook, and the depth of the water.

At length, having brought to a close this minute examination, he hid himself on a slope, near some alder trees which rose tall and dark, and at the foot of which was a thicket of mastich bushes high enough to conceal a man lying on the earth.

The brook which, from the mossy rocks whence it took its rise, followed the windings of the Moncayo before forming the waterfall by which it reached the glen, ran along the gentle slope bathing the roots of some willows which shaded its banks, and flowing between huge stones that had rolled down from the mountain, finally reached the hollow which the huntsman had chosen for his place of concealment.

The poplars, whose silvery leaves the wind shook with gentle murmurings; the willows, whose thin, drooping boughs dipped into the clear current; and the evergreen oaks, crowded together, their trunks entwined with honeysuckle and their roots concealed by bluebells, formed a dense bower around the borders of the stream.

The wind, agitating the green leafy boughs which threw around uncertain shadows, allowed at times a transient ray of light to pierce the gloom, glistening with silvery flash on the dark, still surface of the water.

Hidden in the thicket, with ears open to catch the slightest sound, his eyes fixed in the direction where he thought the deer must appear, Garcés waited for a long time in vain.

All around him was perfectly still.

By and by the night, which was now half spent, began to exercise its power over him. Or was it that the distant murmuring of the waters, the pungent

perfume of the forest flowers, and the caresses of the wind, were lulling his senses to partake of that delicious rest in which all nature now seemed buried? The enamoured youth, who had been giving the rein to the most flattering efforts of his imagination, found that his ideas now took a longer time to form, and that his thoughts became more transient and indefinite in shape.

After cogitating thus for some time in the vague interval between waking and sleeping, he at length closed his eyes, let fall his crossbow from his hands, and fell fast asleep.

The young huntsman lay about two or three hours in a deep slumber, enjoying one of the sweetest dreams he had ever had in his life, when he suddenly started up, opened his eyes, and looked around in the half-dazed manner of one who has been just roused.

On the fitful gusts of wind, mingled with the gentle sounds of the night, he thought he heard a strange noise of voices at once gentle, sweet, and mysterious, which answered one another, laughter and singing by turns, gradually increasing in boisterous merriment, like the song of birds awakening when the tops of the trees are gilded by the first rays of the sun.

This mysterious noise lasted but for a moment. Then all again was still.

'Without doubt I have been dreaming about the nonsense the shepherd told us,' exclaimed Garcés, slowly rubbing his eyes and firmly convinced that all he thought he had heard was merely the result of his drowsiness.

Overcome with fatigue he felt inclined to again stretch himself on the sward when he heard the distant echo of the mysterious voices which, accom-

panied by the music of wind, leaves, and water, sang as follows :—

‘The Archer who kept watch on the summit of the tower has bowed his heavy head on the wall.

‘The furtive huntsman who hoped to surprise the deer has been overcome by sleep.

‘The shepherd, waiting for daylight whilst consulting the stars, is asleep, and will sleep till the morning.

‘Queen of the Undines, follow in our footsteps.

‘Come and seat thyself on the boughs of the willows above the water.

‘Come and feast thyself on the perfumes of the violets which spread themselves out between the shadows.

‘Come and rejoice in the night, which is the day of the spirit.’

Whilst the sweet notes of the ravishing music were floating in the air, Garcés stood motionless. When they ceased he cautiously divided the branches and saw, not without terror, the deer trooping on, now bounding over the low brushwood with incredible lightness, now halting as though waiting for others to join them, playing with one another, hiding in the thicket, and then again making for the path leading from the mountain in the direction of the still waters.

In front of its companions strode the white doe, fairer, nimbler, and more wanton than any, in its lightness of foot scarcely seeming to touch the ground, its extraordinary colour causing it to stand out in relief against the dark background of the trees.

Although the youth at first felt inclined to detect in everything that surrounded him something supernatural and wonderful, the truth was that, apart from the illusion of the moment which had dazzled his senses by deluding him with musical sounds

and songs, he did not perceive in the forms of the deer, in their movements, or in the sharp cries they uttered when seemingly calling to one another, anything that might not be evident to any huntsman accustomed to this species of nocturnal expedition.

In proportion as the first impression faded from his mind this dawned on Garcés, and, laughing inwardly at his credulity and fear, he began to consider, from the direction they had taken, where he should most likely find the deer.

Having come to a decision, he placed his crossbow between his teeth, and winding his way like a serpent through the dense mastich bushes, he took his stand at a distance of about forty paces from where he had before been. Once installed in his new hiding-place he waited sufficiently long for the deer to assemble near the river in order to take a surer aim. Scarcely did he hear the peculiar splash made by water when it is violently disturbed than he raised himself slowly, and with the greatest caution, first leaning on the ground with his hands, afterwards on one knee.

At length, standing upright, and assured that his weapon was ready, he leapt forwards, raising his head over the top of the bushes. In the same moment in which he was about to take aim with his crossbow at his quarry, there escaped from his lips a low, almost imperceptible, and involuntary cry of astonishment.

The moon, which had slowly risen above the wide horizon, was now floating high up in the sky. Its mild brightness bathing the bushes in light, was reflected by the ruffled surface of the water in a thousand diamond gleams, and by it all things around appeared as if viewed through a mysterious azure veil

The deer had vanished ; instead of them Garcés, astounded and almost terrified, saw a group of maidens of exquisite beauty, some playing in the stream, some running followed by others amidst joyous laughter, some furrowing the waters like swans, others diving to the bottom, from which, after a time, they returned bringing to the surface rare flowers, such as lie buried in the beds of the deepest streams.

The startled youth gazed around, hardly knowing where to look amidst so much beauty, when suddenly he thought he saw sitting on the banks of the river, under green spreading boughs which seemed to serve her for a canopy, and surrounded by a group of young maidens, one fairer than the others, the object of his hidden devotion, the daughter of the noble Don Dionis, the incomparable Constance.

Encountering surprise after surprise, the enamoured youth feared to accept the testimony of his eyes, and to remain any longer under the influence of this delusive and infatuating dream.

In vain did he struggle to persuade himself that all was but the working of a disordered imagination, for the more he looked the more he felt convinced that it was Constance whom he saw.

There could be no doubt. No. Hers were the dark eyes overshadowed by those long lashes which, however, hardly sufficed to soften the light which beamed from under them ; hers the golden hair which, crowning her forehead, fell thence over her white bosom, and spread over her shoulders like a golden waterfall ; hers, only, the slender neck which supported the languishing head, drooping lightly like a flower bending under the weight of dew-drops.

At the moment that Constance stepped from beneath the canopy her companions commenced to sing the following words in a sweet melody—

‘Genii of the air, inhabitants of the heavenly ether come, wrapped up in veils of silver haze.

‘Invisible Sylphs forsake your chalices of half-opened lilies, and come in your chariots of mother-of-pearl harnessed by butterflies.

‘Spirits of the fountain leave your moss beds and alight in drizzling rain of pearl.

‘Emerald beetles, glow-worms, black butterfly, come.

‘And all ye spirits of the night, come humming like a swarm of golden insects.

‘Come, for the moment of wonderful transformation is at hand.

‘Come, for they who love you await you with impatience.’

Garcés, who remained motionless, felt, as he heard the mysterious chants, the serpent of jealousy gnawing at his heart, and carried away by an irresistible impulse to break the spell once for all, he tremblingly put asunder the boughs which concealed him, and at one bound stood on the banks of the river. The spell was broken, all had vanished like smoke, and as he looked around he neither saw nor heard anything beyond the noisy tread with which the timorous deer, disturbed in their nocturnal gambols, fled, some hither, some thither, terror stricken, from the scene, some leaping over the thickets, and others running as fast as they could to seek the narrow passes of the mountains.

‘Oh, I said well that all these things were merely the handiwork of the Evil One,’ exclaimed the huntsman; ‘but happily for once he has been too slow, for he has left me the greater part of the spoil.’

And so indeed it was. The white doe which had tried to escape through the thicket had ventured into the labyrinth of trees and had become entangled in a net of honeysuckle from which it tried to extricate itself in vain. Garcés drew his bow, but just as he was about to let fly his arrow, the doe turned towards him and withheld him, saying in a loud clear voice—

‘Garcés, what doest thou?’

The youth staggered; and after a moment of doubt dropped his bow, appalled at the bare idea of possibly wounding his beloved. A piercing peal of laughter finally roused him from his stupor. The doe meanwhile had succeeded in setting itself free, and swift as a flash of lightning, it fled with mocking laughter at the trick it had played the huntsman.

‘Ah! fiend,’ said he with fearful voice, re-aiming his bow with unspeakable quickness, ‘too soon hast thou cried “Victory,” too soon dost thou think thyself beyond my reach.’

Saying this he let fly his arrow, which disappeared with a loud hiss in the darkness of the wood, and almost at the same moment there came from the thicket a cry which was followed by trembling moans.

‘My God!’ exclaimed Garcés, as he listened to the agonising wailing. ‘My God, if it were true!’

And beside himself, like a madman, without being able to gather what had happened, he ran towards the place where his arrow had disappeared, and from whence the moaning came. At length he reached it, but on his arrival his hair stood erect with terror, his words died in his throat, and he

clung to a tree to prevent himself from sinking to the ground.

Constance, wounded by his hand, breathed her last before his eyes, writhing in her blood amongst the sharp mountain thorns.

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MAESE PEREZ, THE ORGANIST

It was at Seville, in the porch of the church of Santa Ines, where I waited for the midnight Mass to be celebrated, that I heard this story, told me by one of the attendants in the church.

As was natural when I had heard it I waited impatiently for the service to commence, anxious to take part in a ceremony to which such a remarkable history attached.

Nothing, however, could be less wonderful than the organ of Santa Ines, nothing more common than the dispiriting notes to which the organist treated us that night.

When the Mass was over I could not help turning to the attendant, and asking him in a mocking manner—

‘How comes it that after all the organ of Maese Perez is so wretched?’

‘You must know,’ replied he, ‘that the present organ is not his.’

‘Not his! What then has become of it?’

‘It dropped to pieces of old age, bit by bit, many years ago.’

‘And the spirit of the organist?’

‘It has never appeared since they placed that new instrument in the place of the old one.’

If any of my readers might be tempted to ask why the organist has not continued his wondrous work I give them here the reason why the strange occurrence narrated in the following history has not been repeated to our days.

I

'Do you see that man in the red cloak with the white plume in his hat, the one who seems to carry on his jacket the gold of all the galleons of the Indies, he who is now getting down from his litter to give his hand to that lady who, getting out of hers, is advancing preceded by four pages bearing flambeaux? Well then, that is the Marquis de Moscoso, the lover of the widowed Countess de Villapineda. They say that before he set his eyes on her he asked in marriage the daughter of a rich gentleman, but the lady's father, who they say was a little avaricious— But hold. Speak of the ruin of Rome, and lo! it happens. Do you see that man coming through the arch of San Felipe on foot, dressed in a black mantle and preceded by a single servant with a lantern? He is going now before the altar-piece. Did you see, when he threw his cloak from one arm in order that he might salute the saint, the decoration which glittered on his breast? Without that noble distinction all folk might take him for a grocer of the Salle de Culebras. Well now, he is the father in question. Look how the people make way for him and salute him. All Seville knows him on account of his enormous wealth. He has more ducats in his treasury than

our master the King has soldiers, and his galleons would form a fleet equal to that of the Grand Turk. Look, look at those grave fellows! They are some of the town councillors. Hulloh, hulloh! Why there is that fat Flemish fellow, against whom they say the folk of the green cross have not yet taken steps, thanks to his influence with the great folk of Madrid. He has only come to church to hear the music. Now if Maese Perez cannot draw from him tears as large as one's fist one may be well assured that he does not hold his soul in his breast, but that it is flying in the path of the Evil One. Ah! neighbour, things look black, things look black, and I fear there will be a disturbance. For my part I shall go into the church, for in my opinion there will be more blows given than there will be *Pater-nosters* said. Look, the attendants of the Duke de Alcada can be seen turning the corner of the square of San Pedro, and by the narrow way of las Dueñas. I fancy I can see those of Medina Sidonia. Did I not tell you so? They recognise one another, and they both stop, neither giving place. The folk disperse. The alguazils, upon whom on such occasions friends and foes both fall, draw away. The corregidor with his rod and his folk takes shelter in the porch, and yet they say there is such a thing as justice! For the poor! Let us go, let us go. The arms are already glittering in the dusk. May all power! Heaven help us! They are already at blows. Neighbour, neighbour, come this way—before they shut the gates! But silence; who comes here? They halt without commencing. What lights are these? Whose are these lighted torches and these litters? It is the bishop.

'The Virgin Santisima del Amparo, whom I in-

voked a moment ago, has come to our aid. Yes! you cannot imagine how much I owe to her. She repays me with usury all I expend on candles to burn every Saturday. Look! How grand he looks in his violet robes and his red biretta! Heaven grant he may live as long as I do myself. If it had not been for him half Seville would have been burnt down in these quarrels between the dukes. Look at them! Look at them! the hypocrites! Look how they approach his litter in order to kiss his hand. Look how they follow and accompany him, mixing with his friends. Would one think that those two men, who now appear such friends, will meet in half an hour in some obscure street—that is to say—one here, the other there? Heaven preserve me from thinking them cowards! They have both of them given good account of themselves on different occasions while fighting the enemies of our king—but it is certain that if they would seek out one another, and do so with the intention of meeting, they would meet and put an end once for all to these continual riots in which those who really cross swords are their relatives, their friends, and their servants.

‘But let us go in, neighbour, let us go in to the church, before it is quite full. On nights such as this it is generally so crammed that there is not room for a grain of wheat. The nuns have a fine prize in their organist. When did one ever see the convent so much favoured as now? Other communities have made grand proposals to Maese Perez. One cannot think it strange, for the archbishop himself offered him mountains of gold if he would go to the cathedral. But there. Bah! He would as soon part with his life as leave his favourite organ. Do you not know Maese Perez? Ah! you have only been in this

neighbourhood a short time. He is a real saint. Poor enough, but more charitable than any one else. He has only one child, his daughter, and only one friend, his organ, and he passes his whole life in watching the innocence of the one and in repairing the keys of the other. You must know that the organ is old. What does that matter? He shows so much skill, in repairing it and in playing it, that it is full of a marvellous music. He knows it so well by means of groping about it—I do not know whether I told you he was blind, and with what resignation he bears his misfortune? When some one asked him what he would give to be able to see, he answered, "Much; but not so much as you suppose, for I have hope!" "What, the hope of sight?" "Yes, surely," replied he, with the smile of an angel, "I am now seventy-six; when so much of my life has passed it cannot be long before I see God!"

'The good man! He will surely do so—for he is as humble as the stones of the street on which everyone walks. He often says that he is only the poor convent organist, but he could give lessons in music to the master of the Primate's chapel. He was employed here, one may say, when he got his teeth. His father followed the same profession as himself. I did not know him, but my dear mother, who is in paradise, used to tell me that the lad was always at the organ with his father, who used to employ him to blow the bellows. The child showed such disposition for the work that when his father died he naturally inherited his post. What hands he has! Heaven has blessed him! They ought to be taken to the Calle de Chicarreros to be chased in gold. He always plays well, very well, but upon a night such as this his playing is wonderful. He has a special

strain for the ceremony of the midnight Mass, and at the moment of the consecration of the Host—that is to say, when our Lord comes into the world—the sound of the organ is like the voice of the angels.

‘But why should I tell you about what you will hear for yourself to-night? It is sufficient to see that all the *élite* of Seville, and even the bishop himself, has come to this humble convent to hear him. Do not think that it is only the instructed, those who are learned in music who can appreciate his skill. The common folk are equally sensible of it. All those groups of men whom you saw arrive with the burning torches, singing with such noise Christmas songs, which they accompany with timbrels and drums, filling the church with clamour, will all become as quiet as the dead when Maese Perez sets his hand on the notes, and towards the elevation, towards the elevation, one could hear a mouse walk—from all eyes there fall big tears, and when the music ends there is a great sigh drawn, for all have been holding their breath while they listened. But let us go on. The clocks have already struck and the Mass is about to commence. Let us go in!

‘This night is the Blessed Night for all the world, but for us it is better than for any others.’ And speaking thus, the old neighbour who had served as a cicerone to her friend, passed into the porch of Santa Ines, and elbowing this person and pushing that aside, entered the church and was lost in the midst of the crowd which stood about the door.

II

THE church was illuminated with an immense number of lamps. The torrents of light which fell from the altar made all around bright, and danced in the rich jewels worn by the women who, kneeling upon the cushions of velvet which had been carried by their pages, and taking the books of prayer from their duennas, formed a brilliant circle around the screen of the high altar. Around that same screen, wrapped in their cloaks decorated with gold, disposed with studied negligence, so as to allow one to see their red and green decorations, holding in one hand their caps, the plumes of which swept the floor, the other hand laid upon the polished guard of a dagger, or caressing the carved pommel of a poniard, the town councillors and nearly all the most noted of the nobles of Seville appeared to form a wall intended to defend their daughters and wives from contact with the common people. Those who murmured in the background with a noise like that of a swelling sea, broke out into an exclamation of joy, accompanied by the discordant sounds of stringed instruments and drums, when they saw the bishop approach. He, having taken his place by the altar under a scarlet dais, surrounded by his attendants, blessed the people thrice.

The hour for the Mass to commence sounded.

Some minutes, however, passed and the celebrant did not appear. The crowd commenced to wonder, to show its impatience. The cavaliers exchanged remarks with one another in low voices. The bishop despatched one of his attendants to the

sacristy to inquire the reason why the ceremony was delayed.

'Maese Perez has been taken ill, very ill, and it will be impossible for him to attend the midnight Mass.'

Such was the attendant's reply.

The announcement spread through the crowd and produced an effect such as it would be impossible to express. It is enough to say that there arose such a noise in the church that the corregidor rose to his feet and the alguazils went about, mixing with the crowd, to re-establish silence.

At that moment a man of mean figure, thin, bony, and squint-eyed in addition, advanced to the seat occupied by the prelate.

'Maese Perez is ill,' said he, 'and the ceremony cannot be commenced. If you wish it I will sit at the organ in his place. Maese Perez is not the only organist in the world, nor at his death need this instrument be mute for lack of one worthy to play upon it.'

The bishop bowed his head in sign of assent. Some of the worshippers already guessing that this was some envious rival—the enemy of the organist of Santa Ines—commenced to express their disgust with him in high tones. All of a sudden, however, there arose a great noise at the doorway.

'Maese Perez is here! Maese Perez is here!'

At the noise of those who stood around the door, every one turned his head.

Maese Perez, pale and with his features distorted, was, in truth, entering the church upon a couch which all were disputing to have the honour of helping to carry on their shoulders.

Neither the commands of his doctor nor the tears

of his daughter had been able to keep him in his bed.

'No,' said he; 'it is the last time. I know it, I know it; and I cannot die without seeing my organ once more, especially upon this night, the Blessed Night! Let us go. I wish it. I command it! Let us go to the church!'

They had complied with his wishes. Those nearest carried him in their arms to the organ-loft and the Mass commenced.

At that moment the clock of the cathedral struck midnight.

After the introit, the gospel, and the offertory, came the solemn moment when the priest, having consecrated the Host, takes it in his fingers and commences to raise it aloft.

A cloud of incense, scattering itself in azure waves, filled all the church. The bells rang with sonorous vibrations, and Maese Perez placed his nimble fingers upon the keys of the organ.

The hundred voices of the metal tubes resounded in a majestic and prolonged burst of music which lost itself little by little as if a gust of air were bearing it away.

After the first notes there came as it were a voice which raised itself from earth to heaven, and this was answered by another. At first it was as it were far off and sweet, then it swelled, and swelled, until it was converted into a torrent of harmony.

It was the voice of the angels, who, traversing space, came down to earth.

Then seemed to rise distant hymns, sung afar off by hierarchies of seraphim, a thousand hymns at once, which ended in blending into one alone—that one a strange melody which seemed to float upon an

ocean of mysterious echoes, like a cloud of mist upon the waves of the sea.

As the chants died away, others commenced. The combination became simpler. There were no more than two voices, the echoes of which blended together. Then one alone, sustaining a clear note like a ray of light. The priest bowed his head, and above the azure veil produced by the smoke of the incense appeared to the eyes of the worshippers the Host. At that instant the note which Maese Perez sustained, quivering, multiplied itself, multiplied itself, and the whole church trembled at the outburst of harmony. The compressed air vibrated in the nooks, and the coloured windows shook in their narrow double-partitioned casements.

From each of the notes which formed this magnificent outburst, was evolved a theme. Some of them were afar off, others near at hand, these clear, those low, as though the brook and the birds, the breezes and the leaves of the trees, men and angels, earth and heaven, chanted each in their own language the hymn of the Saviour's birth.

The multitude listened, astonished, anxiously. In every eye was a tear, in all hearts reigned profound abstraction from earth.

The priest who officiated felt his hands tremble in spite of what he held, that which men and the arch-angels salute—his God! He could have believed that he saw the heavens open and the Host transfigured.

The organ continued to sound, but the notes became gradually lower, like notes which lose themselves in fainter echoes—notes travelling as it were away, and growing weaker in flying. Then there came a shrill cry from the organ-loft—a cry piercing, acute—the cry of a woman.

The organ emitted a sound discordant, strange, like a groan, and remained mute.

The people ran to the steps leading to the loft, and the worshippers, recalled from their religious ecstasy, turned their heads in wonder.

'What has happened? What is it?' asked one of the other. No one could answer, and all were imagining what it could be. The confusion increased; the tumult outraged all order and the proper quiet of the church.

'What is the matter?' asked the women of the corregidor who, preceded by his ushers, had been one of the first to ascend the steps to the organist's seat, and who was now, white and with an air of profound sorrow, making his way to where the bishop, anxious as all the rest, was waiting to know the cause of the disorder.

'What is it?' he asked.

'Maese Perez is dying.'

The chief worshippers, when they ascended the steps and came to the loft, found the poor organist dead, his head upon the keys of his old organ which moaned faintly, while his daughter, kneeling at his feet, called on him with sighs and sobs, in vain.

III

'GOOD-EVENING, dear Señora Baltasara. What, are you also going to the midnight Mass? For my part I thought of going to my parish church, but you see what happens. Where are you going? Where you will. It is certain, to tell the truth, that since the death of Maese Perez it seems as if a

stone weighed on my heart every time I enter Santa Ines. Worthy man! He was a saint. I can say for my part that I preserve a piece of his doublet as a relic. He deserved it. Heaven help me, but I think that if the archbishop wished it our grandsons would certainly have his figure on the altar. But how things go! The dead and the absent have no friends. No one thinks but of what is new. You understand me? What! do you not know what has happened? Well, we are alike in such matters. From our home to church, from church home, without caring about what folk say or what escapes unawares. However, I—as now—as I go my way, with one word here and another there, without wishing to know anything, am generally pretty well acquainted with the news. Know, then, señora, that the organist of San Roman, that squint-eyed fellow who always speaks ill of all other organists, that wretched fellow who looks more like a butcher of the Puerta de la Carne than a master of music, is going to play to-night in place of Maese Perez. You must know, for all the world knows it—it is known all over Seville—that no one wished to undertake the duty, not even his daughter, who is an acknowledged artiste, and who has since his death entered the convent as a novice. It was only natural, too, accustomed as we have been to hear such music! Everything else would appear mean beside it, so the organists seek to avoid comparison. You must know, then, that folk decided that, in honour of the dead and in order to pay respect to his memory, the organ should not be played to-night. But then this fellow presents himself and declares that he will dare to play it. Nothing is bolder than ignorance. However, the fault is not his but theirs who allow the profanation to take

place. So goes the world. Just look at the crowd! One would say that it did not change from year to year. The same folk, the same grandeur, the same elbowing at the gates, the same bustle in the porch, the same number in the church. Ah! if the dead could but lift up his head! He would die again at hearing his organ played by such hands! If what the folk about me say is true they are preparing a fine welcome for the intruder. When the moment comes for him to put his hand upon the keys, then they will commence with tambourines, timbrels, and stringed instruments, and all kinds of things—such a noise as one has never heard! But silence! There goes into the church the hero of the function. Good Heavens! what a smart jacket, what a scent, what a conceited air! Let us go in, let us go in. The bishop arrived a minute or two ago, and the Mass is about to commence. Let us go in. I fancy that we shall to-night hear and see something to talk about during many days.'

Speaking thus the good lady, to whom we have already introduced our readers in a preceding specimen of her chatter, entered the convent of Santa Ines, making herself a way according to her custom through the thick of the crowd by means of pushing and working with her elbows.

The ceremony had already commenced.

The building was as brilliantly illuminated as it had been on the former like occasion.

The new organist, after having made his way through the worshippers who occupied the nave in order to kiss the hand of the bishop, went up to the loft, and then laid his finger on one key after another with a gravity which was as affected as it was ridiculous.

In the body of the crowd which filled the background of the church one could hear a low confused noise—a certain presage of the storm which was arising and about to break.

‘He is a mountebank who can do nothing well, and who considers none better than himself,’ said some.

‘He is a fool who, having played the organ in his parish church worse than a rattle, has come to commit the profanation of trying to play on the instrument of Maese Perez,’ said others.

As they spoke thus, one freed himself from his cloak in order that he might be the better able to play his tambour, another got ready his timbrel, and all prepared to make the greatest noise they could. Only a few ventured to utter a word or two in favour of the strange organist whose insolent and pedantic demeanour contrasted so strikingly with the sterling modesty and affable good nature of the dead Maese Perez.

At last the moment arrived, that solemn moment when the priest, after having bowed himself and pronounced the sacred words, takes the Host in his hands. The bells sounded, sending out sharp delicious notes into the air. The incense rose in diaphonous waves, and the organ pealed.

At that same moment a horrible noise arose in the church which entirely smothered the first notes.

Tambourines, flutes, timbrels, all the instruments of the people began at once to sound in hideous discord. The confusion and the noise hardly lasted for a few seconds.

All of a sudden the tumult ceased as abruptly as it had commenced.

A second burst of music, strong, powerful, magnificent, poured forth from the metal tubes of the organ like a torrent of harmony inexhaustible and sonorous.

Celestial chants like those which charm the ears in moments of ecstasy—chants which the spirit dreams of, and of which the lips cannot find description; detached notes of a far-off melody, sounding at intervals, carried on the gusts of the breeze; the rustle of the leaves as they embrace on the trees, with a murmur like that of rain; the tremulous sound of the lark's song as it rises singing from the midst of flowers like an arrow shot to the sky; sounds such as have no name—solemn as the raging of a tempest; choruses of seraphim, without rhythm or cadence—the unknown music of the sky which the imagination alone can attain to; winged hymns which seemed to mount up to the throne of heaven like a whirlwind of light and of sound—all this did the hundred voices of the organ express with more power, with more mysterious poetry, with more fantastic colouring than had ever before been expressed.

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When the organist came down from the loft the crowd which came to the steps was so great and so desirous to see and admire him that the corregidor, fearing, and with reason, that he would be nearly suffocated, ordered some of the alguazils who were near to take their staves and clear a passage for him to the high altar where the bishop awaited him.

'You see,' said the prelate to him, when he had at length come to his presence, 'I have left my palace to come here solely to hear you. Will you

be as cruel as was Maese Perez, who would never spare me the trouble of coming here and refuse to play the Mass on the Blessed Night in the cathedral?'

'Next year,' said the organist, 'I promise to do what you ask, but for all the gold in the world I will never again play on this organ.'

'Why?' asked the prelate, interrupting him.

'Because,' replied the organist, endeavouring to master the emotion which betrayed itself in the pallor of his face, 'the instrument is old—so bad that one is unable to express upon it what one would wish.'

The bishop withdrew, followed by his attendants. The litters of the nobles passed out and were lost in the windings of the neighbouring streets. The groups about the porch melted away. All the worshippers dispersed in different directions. As the convent servant went to shut the gates of the building, one might have seen two women who, after having made the sign of the cross and murmured a prayer before the altar-piece of San Felipe, went on their way along the Calle de las Dueñas.

'What do you think, my dear Señora Baltasara,' said the one to the other, 'is my idea about it? Every fool has his ideas. The barefooted Capuchins have often assured me, and I never believed it at all. The man we went to hear could not play like that. I have heard him a thousand times in San Bartolome, which is his parish church, and he was driven from there by the priest as a wretched fellow—the priest had to fill his ears with cotton. Why, one has but to look at his face, the mirror of the soul, as some express it. I remember, as vividly as if I saw it now, I remember the face of dear Maese Perez when on a night like this he came down from the loft

after having carried away the people with his music. What a delicious smile, what an animated colour! Old as he was he looked like an angel. As for this fellow, he came stumbling down as if a dog were snarling at his heels. He looked like a dead man, and one. . . . Well, my dear Señora Baltasara, I suspect there is something behind all this.'

With these last words the two women turned a corner of the street, and disappeared.

We think we need not tell the reader who one of them was.

IV

ANOTHER year had passed. The abbess of the convent of Santa Ines and the daughter of Maese Perez spoke together in low tones, hidden in the shadow of the choir. The big bell in the high tower noisily summoned the faithful to worship. Only a few people appeared in the building, which was silent and almost deserted. After having sprinkled themselves with the blessed water by the door, these went to place themselves in a corner of the nave, where a little congregation of the people of the neighbourhood quietly waited the commencement of the midnight Mass.

'You see,' said the superior, 'your fear is perfectly childish. There is no one in the church. All Seville has gone to the cathedral to-night. Play the organ, play it without any fear. We shall be by ourselves; but you keep silent, and do not cease to sigh! What has happened! What is the matter with you?'

'I am—afraid!' exclaimed the young girl with an accent of profound fear.

'Afraid! Of what?'

'I do not know—of something supernatural. Listen and I will tell you. Yesterday evening I heard you say you should ask me to play the organ at this Mass; and proud of such an honour, I thought I would try the keys and give you a surprise. I came to the choir. I was alone. I opened the door which leads to the loft. At that moment the clock of the cathedral struck the hour—I know not which. The bells, sad and many in number—very many—went on sounding while I was as it were glued to the threshold, and the time seemed to me to be an age.

'The church was deserted and dark. Afar off in the background shone, like a lost star in the night sky, one flickering light—the light which burns on the high altar. By its dim rays, which alone seemed to make more visible the profound depth of the shades, I saw—I saw—do not doubt me, mother!—I saw a man, who, silent and with his back turned to where I was standing, passed one hand over the keys of the organ, while with the other he tried its registers. The organ sounded; but it sounded in an indescribable manner. Each of its notes seemed like a smothered groan dying away in the metal tube, which vibrated with compressed air within it, and produced a low harmony, hardly perceptible, but exact.

'The clock of the cathedral continued to strike the hour, and the man did not cease to run his hand over the keys. I could even hear his breathing.

'Fear made the blood run cold within me. I felt myself cold as ice, with the exception of my forehead,

which seemed on fire. Alarmed, I would have cried out, but I could not. The man turned his head and looked at me—no, I express myself badly—he did not look at me for he was blind! It was my father!’

‘Bah! my sister! Repulse these phantoms with which the enemy seeks to trouble the minds of the weak. Recite a *Pater noster* and an *Ave Maria* to the archangel Saint Michael, the leader of the heavenly guard, who assists us against the evil spirits. Carry round your neck a scapulary which has touched the relics of San Pacomio, a protector against temptations, and go, go to the organ-loft. The Mass should now commence, and the worshippers are already becoming impatient. Your father is in heaven, and from there, far from coming to disquiet you, he will rather descend to inspire his daughter during this solemn ceremony, a time of such special devotion.’

The Superior went off to take her seat in the midst of her community. The daughter of Maese Perez opened with a trembling hand the door leading to the organ-loft, seated herself on the little bench, and the Mass commenced.

The Mass proceeded and went on without interruption until the time of the consecration. At that moment the organ pealed forth, and at the same moment that the organ commenced, a cry escaped the lips of the daughter of Maese Perez.

The Superior, the nuns, and some of the worshippers ran to the loft.

‘Do you see him? Do you see him?’ cried the girl, her distended eyes fixed on the seat which she had quitted in her terror, holding on with clutching hands to the rail of the tribune.

Every one directed their eyes to the same spot. No one was at the organ, and nevertheless it still

pealed on—played as it were the song of the arch-angels, the song they sing in the raptures of their mystic joy.

‘Did I not tell you a thousand times, my dear Señora Baltasara—did I not tell you that it was strange? Listen to me. Were you not yesterday evening at the midnight Mass? In any case you will know what happened. All Seville talks of nothing else. The bishop is furious; and he has good reason to be so. Not having gone to Santa Ines, he was not able to take part in the ceremony there. And all for what? To hear a simpleton—for all those who went to hear that blessed organist of San Bartolomé declare he is nothing else—in the cathedral. I said it would be so! The idiot does not know how to play. I told you there was something else at the bottom of it, and that something was, in truth, the spirit of Maese Perez.’

DORIDO AND CLORINIA

A GENTLEMAN, a native of Rome, as high-born and accomplished as he was brave and handsome, named Dorido, fell in love with a lady, the fair Clorinia, not more than sixteen or seventeen—beautiful, virtuous, and also of a good family. She received an excellent education, and her charms, both of person and of mind, shone with redoubled lustre by the extreme care and polish bestowed upon her manners and her attainments of every kind. Her surpassing beauty, which none could gaze on with impunity, made her parents cautious how they permitted her to appear in public, lest some quarrel might arise among those eager to win her regard; for which reason either her father or brother was seldom seen absent from her side.

Already, for some months, had young Dorido seen and loved her; and such was the passion he entertained for her, as wholly to absorb his mind, and lead him, by seeking every occasion for looks and signs—all by which he was permitted to address her—to convince her of its reality. These soft and voiceless witnesses of his love were not always fortunate enough to be regarded; but when they were, they seemed to produce a favourable effect upon the object of them. Clorinia took pleasure in secretly observing

him—far more than she let it appear that she did ; but soon, without knowing exactly why, she felt equally interested in attracting his regard, till, by degrees returning his silent advances, she caught the sweet contagion she had before communicated to him, and, for the first time, felt the young emotions of love and jealousy, as he had done.

It was impossible Dorido could be long ignorant of the conquest he had accomplished, and for a period he gave himself up to the delighted assurance of being beloved. But soon sighing for more substantial proofs of his success, he sought for the means ; he contracted an acquaintance with her brother, Valerio, and so far won his confidence as seldom to be seen out of his company. They continually visited each other, and Dorido had now ample opportunity to contemplate the charms he so much admired, and even to speak to and to hear her speak. Still he could not declare his feelings ; and their eyes were the sole interpreters of their secret wishes.

Things, however, did not long remain in this position. Clorinia could not conceal her love from her favourite maid, a girl of some experience, and one who wished to show her devotion to her young mistress. With this view she went of her own accord to find the lover, and said to him, 'Señor Dorido, you are very handsome, and it would be foolish in me to conceal what it would be still more foolish in you to conceal from me. I see into your heart ; you are in love with Clorinia, and you are not the only one that loves. You are both dying to be left alone together, and I truly pity your case. I shall have no rest till I invent some expedient to give you this happiness.' The lover, enraptured to hear these words, thanked the kind creature from the

bottom of his heart, declaring that if she succeeded in what she promised she would find him anything but ungrateful for the boon. He then sat down and wrote an impassioned letter, full of love and gratitude, which he conjured her to deliver safe into the hands of her fair mistress.

Scintilla returned home, and holding the billet in her hand, told her lady the object of her embassy; for which, though she received a sharp chiding, she was soon with no great difficulty pardoned. How and where the lovers were to meet became the next question. The young lady, declaring it to be impossible, wished to give up the idea; but her ingenious maid hit upon a method which she could not but agree was extremely deserving of a trial. Scintilla was in the habit of occupying a little low apartment, adjoining another set apart chiefly for the lumber of the house, and which received light only through a small grated window, through which a person was barely able to insert his hand. It opened upon a very lonely unfrequented quarter, which seemed to have been made expressly for the rendezvous of two lovers on some quiet night.

When the duenna found her young lady inclined to put her new theory into practice by means of this little grated window, she went and acquainted the gentle lover, who, that very same evening, about eleven o'clock, found himself close to the place. He saw the window, he saw the good duenna, and she preached patience to him—at least, till the rest of the domestics should have retired. Yet he did not sigh there long; the delightful moment was at hand; Clorinia appeared in all her beauty, though trembling in every accent and every nerve. Her lover, too, could not utter a word. They came to tell their

love, and the excess of their joy prevented it; but love has more than one language; the lady's hand was extended through the envious bars, was grasped, and instantly covered with a thousand kisses.

By degrees they recovered the power of speech, they gave full vent to the emotions by which they were governed—the delight of hearing each other speak, and being together. The morning would thus have stolen upon them unawares had not the watchful guardian of their love informed them of the lapse of time. Before bidding adieu Dorido conjured his mistress to permit him to return on the ensuing evening, at the same hour, to the same spot, and this she had neither the courage nor inclination to refuse him.

Both were equally enraptured with their meeting, and sighed with equal ardour to repeat it. Dorido was in a state of impatience and agitation which would not permit him a moment's repose, and he counted each minute until the promised one arrived that was to restore his Clorinia to his sight. The lady was equally true to it, and this night, with less timidity and alarm, their mutual joy seemed to be more intense. A lively conversation ensued in which each, as eager to display the superior charm of a well adorned and accomplished mind as well as of person, exerted themselves to the utmost, and not a few were the sprightly and happy allusions and more delicate compliments they made and returned each other. The interview continued more than three hours, and you may suppose was not unmingled with vows and innocent caresses. Such was the charm of this meeting as to render it again imperative on the prudent attendant to remind them of the hour, and it was some time before she

succeeded in rousing them to a sense of their danger, and tearing them from each other's sight.

The only other person acquainted with Dorido's passion was a Roman gentleman, named Horazio, who, unknown to his friend, was extremely attached to the same lady. Perceiving, however, that he made no progress in her affections, he conjectured that there was somewhere a rival, perhaps more fortunate than himself, and it was not long before his suspicions were directed towards Dorido, from the circumstance of his being seen so frequently in the company of the brother. To ascertain at once how far he was correct in his supposition, Horazio went directly to Dorido, with whom he was in daily habit of intercourse, and addressed him in these terms—'I am come, my dear friend, to ask you a particular favour, such as I trust you will not refuse, for my peace of mind depends upon it. I see you continually with Valerio, you are very often at his house, and I suspect that you are smitten with the beauty of his lovely sister. Let me appeal to your candour and kindness, if it be as I think, reveal the fact, for you are too worthy and noble for me to dispute with you the affections of this enchanting and accomplished girl.'

'You are then yourself in love with Clorinia?' inquired Dorido, with an anxious air.

'I am most certainly charmed with her,' replied Horazio, 'but I am just and sensible enough to allow that you better deserve to obtain her regard.'

'In that I should feel myself especially honoured,' said Dorido, 'but, all flattery apart, I will tell you candidly that it is not my intention to solicit the hand of the fair Clorinia.'

'Is that possible!' exclaimed Horazio quickly

'is it not your object to become the husband of Valerio's sister? Ah, my friend, how different do we feel then, how I long to unite my fate for ever with hers! And, indeed, if such are your ideas, I think you ought to resign any other views or intentions you may have formed, in favour of my more lasting—more honourable claims. As my friend you will do as much, I know.'

'And as the friend of your Clorinia's family, you might have added,' rejoined Dorido, 'in that point of view I assuredly ought. Yes, I will leave the field open to you, and if Valerio's sister consent to bestow her hand upon you, I, for one, will not oppose your success. Nay, I will do more, I will speak to her in your favour, and as far as it may depend on me, my embassy shall not be a bootless one.'

So delighted was Horazio with this frank and generous conduct on the part of his friend, that he was at a loss for words to express his gratitude, not reflecting that the promise given was conditional, and made to depend upon the lady's own choice. In short, such was the illusion of his joy, that he repeatedly pressed his friend to urge his cause as if it were his own, and with so much earnestness and tenderness of manner, as really to interest the feelings and pique the generosity of his more favoured rival. He felt the power of virtuous love, and, doing justice to the purer motives of his friend, Dorido resolved to sacrifice his less pure passion, to accomplish the lasting happiness not only of Horazio, but of the lady's family and of herself.

In pursuance of this object, at their next interview, Dorido thus addressed the lady to whom he

had before made so many professions of unalterable love—'You are doubtless not ignorant, madam, that you rank in your long list of conquests, a gentleman named Horazio, but I am very doubtful if you are aware to what an extreme degree he is captivated by you. He actually idolises you, and the bare idea of ever becoming your husband is the sole and sweetest dream of his existence, without which he declares that life has for him no charm.'

'I am delighted at what you tell me,' replied Clorinia, 'for now I shall have an opportunity of showing you what little regard I pay to the adoration of all the lovers in the world—except—except one.'

'I feel,' replied Dorido, 'all the value of such an acknowledgment, every way so noble; but at the same time, I should be undeserving of this exceeding goodness, were I not in a manner to take up arms against myself, in defence of one of the best and most amiable and generous of friends. Horazio's merit is great, and when you come to appreciate it rightly, you would probably not much regret it if your parents were desirous of bestowing you upon so excellent a man!'

'How then,' exclaimed the beauty, with a look of extreme surprise, and even terror, 'do you wish to yield—to destroy me? Can you be in earnest that you wish me to return Horazio's love?'

'No, truly,' replied Dorido, 'that is not my idea, I only wished you to understand that if you bore him any affection, and your parents had resolved to give him your hand, it would have been bootless in me to complain; I would then make a sacrifice to the happiness of my rival in order to show how truly devoted I am to all your wishes. Do you comprehend me?'

'Do I?' replied the lady, bitterly, 'I know that I would not fall a victim so submissively as you appear to think; or your attachment has lost much of the fidelity—the ardour which I believed it to possess. But,' she continued, 'I wish not to put you to this proof. Dorido has been the first, and will be the last of the lovers I wish to have,—on that at least you may depend. Let Horazio persist or not, as he feels disposed, in his pursuit of me, he will not gain any more in my esteem, and I wish you to understand that as my fixed determination. I was before aware of his views, and I have ever since conceived an aversion for him, amounting to absolute horror; and for which I can hardly account.'

Dorido no longer ventured to say a word in his friend's favour, he saw that it was worse than useless to press the subject upon her attention. He changed the conversation, which took an interest of another kind, exhausting itself in the most tender and passionate exclamations on the side of Clorinia, which called forth all Dorido's ardour, and no fewer protestations on his. On the ensuing morning Horazio called upon his friend. 'You have seen Clorinia?' he exclaimed, 'and spoken in my favour; and how did she receive it?' was the breathless inquiry he made.

'In very ill part,' replied the other, 'and you must not continue to flatter yourself with the least hope. I said all I could to raise your merit in her eyes; your person, wealth, family—but all in vain. I described to her the excess of your attachment, greater, most likely, than it is; but the cruel creature stopped my mouth, vowing, that though you loved till the day of doom, you should never be united in marriage bands with her.'

On hearing these words, Horazio grew deadly pale, and seemed lost in profound thought; while, struck with the extreme pain he appeared to suffer, Dorido, softening his tone, besought him to summon more resolution, and desist from a vain and fruitless pursuit; adding that in Rome there were many girls as lovely as Clorinia, who would not require to be compelled to return his love. 'Besides, my dear Horazio,' he continued, 'I am sure you have not the slightest cause to complain of me; I would have yielded her to you, I swear, had I seen the least probability of her indulging an inclination for you. I would have made this noble sacrifice to our friendship; and will you, on your part, refuse to relinquish an anxious painful undertaking, and which, in the remote case of succeeding, must be at the expense of your best friend.'

It was now for the first time Horazio broke silence, and fixing his eyes on his friend—'I am very far,' he said, 'from reproaching you. You have rendered me a sad and useless service; you have spoken for me, and I thank you for it. It is only just, I agree, that I should renounce the pursuit of what I cannot obtain. Her heart is yours—so let it be. Farewell! and I will try to attend to your advice about attaching myself to some other more attainable object.'

With these words he left his friend Dorido in the persuasion that, struck with the justice of what he had said, he would leave nothing untried to banish the thought of Clorinia from his mind. It was not so; he had set down his friend Dorido as a traitor, a false, malicious, selfish hypocrite, who had betrayed him, drawn a hateful portrait of him to the lady he adored, and he now resolved to take the matter into his own hands. 'By heavens,' he exclaimed, 'I

will ask her, I will have her in marriage from her father—he will plead for me better than a rival.' He proceeded forthwith to act upon this suggestion. He declared his wishes, and they were accepted and approved. He also obtained his own father's consent; and the two old gentlemen soon sat in council upon the business, the result of which was that the marriage should take place, provided the inclination of the lady could be brought to accord with their own views.

On the first mention, however, of the affair, such was the extreme repugnance and even horror manifested by the beautiful Clorinia that the design was as quickly abandoned as it had been formed, as a thing wholly impossible.

How lamentable the folly and weakness of man! to let a single passion obtain mastery over his mind until he becomes no longer the same being, and, yielding up the helm of reason, is borne, like a lost vessel, upon the rocks! Horazio imagined he saw his passion treated with scorn—his rival happy and triumphant; and in an instant the love which before animated his soul became changed to bitter hatred. He now regarded Clorinia as an object of horror, and brooded over thoughts of revenge. He next began to study the means, and how he could strike most surely and deeply at the hearts of both, and by a single blow. He set a vigilant guard upon their proceedings,—a wretch hired to dog their steps whithersoever they went; and having thus discovered the place of their stolen interviews, with every circumstance attending them, there remained little else requisite to supply him with the most strange, cruel, and heartless method of revenge that ever entered into the human breast. Actuated by

his infernal hatred, he one night, anticipating the arrival of Dorido, hastened to the place where they met, and approached the little window at which he already beheld, looking forth, the object in pursuit of which he had come. In the obscurity of the evening he knew that the sister of Valerio would easily mistake him for her lover, and, in fact, she addressed him in the most affectionate language—in words that made Horazio's blood boil within him, and impelled him to deep revenge.

In perfect silence the treacherous friend approached; he stretched out his hand, he clasped that of the lady eagerly meeting his, and holding it with a ferocious and gigantic grasp, he had the heart, with a sharp instrument prepared for the purpose, to separate the lovely limb from its arm. The act was momentary; vain were her shrieks; the villain had fled. He already sat in the gloom of his secret chamber, and in the deeper gloom of his soul madly exulting in the thought of his triumphant revenge.

But what were the horror-struck feelings of the family and friends of that fair girl when, roused by her cries, they found her deprived of consciousness, and bathed in her blood. Her faithful attendant hung over her, still filling the house with her shrieks. On beholding the deed, her parents both fell unconscious at her side, while the unhappy brother and the servants were busily endeavouring to stanch the bleeding wound. It was no time to doubt, to inquire, or to accuse; the most eminent surgeons were summoned to the spot, to attempt, if possible, to arrest the unhappy lady's fleeting breath. The aged father, having meanwhile recovered, besought his domestics, for the ends of justice, to reveal nothing without orders; while he sighed over the lost honour

and happiness of his house. Her brother, Valerio, having armed himself, now issued into the street, attended by his valets; and what was his grief at being enabled for some distance to track the murderous villain by the drops of his dear sister's blood, for the wretch had borne along with him the bleeding hand as a trophy of his secret crime. While thus employed he met his friend Dorido, who was hastening to his accustomed interview with an air of visible joy. In faltering accents Valerio called to him, 'Alas! my dear friend, whither are you going? Help us, for God's sake, help to find the murderer; for I see by your looks you know nothing of the horrid deed. Our poor Clorinia—my sister'—but words failed him, and he could not go on. 'Gracious God!' cried Dorido, 'what has happened—quick—answer me—what of Clorinia?' 'That,' replied Valerio, in a voice of solemn anguish, 'that we ought to conceal from every human ear and eye, but to you it shall be told, because I know as my friend that you will unite with me in hunting down, whithersoever he flee, the cruel assassin of my poor sister.'

Pierced to the heart by these words, Dorido nearly sank under sudden terror and surprise. Then, trembling and faint, he begged Valerio to explain everything, which he did; and Valerio would then have conducted him to the surgeon, had he not resolutely resisted, exclaiming, 'It is no time now for aught but revenge. She will be lost to me! but I will drag forth the unheard-of villain to light—monster as he is! Leave me to deal with him, for I feel this visitation as bitterly as you can. It is impossible to think of it without shuddering; but, heavens! with what delight shall I inflict upon him

a punishment as near as may be commensurate with his fatal crime.'

The two friends then separated, Dorido returning to his own house, in the resolution of taking some immediate step to avenge his outraged love, and full of indignation against Horazio, whom he more than suspected of having committed the atrocious deed. He first shut himself up in his room, where he gave free vent to his feelings at so severe a loss; for he had now become more deeply attached to the fair Clorinia than before. 'My lost, my beauteous one!' he exclaimed, 'my envious hated rival hath indeed succeeded! hath snatched thee from my arms for ever! Alas! you mistook him for me, Dorido; and I—I am the sad cause of the calamity that has befallen you. But for me, you had been happy and beautiful as ever!—in all thy sweet innocence and tranquillity of soul. Yes, it is I who have been thy assassin! Yet will I not long survive thee—when once I shall have immolated thy wretched destroyer to thy dear sacred shade! Would only that thou mightest survive to enjoy the only consolation left us now—to hear of the memorable doom to be inflicted by this right hand upon the body of the traitor!'

The next morning found him still absorbed in grief and tears; but then, rousing himself, he hastened to the house of Clorinia's father, where sorrow and consternation sat on every countenance. The father and the brother seemed to feel fresh grief at his appearance. The old man, as he welcomed him, observed—'Alas! Dorido, my friend, my sweet girl is even now in the agonies of death. She has lost so much blood, that it is alone enough to forbid every hope. Was there ever a more unfortunate

father ! What can have been the motive, think you, for the commission of so accursed a deed ? It was no man—it was a horrid monster—and what punishment can be imagined adequate to reach it ?

‘Sir,’ replied Dorido, ‘try to assuage your grief ; and feel quite at rest on that head—to avenge her is the object of us all. I have undertaken to chastise him ; he will perish. But ere that, give me a legal title to become her avenger ; I love Clorinia as my own soul ; unite our hands ere she breathe her last sigh. Thus, too, will her reputation not suffer ; and you will not owe to a stranger that satisfaction to which you are entitled.’

Without hesitation the father, as well as the son, accepted the proposal ; they extolled his honourable feeling, and expressed gratitude for the noble manner in which he had stepped forward to obviate all unpleasant remarks that might affect the poor girl’s reputation. The old man, weeping, took his way to his daughter’s bedside ; and a delightful smile played over her countenance when she heard what was requested. She signified her assent amidst tears of mingled bitterness and joy. She declared that she should die contented as the wife of Dorido ; she inquired eagerly if he were in the house, and if she might be permitted to see and speak to him. This, as the fever appeared to have left her, it was conceived might not prove injurious to her. He approached ; but so great was the sudden joy she experienced on beholding him that she fell into a swoon, from which it was some time before she recovered. The surgeon upon this gave strict injunctions that the lovers should not be permitted to speak to each other ; but their looks sufficiently told what they felt and suffered. Observing that his

presence appeared to afford her relief, he did not leave her during the remainder of the day. In the evening a priest and a notary were called in, and the marriage ceremony was performed before the assembled and weeping family.

For the two ensuing days feeble hopes were entertained of her life. She seemed to rally, and even the surgeon no longer despaired; but all were disappointed. On the third day a fresh access of fever, of a more rapid and violent character, seized on the patient, and left not the remotest chance. As her last hour drew nigh Dorido, perceiving that the event must occur, secretly withdrew, and set about the means of his premeditated revenge. He sought Horazio in every spot; and at length meeting with him, he took him cordially by the hand, and as if quite unsuspecting of any crime attaching to him, he carelessly asked if he would come and sup with him that evening, to which Horazio consented, conceiving that as he had heard no public notice made of the atrocious deed, the lady was either recovering, or his friend unacquainted with her misfortune. At the appointed hour Horazio went, as he had been accustomed, to join his friend—and both were soon seated opposite each other at the table. Dorido had, however, taken care that the wine should be well drugged; and such was its potent effect that in a very little time Horazio found himself overpowered, and fell into a deep slumber.

It was now that Dorido, assisted by his two valets, wholly devoted to his interest, bound the sleeper both hand and foot; they next slipped a cord round his neck, and with this, and another passed round his body, they fastened him to a pillar which stood in the apartment. Having before closed

all the doors in the house, they now proceeded to administer antidotes to his lethargy, which speedily recalled the unhappy wretch to a sense of his situation.

The moment he found himself awake did the dreadful truth flash conviction and horror to the soul of the assassin—he knew in a moment wherefore he was there, and what he had to expect. He did more—he confessed his heinous crime, while he implored compassion and mercy in accents of bitter sincerity, such as only the love of life even in a convict can inspire. But here they were all in vain; steeled to the heart's core, the lover and husband—bereaved so barbarously of his charming mistress—listened to his prayers and cries with mockery, his imagination being still haunted with the picture of his dying wife. Bent upon inflicting retributive justice, he proceeded to sever with an axe the hands of the wretched Horazio; and while he was still in the agonies of approaching dissolution, he commanded his valets to strangle him with the rope that bound him to the fatal pillar. Then having hung the two dissevered members round the neck of the corpse, he directed his men to bear it to the spot where the crime had been committed; and on the same fearful night, unable to support the idea of life in a place connected with so many horrors, he took his departure from Rome. Pursuit was vain—it is not even known what route he took, to what country he fled; but the unfortunate Clorinia breathed her last about three hours after he disappeared.

A MOONBEAM

I CANNOT tell whether this is a history which resembles a tale, or a tale which resembles a history. What I know is that it is based on a fact—a very sad fact, yet one which I should be amongst the very last to make good use of, on account of the particular bent of my imagination.

Others with such a suggestive subject as this might have written a volume of sentimental philosophy; I have made it matter for a story, and should the reader not derive instruction, I at least hope he will receive some entertainment from it.

I

OF noble birth, he had been educated amid the din of arms. Yet even the harsh note of the bugle itself would fail to divert his eyes from the ancient parchment over which he bent, reading the lay of the troubadour.

If one desired to see him, it was not in the spacious courtyard of his castle that one would find him, where the grooms were breaking in the colts,

the pages taming the falcons, and the soldiers sharpening their lances in their idle moments.

'Where is your master Manrique?' asked his mother, sometimes.

'We do not know,' replied the servants, 'perhaps he is in the cloisters of the monastery of La Peña, seated on the edge of a tomb, trying with strained neck to overhear the dead talking, or on the bridge watching the water flow under the arches, or lying in the crevice of a rock counting the stars in the heavens, following the clouds or watching the *ignis fatuus* flitting over the surface of the lagunes. You will find him anywhere except where all others are.'

Manrique, indeed, loved solitude, and loved it so much that he sometimes wished he had no shadow, that it might not follow him.

He loved solitude, for in it he gave rein to his imagination, and created for himself a world of phantasy peopled by strange beings, the creatures of his fancy and his poetic dreams. Manrique was a poet—a poet so much that he was never satisfied with the forms in which he clothed his thoughts, and never could he bring himself to put them into writing.

He believed that amid the ruddy flames rising from the hearth there dwelt fire spirits of variegated colour, running hither and thither over the blazing logs like golden insects, or dancing in a fiery round of sparks on the summits of the flames; and he spent very many hours, seated on a footstool beside the high Gothic fireplace, motionless and with his eyes fixed on the gleams.

He loved to think that beneath the ripples of the waves of the river, between the moss sprays of the spring, and in the mists that rose from the lake,

there lived mysterious maidens, fairies, or sirens, who uttered sighs and wails, and sang and laughed with the monotonous rippling of the water, and he tried to understand their tongue.

In the clouds, in the air, in the forest, in the crevices of the rocks, he thought he saw shadows or heard mysterious sounds, shades of supernatural beings, clear sounds of words that he could not understand.

Love! He was born to dream of love, not to feel it. He was constantly falling in love with every woman he saw. With one because she had golden hair, with another because her lips were ruddy, with another because of her graceful carriage.

At times, when in a state of ecstasy, he would spend the whole night gazing at the moon floating in the sky amidst the silvery clouds, or at the stars twinkling from afar like diamonds in their ever changing hues. During these long nights of poetic sleeplessness he would exclaim!

'If it be true, as the prior De la Peña has said, that these specks of light are worlds; if it be true that that globe of mother-of-pearl which revolves above the clouds, be inhabited by men; that the women are so fair who dwell in those regions of light; and that I may not see them, may not love them; of what nature is their beauty? of what nature their love?'

Manrique was not yet sufficiently mad to be followed in the streets by the little boys, but mad enough to talk and gesticulate to himself, which is the first step in the direction of madness.

II

OVER the Duero, which bathes the dark and mouldering stones of the walls of Soria, there is a bridge which leads to the city of the ancient monastery of the Templars, whose lands stretch along the bank of the river, and extend to the opposite side of it.

At the time of which we speak the knights of the order had already abandoned their historic fortress, but the ruins of the old towers still stood. The massive arches of the cloister were then to be seen, as part of them may be now, covered with ivy and white bell-flowers; and the wind, whistling through the tall surrounding trees, sighed through the long galleries of its courtyard.

In the garden, the pathways of which had not been trodden by the monks for many years, the vegetation grew in luxuriant wildness unchecked by the desecrating hand of man. The climbing plants entwined themselves around the old trunks of the trees. The deep shadowed paths beneath the poplars, the branches of which met and became interlaced one with another, were covered with grass. Nettles and thistles grew on the sandy paths. On the ruins of the ancient walls, ready to crumble to pieces, the horse-radish leaves fluttered like the plumes of a helmet in the wind, and the blue and white bell-flowers drooped from their long, graceful stalks. All proclaimed the triumph of ruin and desolation.

It was night—a summer's night, balmy, full of perfumes and sweet sounds. The moon, serene and white, hung high up in the sky—a sky of bright, transparent, azure depths.

Manrique, his mind reeling under poetic imagination, came to the bridge, from which he contemplated for a moment the dark silhouette of the town against the light fleecy clouds formed on the horizon, and then going on, he plunged amidst the deserted ruins of the monastery of the Templars.

The hour of midnight sounded. The moon rising slowly had reached its highest point in the heavens, when he came to the entrance of a dark avenue, which led from the ruined cloister to the banks of the Duero. Manrique uttered a cry—a cry, sudden, half suppressed, a singular mixture of surprise, fear, and joy.

At the end of this avenue he saw a fluttering figure in white, which flitted by for an instant and disappeared in the darkness. It was the train of a woman's dress—of a woman who had crossed the orchard and hidden herself in the foliage at the moment when the demented Manrique, dreamer of chimeras and impossibilities, had entered the garden.

'An unknown woman! In this place and at this hour. This is the woman I am seeking,' exclaimed Manrique, and he flew after her with the swiftness of an arrow.

III

HE reached the place where the mysterious woman had disappeared into the copse. She had vanished! To which side? There in the distance farther still, amidst the interlaced trunks of the trees, he thought he observed something light—a white form moving.

'It is she, it is she who has wings to her feet and flies like a shadow,' he said, rushing after her, tearing down with his hand the network of ivy which stretched from one poplar to another.

He went on, forcing his way through the ivy till he reached a little open space flooded with the heavenly light. Nobody!

'Ah! this way she went, this way,' he exclaimed, 'I hear the crackling of the dry leaves under her feet, and the noise of her robe rustling against the bushes,' and he ran hither and thither like one demented. He could not see her.

'But I hear her gentle footsteps, he continued; I think I hear her speak, yes, she speaks. The wind groaning in the branches, the leaves which seem to pray in low tones, prevented me from hearing what she said, but without doubt, as she passed here, she spoke—but in what tongue I know not, but it is a foreign tongue.'

And he continued the pursuit, now thinking to see her or to hear her, watching the moving of the branches in the midst of which she had disappeared, now thinking to see her footprints in the mould, and anon convinced that the fragrant odours he breathed came from the lips of this beautiful woman. So he continued the chase, exultingly, through the entangled labyrinth.

But in vain.

He had been running about for some hours, exhausted and almost beside himself, stealing stealthily over the dew-besprinkled grass, and abandoning himself to his mad career.

On reaching the grounds which skirted the banks of the river, he came to the foot of the rock on which rises the hermitage of San Saturio.

'Perchance from this height I shall be able to track her footsteps through the entangled brushwood,' he exclaimed, clambering over the rocks with the aid of his dagger.

At length he reached the summit, from whence he could see in the distance the town and part of the Duero at his feet, its impetuous current rushing along the tortuous mountain gorge.

Manrique looked around him as far as his eyes could reach, when suddenly he stopped, with difficulty repressing an imprecation.

The moonlight shimmered in the wake of a little boat making swiftly for the opposite bank.

In this bark he thought he saw a figure in white, tall and graceful, a woman, and without doubt the woman whom he had seen in the garden of the Templars, the woman of his dreams. The object of his most desperate hopes. He flung himself from the rock as nimbly as a fallow deer, cast away his cap, the long plume of which impeded him in his flight, and throwing aside his ample velvet cloak, he made for the bridge swift as a lightning flash, hoping to reach the town before her bark came to the opposite shore.

Vain hope.

When Manrique came to the place, panting and breathless, the occupants of the bark had already entered Soria by one of the city gates, which stood on the banks of the river, in the waters of which were reflected its sombre turrets.

IV

ALTHOUGH Manrique had abandoned all hope of coming up to the party which had entered by the postern gate of San Saturio, yet he did not despair of discovering their place of abode. Possessed with this idea he entered the town, and made for the quarter of St. Juan, roaming at haphazard through the silent streets. The streets of Soria in those days, as now, were narrow and winding. Stillness reigned around, a stillness broken only by the barking of a dog, the slamming of a gate, or the neighing of a horse, pawing and trying to free itself from the crib to which it was tied in its subterranean stable.

Listening attentively to these noises of the night, Manrique thought he heard the sound of footsteps proceeding from a deserted alley, and a confused sound of voices coming nearer and nearer.

So he spent several hours, wandering from place to place.

At last he stopped before a large house, the walls of which were black with age, and his eyes gleamed with an indescribable expression of joy. In one of the lofty windows of the edifice, which might be called a palace, a ray of light pierced through the light curtains of rose-coloured silk and rested on the old walls of the opposite building.

'No more doubt. It is here she dwells,' exclaimed Manrique in low tones, gazing on the Gothic window, 'she lives here. She entered by the wicket of San Saturio. It is by the wicket that one reaches this quarter, and in this quarter there is a house where some one keeps watch after midnight. Who can it

be? Who but she, returning from her nocturnal rambles at this late hour of the night? There can be no doubt she lives here!’

Fully convinced it was she, and giving rein to the most fantastic turns of his imagination, he awaited the dawn of day before the Gothic window, the light from which continued burning all the time, and which he never lost sight of for a moment.

At the first streaks of day the massive gates of the mansion, above which was displayed the emblazoned coat-of-arms of its proprietor, slowly turned on their hinges with a grating noise. A servant, carrying a bunch of keys, appeared at the wicket, and, rubbing his eyes and yawning, displayed a superb set of teeth such as might have excited the envy of a crocodile.

To see him and to approach him was with Manrique the work of an instant.

‘Who dwells in this house? What is her name? From whence does she come? For what purpose is she in Soria? Is she married? Answer, churl.’

In this manner, and shaking the man violently by the arm, did he accost the servant, who replied half-stunned.

‘This house belongs to the illustrious Señor Don Alonso de Valdecuellos, Master of the Hunt to His Majesty the King, who, having been wounded in the wars against the Moors, is reposing here after the fatigues of the war.’

‘And his daughter?’ interrupted the youth impatiently, ‘or his sister, or his wife, or whoever she may be?’

‘There is no woman in the house.’

‘No woman! Who dwells, then, in the chamber

where I have observed the light shining all the night?’

‘That is the chamber of my master, Don Alonso, who, being sick, keeps his lamp burning continually.’

A thunderbolt falling at his feet could not have filled Manrique with greater consternation than did the words he had just heard.

V

‘I WILL find her again. I will find her again; and if I do find her, I am almost sure to recognise her.’

‘By what?’

‘I cannot tell, but I shall assuredly recognise her. The echo of her footsteps, the sound of her voice, the fringe of her train will suffice me! Night and day I have seen floating before my eyes the folds of a white and transparent stuff. Night and day I have heard the rustling of her robe and the confused sound of her words. What did she say? Ah! if I but knew. Surely, though, I shall know her again. My heart tells me so, and the heart never deceives. True, I have searched in vain through the streets of Soria; I have spent the nights in ceaseless vigil; I have expended more than twenty golden doblas in opening the mouths of the servants and the duennas; I have offered up holy water in the Church of St. Nicholas. One night after matins in the Collegiate Church I, like an imbecile, followed the archbishop in his litter, thinking that the hem of his hopalanda resembled the robe of my unknown

one! But no matter, I will find her again, and the glory of possessing her will certainly outweigh the labour of searching for her.

'Of what colour are her eyes? They should be blue—blue and like the evening sky. I love blue eyes, they are so expressive, so melancholy, if . . . Assuredly her eyes are blue, and her hair black, very black and long, floating around her.

'Her voice? Yes, I have heard the sound of her voice, sweet as the murmurs of the breeze through the leaves of the poplars, and her step was as stately and majestic as a musical measure.

'And this fair one who surpasses the fairest dreams of my youth, who thinks as I think, who loves as I love, who is the complement of my soul, will she not be moved on seeing me? Will she not love me as I shall love her, as I love her already, with all the strength of my life, with all the faculties of my soul?

'Away, away to the place where I first saw her, and for only that one time. Who knows but that, capricious as myself, and loving solitude and mystery, like all dreamy souls, she may delight in roaming amidst the ruins during the silent night?'

Two months had elapsed, during which Manrique had been building fresh castles in the air, only destined to disappear at every breath of the wind. Two months passed in the fruitless search after the unknown fair, his infatuation for whom had been now even increased in strength, when, one evening, absorbed in thought, he crossed the bridge leading to the Monastery, and made for the garden, to once more conceal himself amid the thickest foliage.

VI

It was a calm and beautiful night. The moon shone in all her splendour from the highest point in the heavens, and the wind whispered gently between the leaves of the trees.

Manrique reached the cloister and gazed around as far as he could see among the massive pillars of the arches. The place was deserted. He retraced his steps and went in the direction of the dark avenue leading to the Duero, which he had scarcely entered when a cry of joy escaped his lips.

For a moment he caught a glimpse of the white robe, of the white robe of the object of his dreams of her whom he adored to distraction.

He flew after her, reached the place where he had seen her disappear, and stopped, fixing his haggard eyes on the moon, motionless. A light tremor passed over him, a tremor which became convulsive; and at length he burst out into laughter—loud, prolonged, horrible.

This white something, light, floating, had dazzled his vision for an instant, but for an instant only.

It was a moonbeam which pierced through the thick foliage of the trees at intervals when the branches were moved by the wind.

Some years had passed; Manrique was seated on a stool in the corner of the huge Gothic fireplace in his castle, with a vacant and wandering look in his eyes, like that of an idiot, hardly noticing the endearments of his mother or the attentions of his servants.

'You are young and beautiful,' his mother said, 'why do you live alone? Why do you not seek a

maiden whom you can love, and who will requite your love?'

'Love? Love is but a moonbeam,' replied the youth.

'Why do you not rouse yourself from your lethargy?' one of his retainers said. 'Attire yourself in armour from top to toe, unfurl your standard, and hie you to the wars? It is in the wars that glory is obtained.'

'Glory! Glory is a moonbeam.'

'If it please you, I will sing you the last lay of Arnaldo, the troubadour of Provence.'

'No, no,' exclaimed Manrique, rising passionately from his seat, 'I want nothing. I mean I only want—to be left alone. Songs, love, glory, happiness—all lies, vain phantoms created by our imaginations and clothed by our fancy, which carries us away whither, and to what purpose? To find a moonbeam!'

Manrique was mad. At least, all the world thought so. For my part, judging from what he said, I should say he had recovered his reason.

THE MOUNTAIN OF SPIRITS

ON the night of the Dead I listened, till I know not what hour, to the tolling of the bells. Their sound, monotonous and everlasting, brought to my mind that legend which I had heard at Soria.

I wished to go to sleep, but it was impossible. Once aroused, one's imagination is a steed which takes the bit between its teeth, and it is of no avail to try to restrain it. In order to pass the time I decided to set to work and write, and what I wrote is here.

I heard the story told at the place where the events are said to have taken place, and I have written it down, turning my head many times with fear when I heard the window creak as the cold night wind dashed against it.

I

'CALL back the dogs, blow the horns, so that the hunters may gather again, and let us go back to the town. The night comes on. To-day is All Saints' Day, and we stand on the Mountain of Spirits!'

'Well! What then!'

'Upon any other day I would not leave without making an end of that band of wolves driven from their dens by the snow of Montcayo, but to-day it is impossible. In a moment the bell will sound from the chapel of the Templars calling to evening prayer, and the spirits of the dead will commence to toll the bell of the mountain chapel.'

'Of that ruinous chapel? Bah! You want to frighten me!'

'No, my beautiful cousin. You are ignorant of what has taken place on this spot, to which you have come from so far only a year past. Rein in your palfrey, I will make my horse walk at a like pace, and I will tell you this history while we are on the road.'

The pages formed themselves into joyous noisy groups, the counts of Borges and Alcudiel mounted their superb horses, and followed together their children, Beatrice and Alonso, who headed the procession.

As they went on Alonso narrated the promised story in these words—

'This mountain, which is now called the Mountain of Spirits, belonged once upon a time to the Templars, whose convent you can see from here on the bank of that river. The Templars were at that time warriors and monks. Soria had been conquered by the Arabs, and the king gathered troops together from far-off parts in order to defend the town upon the side of the bridge, giving by this great offence to the nobles of Castile, who would themselves have been able to defend it, as afterwards they themselves were able to reconquer the land.

'Between the troops who came from afar belonging to the powerful order and the nobles of the town a great hatred existed, which was hidden for some

years, but which afterwards plainly showed itself. The former reserved to themselves this mountain, desiring to possess for their own wants and pleasures the abundance of game there was to be found there. The latter determined to organise a great hunt within the reserved ground in defiance of the severe prohibitions that the "spurred priests," as they called the strangers, had issued. Nothing was heard but the language of defiance. On the one side the love of the chase was irrestrainable, on the other was an equally uncontrollable desire for combat. The projected expedition took place. It would not be remembered by the beasts of the forest, but its memory is ever present in the minds of the mothers who weep the fate of their sons. It was not a hunt, it was a terrible battle. The mountain was heaped with bodies, and the wolves that should have been exterminated held a sanguinary feast. At length the king interposed his authority. He declared the mountain, which had been the cause of so much bloodshed, interdicted, and the chapel of the monks, situated in the same mountain in which were buried together friends and enemies, began to fall into ruin.

'Since that time it is said that upon All Saints' night the bell of the chapel sounds of itself, and the spirits of the dead, clad in their grave clothes, sweep in weird hunt over the craggy ground and thickets. The deer cry sadly, the wolves howl, snakes utter horrible hissings, and when the day breaks one may see imprinted on the snow the tracks of skeleton feet. That is why in Soria this mountain is called the Mountain of Spirits, and why I wish to leave it before night has fallen.'

Alonso finished his tale just as he and his cousin arrived at the bridge by which access is obtained

from that side of the mountain to the town. There they awaited the arrival of the others, and having been joined by them, the whole company disappeared in the narrow winding streets of Soria.

II

THE servants had cleared away the banquet; the high Gothic fire-place of the palace of the counts of Alcudiel was filled with a good fire lighting up the groups of dames and lords who were chatting together around the fire, and the wind beat against the panes of the windows of the hall.

Two persons alone had retired from this general conversation. Beatrice followed with her eyes the leaping of the flames, absorbed in deep thought; Alonso looked upon the reflection of the fire in the blue eyes of Beatrice.

The two remained for some time without speaking a word.

The old women told, as befitted the night of the dead, terrible stories in which spectres and apparitions acted the chief part, and one could hear afar off the sound of the bells of the churches of Soria tolling monotonously and sadly.

'Beautiful cousin,' said Alonso, at last breaking the long silence, 'soon we shall be separated, perhaps for ever. The sandy plains of our Castile, the rude and warlike customs, the manners, simple and patriarchal, will not please you, I am sure. I have several times heard you sigh; was it for some far-off gallant of your neighbourhood?'

Beatrice made a gesture of cold indifference. All the woman's character showed itself in the disdainful contraction of her little lips.

'It was perhaps for the pomp of the French court where you have lived till now,' went on the young man. 'In one manner or another, I presage it will not be long before I lose you. Before, however, we separate I would like to give you something in memory of me. Do you remember when we went to the church to return thanks to God for giving you your health again—which you came to seek in this country—the brilliant which fastened the plume of my cap then attracted your attention? How fine it looked when it served as a fastening for the veil which was thrown over your dark hair! A bride has already worn it. My father made a present of it to her who gave me life, and she wore it as she went to the altar. Would you like it?'

'I do not know the custom of your country,' said the girl, 'but in mine to receive a present entails an obligation. One can only accept on a ceremonial day a present from one's father.'

The cold tone in which Beatrice pronounced these words for a moment troubled the young man, but recovering himself, he said sadly—

'I know that, cousin, but to-day they celebrate the fête of all the saints, and yours is one of the chief amongst them. We are then arrived to-day at a time of ceremony and of presents. Will you accept mine?'

Beatrice bit her lip lightly as she held out her hand to receive the jewel, but said not a word.

The two were again silent. One could once more hear the voices of the old folk talking of wizards and hobgoblins, the sighing of the wind as it beat against

the windows, and the lugubrious, monotonous tolling of the bells.

After some moments the interrupted conversation was renewed in this fashion—

‘Before the end of the fête of all the saints, which comprehends both yours and mine, since you may without compromising your wishes, give me some memorial of you; will you refuse it me?’

As he spoke he looked at his cousin, whose face, illuminated as a terrible idea occurred to her, shone as if lighted by a lightning flash.

‘Why should I not,’ said she, taking the young man’s right hand, and pretending to search amongst the folds of her large velvet mantle embroidered with gold. Then she said, with the air of a disappointed child—

‘You remember the azure blue ribbon which I wore to-day during the hunt? You remarked that its colour was emblematic, the colour you most loved.’

‘Yes.’

‘Well, then! It is lost; it is lost, and I was thinking of giving it to you as a present!’

‘It is lost! Where?’ cried the young man, rising from his seat with an expression of fear and of despair.

‘I do not know—perhaps upon the mountain.’

‘Upon the Mountain of Spirits?’ murmured he, growing pale and sitting down again, ‘upon the Mountain of Spirits!’

After a pause, he said in a husky low voice—

‘You know, for you have heard it a thousand times, in the city, in all Castile, that I am called the king of the hunters. Not having the opportunity to show my skill, like my ancestors, in actual combat, I have found a vent in this pastime, which is the

imitation of war, for all my manly strength, all the hereditary ardour of my race. The carpet pressed by your feet is made of the skins of fierce beasts slain by my hand. I know their lurking-places and their habits. I have fought them by day and by night, on foot and on horseback, alone and with others, and no one can say that he has ever seen me shun danger on any occasion. On any other night I would go in search of that ribbon, I would go as if to a feast—but this night, this night why should I seek it? I fear. Listen! The bells are tolling. One can hear the bell of San Juan del Duero sound. The spirits of the mountain commence now to lift their yellow skulls above the weeds which grow upon their graves—spirits, of whom the very sight is able to make the blood of the bravest run cold, to turn his hair white; spirits who are able to drag him helplessly on in the wild sweep of their fantastic hunt, like a leaf which the wind carries one knows not whither.'

While the young man spoke, an almost imperceptible smile played on the lips of Beatrice, who, when he had finished, said in a tone of indifference, looking at the fireplace where the flames gleamed and leaped, sending up sparks of a thousand colours—

'Oh no! certainly! What nonsense! To go to the mountain at such a time for such a trifle! Such a dark night, the night of the dead, and with the roads, too, full of wolves!'

She spoke these last words with so strange an accent that Alonso could not but feel their bitter irony. Moved as by some invisible power, he sprang upon his feet. He passed his hand over his brow as if to wipe away whatever fear still dwelt within his brain, for none was in his heart. Then, in a firm voice, addressing the beautiful girl, bent towards

the fire, and still occupied in watching the smoke eddying up, he said—

‘Good-bye, Beatrice. Good-bye!’

‘Alonso! Alonso!’ said she, turning quickly.

But when she wished, or appeared to wish, to detain him, the young man had disappeared.

At the end of a few minutes the noise of a horse’s hoofs was heard going at a gallop. The beautiful girl listened to the sound, a radiant expression of satisfied pride colouring her cheeks, till the noise became faint and at length died away.

The old folk, meanwhile, continued their tales of terrible apparitions, the wind sighed around the building, and the bells of the town could be heard afar off.

III

AN hour passed — two, three. Midnight was about to sound, and Beatrice retired to her chamber. Alonso had not returned. He had not returned, although he should have come back in less than an hour.

‘He has been afraid to go,’ said the young girl, closing her book of prayers and going towards the bed, after having endeavoured in vain to offer up some of those prayers set apart by the Church for the day of the dead, for those who are no more.

She put out the light, drew the double curtains of silk, and went to sleep. She slept, but restlessly, lightly, troubled.

Midnight sounded from the clock of the postern, Beatrice heard in her dreams the vibrations of the

bell—slow, solemn, sad, and she opened her eyes. She thought she heard some one at that moment speak her name, but it seemed far off, very far off, and in a voice hoarse and plaintive. The wind sighed around the window.

'It was the wind!' she said, and placing her hand over her heart, she sought to repress its throbbing. Every moment, however, it beat the more and more. The larch-tree doors to the chambers began to grate on their hinges with a sharp grinding—prolonged, harsh!

At first one, and that the nearest of the doors, and then all the doors which led to the place, shook in their turn, these with a low grave noise, those with something like a groan—prolonged, piercing. Then all was quiet—a quiet filled with strange sounds. The silence of midnight, with the monotonous murmur of distant water, the baying of far-off hounds, confused voices, unintelligible words, echoes of steps coming and going, the rustling of robes brushing the floor, weary sighings, incomprehensible tremblings such as announce the presence of some one whom one cannot see, but of whom one divines the approach in spite of the dark around.

Beatrice, frozen, trembling, put her head from between the curtains to listen for a moment. She heard a thousand different sounds. She passed her hand over her forehead and listened again. There was nothing! All was quiet!

If, with that phosphorescence which attaches to the pupil in moments of extreme nervousness, she saw what looked like a body moving in all directions, when she fixed her dilated eyes on any one point there was nothing—all was darkness, impenetrable shadow.

'Bah!' she cried, turning away and laying her beautiful head upon the blue satin pillow, 'shall I be as big a coward as the poor folk, whose hearts beat with terror, even under armour, while they listen to the story of an apparition?'

She closed her eyes, determined to go to sleep; but the effort was a vain one. She became more pale, more restless, more terrified. It was surely no more a delusion. The hangings, worked with gold and with silk before the door, were parted, and slow steps resounded upon the carpet. The noise of those steps was low, almost imperceptible, but continual, and accompanying them was a sound like the crackling of wood or bone. They came on, they came on, and the *prie-Dieu* at the head of the bed was shaken. Beatrice uttered a sharp cry, and plunging down under the clothes of her bed, hid her head and held her breath.

The wind howled around the windows. The water of the fountain fell, fell with an eternal monotonous sound, the baying of the dogs swelled out upon the gusts, and the bells of the town of Soria, one near at hand, others afar off, tolled dolefully for the souls of the dead.

So passed an hour, two—the night, an age; for that night seemed eternal to Beatrice. At last the morning appeared, and recovering from her fear she opened her eyes to the first rays of the light. After a night sleepless and full of terror how beautiful, was the clear white light of day! She parted the curtains around her bed, and she felt disposed to laugh at her past fearfulness, when all of a sudden a cold perspiration bathed her limbs, her eyes dilated beyond themselves, and the pallor of the dead stole over her cheeks. Upon the *prie-Dieu* she saw, bloody

and torn, the piece of blue ribbon which she had lost upon the mountain, the blue ribbon that Alonso had gone to seek!

When the affrighted servants came to announce to her the death of the first-born of Alcudiel, who it seemed had been devoured by wolves in the wild parts of the Mountain of Spirits, they found her motionless, clinging with her two hands to one of the ebony columns of her bed, her eyes fixed, her mouth open, her lips white, her limbs rigid—dead, dead of horror!

THE END

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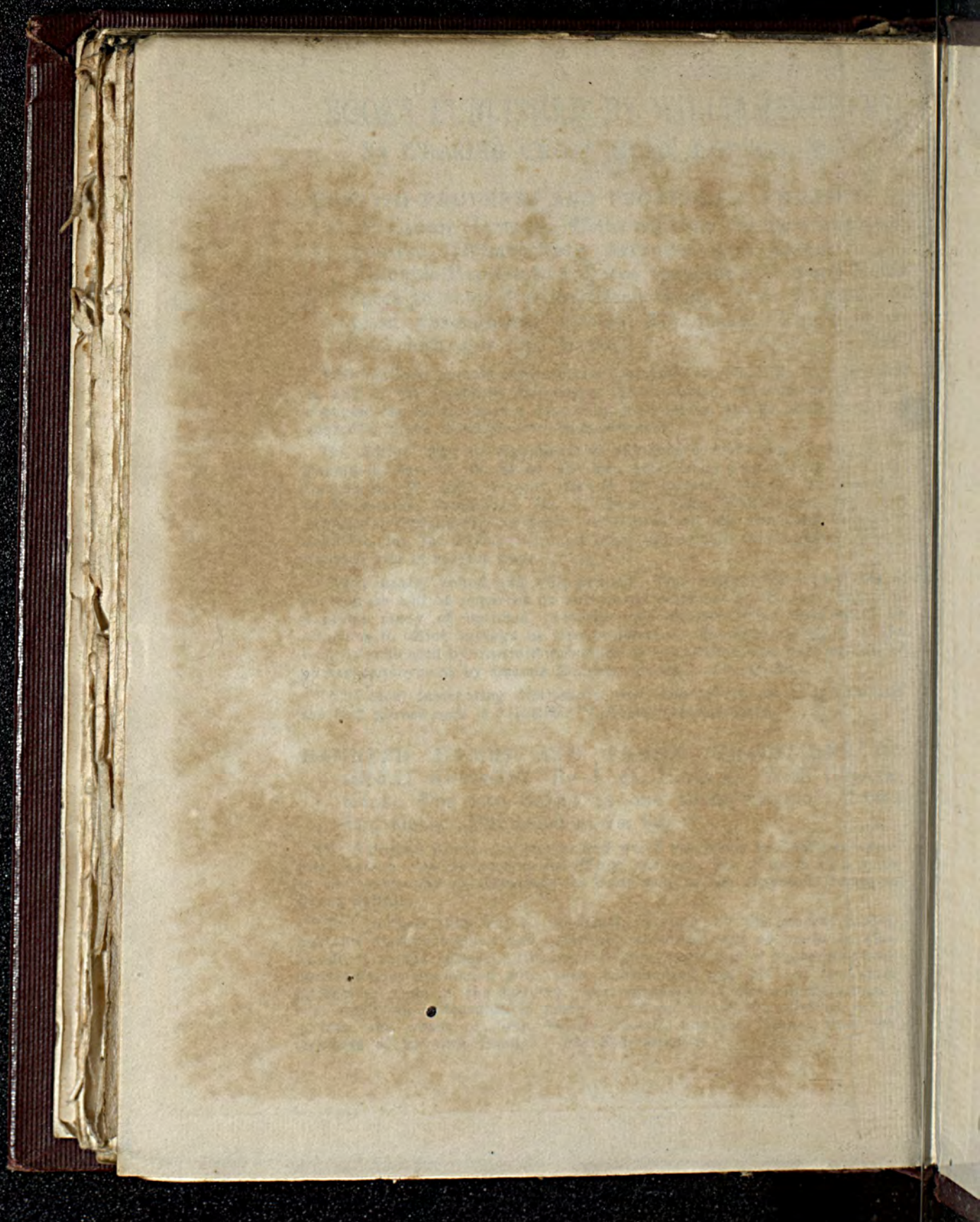
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