

A. L. O. E.

THE SPANISH CAVALIER:
A STORY OF SEVILLE

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CHAPTER I. THE COUNTING-HOUSE

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

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

when translating the letters from Madrid."

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

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

"Ill! yes, he always looks ill – as if he fed, or rather starved, on chestnuts and raisins," interrupted Mr. Passmore, "and had never tasted a slice of good roast beef in the course of his life! I guess there's many a one of the whining beggars that beset one in the Calle de los Sierpes, that fares better than the caballero Don Aguilera. And yet, forsooth, the señor must keep his horse (a lean one, to be sure), and carry himself with a lofty air, as if he were, at the least, Secretary of State to Queen Isabella! I do believe that his worthiness never made his appearance to-day, because I offended his dignity yesterday by calling him simply 'Aguilera,' without all the fine additions to a name already too long, which

¹ Circus for bull fights.

Spaniards wear as their mules do tassels and fringes, I suppose, to make one forget the length of their ears!" Mr. Passmore rubbed his hands in evident enjoyment of his own joke, and laughed his peculiar, explosive laugh, which reminded his hearers of the snort of a hippopotamus rapidly repeated. Lucius was not inclined to appreciate or join in his mirth.

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

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

"Nor I, nor I; but just for once in a way, one must do at Rome as the Romans do," observed Mr. Passmore, as he fastened the clasp of the large ledger-book in which he had been making some entries at the end of the week. "Barbarous spectacle it is, disgraceful to any civilized people, but quite in harmony with Spanish character. A century or two ago," (Mr. Passmore was less accurate in his chronology than in his accounts,) "these people had their autos-da-fé,² in 1868 they must have their bull-

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

fight; fire or blood, fire or blood, the only means of rousing them up from their lazy lethargy, and keeping them wide awake for a couple of hours!" Peter Passmore, himself a sharp trader and active man of business, regarded idleness as one of the greatest of sins.

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

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

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

"Spain will never be much of a country," said Passmore, "until her people learn to do their own business, manufacture their

own wares, lay down their own lines, instead of making over everything that is useful to strangers. The dons leave others to cut up their meat for them, and think it condescension enough if they open their mouths to eat it! Ho, ho, ho! Idleness is the bane of this land."

"And superstition," added Lucius Lepine.

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

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

"Ah, there's one of your Exeter Hall notions," cried Peter Passmore, tossing down on the table the packet which he had just fastened up with a bit of red tape; "you young hot-brains are always ready to air your romantic ideas on subjects which you don't understand." Let it be observed, in passing, that young Lepine seldom uttered a dozen consecutive words on any subject whatever in the presence of his employer; but the manufacturer, probably from liking to monopolize the talking, was wont to

accuse of loquacity every one with whom he conversed. "But hark'ee, young man," continued the principal of the firm, in a tone rather more dictatorial than usual, "I'd advise you, whilst you remain in Seville, to lock up your fanatical notions as tight as you would your cash-box. The Plaza is not Piccadilly, nor Isabella our good Queen Victoria. The Inquisition may not be actually catching and squeezing victims to death, as in the old times; but, as Joe Millar would say, 'The snake is scotched, not killed.' The priests, lazy as they are, will be sharp enough, in both senses of the word, if any one meddle with their profits. Don't you be playing the Don Quixote against what you are pleased to call superstition. It is not only in the Plaza de Toros that a fool may wave a red rag, go full tilt against an enemy too hard for him, and find himself caught on the horns of a dilemma. You may get yourself into grief," continued the oracular Passmore; "and I've no mind to spend time or money in fishing my clerk out of prison, if he manage to stumble into one unawares. That's no part of the bargain between us; so I give you fair warning, my lad." Taking up his hat as he ended his oration, Peter Passmore quitted the place.

Lepine saw the stout figure of his employer disappear through the doorway, and gave a sigh of relief. It was during conversations like the preceding that the young English gentleman most keenly realized the trials of his position. He was isolated from his family and friends in a foreign land, and forced to endure the companionship of a low-minded man, who regarded money-

making as the great aim and end of existence. Lucius was obliged to listen with a decent appearance of respect to the advice which Passmore proffered with an assumption of superior wisdom, which was in itself offensive. It was somewhat hard for a youth, who had been one of the cleverest scholars at Rugby, to receive instruction on all kinds of subjects from a man who had never construed a line in Horace or opened a page of Cæsar.

"But what could the eldest of a family of nine do, without money, without interest, but take advantage of the first opening that presented itself to him?" mused Lepine, as, able to leave the office-room at last, he locked the heavy door behind him, and went forth into the street. "I knew that to accept the clerkship was like plunging into a river in December, and that he who would make his way thus must throw off, as a swimmer does his clothes, all consideration of personal inclination and family pride before making the plunge. But what matters it!" – thus flowed on the current of thought – "I am thankful to have the means of swimming, thankful to be no drag on a widowed mother – nay, to be able already to hold out a helping hand to the young ones. Anything is better than standing idly on the brink of the icy stream, waiting till some boat should chance to appear and ferry me across. The struggle is strengthening, the cold is bracing, and the feeling of independence is worth all that I have given up for awhile. Yes, my northern constitution may bear it; but the strain comes much harder, I fear, on poor Alcala de Aguilera. He has doubtless been brought up from childhood to regard labour as

degradation, and clerk-work under a despised foreigner as but a degree better than the galleys. He has not the buoyancy of spirit with which I am blessed, and the cold which is bracing to an Englishman may bring deadly chill to a Spaniard. I must find out De Aguilera's house, and ascertain the cause of his absence to-day. Though there may be no foundation for that extraordinary report which I heard this morning, and which I cannot believe to be true, I shall not rest easy until I learn its falsehood from himself. I trust that the cavalier's Spanish courtesy will forgive my intrusion, if intrusion it be. I long to penetrate through the reserve which De Aguilera wraps around him like his *mantero*, and speak to him freely as man to man, in a place where we can be secure from perpetual interruptions, and unfettered by the trammels of business. The address given me was the Calle de San José, in the suburb of Triana, somewhere at the other side of the river. As I am now pretty well up in my Spanish, I think that I shall have no great difficulty in finding my way."

CHAPTER II.

A SAUNTER THROUGH SEVILLE

Lucius Lepine was the son of an officer of the royal navy. The youth had been eagerly and successfully pursuing a course of education in one of the public schools of England, when the sudden death of his father had deprived him of the means of completing it, and of leaving Rugby, as he had hoped to do, at the head of the school. The widowed mother of Lucius was left to support, on very slender means, a numerous family, of which he was the first-born. The youth's ambition had been to enter one of the universities, with a desire – as yet mentioned to no one – of preparing himself for the ministry of the Church. He now saw that the desire must be suppressed, the ambition relinquished. Lepine's first earthly object must be to become, not a burden, but a stay to his mother. Lucius had for some time exerted himself unsuccessfully to discover some means of earning independence, when a situation was offered to him in the firm of Messrs. Passmore and Perkins, which conducted an ironware factory in Seville. A boyish fancy, which had induced Lucius to acquire the Spanish language that he might read Don Quixote in the original, great intelligence, and a talent for keeping accounts, made the admiral's son peculiarly qualified to fill such a situation with credit to himself and advantage to his employers.

Mr. Passmore's terms were liberal: he was at least good as a paymaster, whatever he might be as a man. Lucius did not hesitate long ere accepting the offer made to him. He took the "plunge" so bravely, and apparently cheerfully, that none, save perhaps his mother, guessed with what an inward shudder of repugnance it was made.

When thus separated from his family and all the companions of his youth, Lucius, who was of a genial temperament, looked around him for friends in what was to him a land of exile. He had had no letters of introduction, and the society of Mr. Passmore, the working head of the firm, and of a few merchants and manufacturers occasionally met with at his table, by no means satisfied the yearning of the young man's heart for intercourse with congenial spirits. The only person in Seville towards whom Lucius felt drawn by a feeling of sympathy was the stately young Spaniard, De Aguilera, – who had, like himself, been induced by liberal offers to accept a situation in the firm of Messrs. Passmore and Perkins. The aristocratic bearing of Don Alcala de Aguilera, his refined manners, his lofty courtesy, gave to him an interest in the mind of Lucius – an interest made up of mingled admiration, curiosity, and pity. The Spanish clerk, compared to his English employer, appeared to Lucius like a polished Toledo blade compared to a kitchen utensil. Lucius was occasionally reminded by the mien of his companion of other qualities of the rapier besides its exquisite polish. Insult, or what he deemed such, would make the Spaniard's dark eyes flash with

an expression which told that his pride was not subdued, and that his anger might be dangerous. It was perhaps well that Mr. Passmore's inability to speak Spanish with anything approaching to fluency made him generally employ Lepine as the channel of communication between himself and De Aguilera. Many a dictatorial command or coarse reproof, uttered by Passmore, came softened from the lips of the English gentleman, – words which, if repeated in the tone in which they had first been spoken, would have made the haughty Spaniard lay his hand on his stiletto.

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

As Lucius emerged from a lane into one of the open plazas, he was strongly sensible of the charm which enwraps the queen-city of Andalusia.

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

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

"What a glorious city is this Seville!" said Lucius to himself as he went on his way. "There is not an object on which the eye rests

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

"Do I indeed stand on the very spot where, a few centuries ago, thousands of martyrs yielded their bodies to the flames, their souls to their God?"³ mused Lepine. "Was it here that – clad in their yellow san-benitos,⁴ and surrounded by curious crowds to whom their pangs were a pastime, and fanatical priests to whom

³ It is said that in the year 1461, when the Inquisition was established in Seville, it sacrificed *two thousand* victims; and that from the same date to 1517, *twelve thousand* were burned alive.

⁴ A garment, covered with representations of demons, worn by the condemned.

their torments were a triumph – men and tender women endured the most painful of deaths! Yes; this pure balmy air was once polluted with the smoke from human sacrifices – this sunshine darkened with the clouds rising from stakes to which living victims were bound! What deeds of heroism – what unblenching courage – what unshaken faith displayed in the hour of nature's agony, have made this spot holy ground! Here – a spectacle to angels and to men – martyrs showed what the sons of Spain could dare and her daughters endure! Are the idle, self-indulgent inhabitants of Seville in the nineteenth century descendants or representatives of heroes who counted not their lives dear to them, but who, having embraced evangelical truth, grasped it firmly even unto death? Or can it be that martyrs have suffered in vain – that the light which they kindled is quenched for ever in Spain? Is the cry, 'How long, Lord, how long?' never to meet an answer as regards this benighted though beautiful land? I cannot believe it;" and Lucius resumed his rapid walk. "The seed sown amidst tears and blood must spring up one day, and ripen to a harvest of light! Happy – thrice happy – the reapers! Spaniards will show themselves worthy of their martyrs, and no longer appear to the world as a degenerate race, indifferent to their highest interests, or cold in the holiest cause. But what right have I to upbraid them either with indifference or coldness? Here am I, proud of the name of Englishman, thankful for having been brought up in the clearness of gospel light. I have been for a year in Seville, and I have never so much as shown to a Spaniard the

New Testament in his own language, which I carry now on my person. Nay, the only man in this country for whom I have a feeling of friendship – the man whom I meet almost every day of my life – he knows nothing of the faith which I hold, save that he probably deems me a heretic, simply because I was reared in England. Of Alcala's inner life, his views, his hopes, I, his friend, am as ignorant as if we had never met till to-day! I cannot tell – I have never inquired – whether De Aguilera be a bigoted son of that Church which is drunken with the blood of the saints, or whether, like many of his countrymen, he has adopted sceptical views, the pendulum swinging from superstition into infidelity – from believing that which is false, into denying that which is true.

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

CHAPTER III.

FADED SPLENDOUR

Is this a prison or a palace?" was the mental inquiry of Lucius, as, after again asking his way to the house of Don Alcala de Aguilera, he reached the stately building, which was one of the numerous relics which the Moors have left behind them in Seville. The high, dead, fortress-like wall, suggested the former term; a glimpse through the open archway of the dwelling, the latter. From this archway a vestibule led into an inner court, from which it was divided by an ornamental grating; this grating also being open at the time, nothing impeded the view into the marble-paved patio beyond. This patio, or court, was surrounded by clustering columns of the most graceful proportions; while in the centre of it orange-trees and broad-leaved bananas, the oleander and the myrtle, bordered a fountain of exquisite design. The vestibule itself was paved with Moorish tiles, of hue the most brilliant; and the exterior of the archway was gracefully sculptured. The first impression made by a glance through the opening was, that a scene of Oriental beauty and splendour lay beyond it. Had Lucius had time for closer observation, he must have noticed also marks of poverty and decay. Every here and there a bright tile in the passage, and marble square in the patio, had been broken or displaced – the carving on the fountain had

in many places been injured, and no water fell into its basin; but the plants in the little central garden looked fresh and green in the softened light, as if tended by a woman's hand. The aspect of the place, so unlike that of any mansion in a northern clime, was calculated to raise admiration and excite curiosity in the mind of a stranger, and waken a desire to explore the interior, and make acquaintance with the dwellers in so picturesque and romantic a home.

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

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

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

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

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

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

The hawker shook his head, and shouldered his basket.

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

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

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

"Is Don Alcala de Aguilera within?"

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

the house.

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

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

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

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

placed his card in the soiled, wrinkled hand of Teresa, to be given to her master on his return. With a lingering look through the vestibule into the beautiful patio beyond, the Englishman quitted the place.

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

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

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

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

"Forget!" repeated the old woman angrily; "I should remember well enough, if I knew what is, or rather what is *not*, my place in this house. Am I not doctor, sick-nurse, and attendant to the old señora, and duenna to the young one; purveyor, keeper of stores, preparer of meals, anything and everything here, — helped by no one but bandy-legged Chico, who only serves the señor because no one else thinks him worth the puchero⁵ which he eats? Ah! it was very different, child, in your grandfather's days, before the hated French soldiers swarmed like wasps into Seville!"

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

⁵ A kind of soup, common in Spain

extreme old age, her subsequent life had been but as a lengthened childhood.

The family fortune had also at that time received a blow from which it had never recovered. Teresa was never weary of telling of the treasures which Don Pedro once had possessed, services of silver plate, and a splendid goblet of gold, and of the jewels of his bride, – which, by her account, might have purchased half Andalusia. Bitter were Teresa's invectives against the foreign robbers, who had not only killed her master, but plundered his helpless widow and orphan. Teresa had clung to the De Aguilera family in weal and in woe; but age and adversity had rendered more irritable a temper not naturally sweet; and having once dandled in her arms the father of Inez, the old duenna always looked on his daughter as a mere child. Teresa was as ready to chide as to serve the señorita; but the retainer's long-tried fidelity made Inez tolerate from her what from another she could not have borne.

Teresa now went rambling on with her reminiscences; but the mind of Inez was so painfully preoccupied, that she took in the meaning of nothing, and was only aware of the fact that the old woman was speaking, by the babble of her voice distressing an ear intently listening for the step of Alcala. The sun had sunk, and the first faintly visible star shone over the patio, which was unprovided with the awning commonly used in the courts of the wealthy to soften the glare of a southern sky. Inez could no longer see to work; but her labour was finished – the last silver spangle

had been fixed on the glossy green satin sleeve. The maiden sat listening, waiting, weeping, till startled again by a sound at the entrance to the house, which made her spring to her feet with the exclamation, "It is my brother at last!"

CHAPTER IV.

PRIDE AND ITS PENALTY

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

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

"It is then true!" exclaimed Donna Maria, "and Don Alcala is to appear in full fíco⁶ in the Plaza de Toros to-morrow!"

The look of anguish on the pale face of the sister might have been sufficient reply, but Donna Maria was not one whose curiosity could be so easily satisfied. She was an old friend of the family, and, as such, she deemed it her right to know all that concerned them. Perhaps to the motherless girl at her side it was some relief to pour forth the tale of her sorrows to one who professed at least to feel a strong interest in the children of her early companion. In the deepening twilight, under the clear blue

⁶ The full costume of a picador.

sky of Andalusia, while star after star twinkled forth, Inez, often interrupting herself to listen, told the cause of that distress which was blanching her cheek and well-nigh breaking her heart.

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

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

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

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

Inez went on with her story.

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

"Ah! the governor has a daughter, and Donna Antonia has beautiful eyes," observed the visitor with a meaning smile, which

it was well that Inez did not see.

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

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

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

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

"Ay," replied Inez bitterly; "though every one knows that

caballeros never now encounter the bull, that the desperate struggle is left to picador and matador⁷ trained and paid to expose their lives for the sport of the crowd."

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

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

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

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

"But your brother will not be alone in the arena," suggested

⁷ The picador is he who encounters the bull on horse-back. The matador meets him on foot, and gives the last stroke.

Donna Maria; "there will be the matadors, the picadors, the chulos,⁸ to divert the bull's attention, or to give him the *coup-de-grace*."

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

⁸ Those who irritate the bull by sticking into him small darts with flags attached, called banderillas.

misery of my waking!"

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Your brother would not ring, but enter," suggested Donna

Maria. "Poor child! how you are trembling!"

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

The brief note was as follows: —

"It is better, dearest, that we meet not again till all is over. Send Chico at dawn with Campeador and my dress to the Posada⁹ de Quesada; he knows the place well. Kiss for me the hand of our venerable parent. Farewell! a brother's blessing be with you! Inez, you have been more than a sister to Alcala."

⁹ An inn

CHAPTER V.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

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

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

"GRAND AND EXTRAORDINARY ATTRACTION

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

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

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

"The Enemy of mankind desists not from his infernal task of sowing tares in the field of the Great Husbandman, and to

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

us it belongs, as sentinels of the advanced post of the house of Israel, to sound the alarm, lest his frauds and machinations should prevail. We say this, because we have read with profound grief, in a periodical lately published, that the Protestant Bible Societies and Associations for the distribution of bad books are redoubling their efforts for inoculating our Catholic Spain with the venom of their errors and destructive doctrines, selecting, in particular, our religious Andalusia as the field of their operations," &c. &c.

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

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

Lucius, for once, arrived late for dinner, found the company already seated at table, and forgot to make an apology. Mr. Passmore, at the head of a board loaded with a repast more

profuse than elegant, was too much engaged with his double occupation of eating and talking even to notice the entrance of his clerk. The familiar sound of the snorting laugh of his employer reached Lucius before he came into the room.

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

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

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

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

"Perhaps the don thought that he'd do a sharp bit of business," resumed Mr. Passmore, as soon as his explosive mirth had

sufficiently subsided; "he'd contrive to get double pay for double work, by writing on week-days and fighting on Sundays. I wonder now what he'll receive for sticking his bull!"

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER VI.

A SISTER'S SACRIFICE

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

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

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

the eyes are heavy with weeping, and the slender hand trembles as it strokes Campeador's long flowing mane.

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

A little in the rear of the group appeared Teresa; but Lucius, had he been present, would scarcely have recognized in her the work-soiled, poorly-dressed old drudge whom he had seen bargaining with the hawker. Teresa was now attired in her best Sunday apparel; and the look of complacent pride on her wrinkled face was in strong contrast to that of despairing sorrow

on that of her youthful lady. Teresa allowed herself the one annual treat of going to a bull-fight, to her Spanish mind the greatest of pleasures. She had a cousin to whom belonged the office of cleansing the blood-stained arena, and who always contrived to smuggle Teresa into a good seat, she being content to go early and wait for hours before the entertainment began. Nothing would have bribed the ancient Andalusian to have been absent from the Plaza de Toros on the present occasion; her strong desire to go overcame her reluctance to leaving for the greater part of the day her infirm old mistress and the sorrowing Inez. To Teresa, blinded by pride even greater than that which usually characterizes the Spaniard, the coming struggle in the Plaza de Toros appeared in a very different light from that in which it was viewed by Alcala's more clear-minded and tender-hearted sister. Full of the glories of the race of heroes from whom her master was descended, Teresa felt not a doubt that she was going to be a witness to his triumph. It had been a bitter humiliation to the old domestic to know that Alcala was earning his bread by honest industry. Had he consulted Teresa, the family might have starved before the caballero had so demeaned himself as to work for the firm of Messrs. Passmore and Perkins. But it was a very different thing to behold Don Alcala de Aguilera ride in magnificent array into the Coliseo, to confront danger with all the courage of his race, and win the plaudits of assembled thousands. Teresa felt as an old retainer of some knight might have done in days of chivalry, when his master rode forth, with

gilded spurs and waving plume, to win honour in the lists at some brilliant tourney. To Teresa's partial eyes Campeador was the noblest of steeds, worthy to carry the bravest of masters. The arm of an Aguilera, once raised to strike, must hurl to the dust whatever opposed it. Teresa would not have feared the result had Alcala had, like Hercules, to slay the Nemean lion.

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

"Shame on those tears, Donna Inez!" exclaimed old Teresa. "It is well that your illustrious brother is not here to see your

weakness; it would make the caballero blush for his sister! Are you a daughter of the house of De Aguilera, and yet tremble with cowardly fear?" The spirit of Inez was too much broken for the insolent taunt to raise even a flush on her cheek.

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

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

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

Inez silently kissed the thin wasted hand extended towards her. She stood with her back to the light as she first beat up the

pillows and then proffered the cup, that the old lady might not see the traces of tears on her face. When Donna Benita, in a fretful tone, repeated her question, Inez tried to speak cheerfully, as she replied that Alcala had been specially engaged. Inez had to say the words thrice over before the aged lady could take in their meaning.

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

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

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

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

While she was gloomily gazing forth into the now silent street, a sudden thought occurred to the mind of the sister. Inez would make one effort more to move the resolution of Aguilera, or

to bribe her patron saint to protect him. The maiden hastened back into the patio without giving herself time for reflection. There, in a recess between two columns, Inez had left the writing materials which she had used when penning the note intrusted to Chico. She sank down on her knees at the place, and resting her blotting-book on the base of one of the columns, hastily, and with trembling fingers, wrote the following letter: —

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

With this missive in her hand Inez returned to the archway. If Alcala were coming at all before going to the circus, by this time he would surely have come. The poor girl glanced up and down the street; there was not a single person to be seen, save a muleteer who chanced to be passing, and who turned in some surprise to see a señora standing alone at the

entrance of a mansion. Teresa and Chico both being absent, Inez had no messenger to send with her letter, unless she employed the stranger whom chance had brought into her way. The lady beckoned to the muleteer to approach her, drew off her rosary – the only ornament which she wore – for money she had none, and gave the coral beads, with the letter, into the hand of the man.

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

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

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

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

the past had been a bright dream, which was passing from her for ever. Unless Alcala should yield to her entreaties (and then his life would be clouded over by a sense of disgrace), there seemed to Inez to be no alternative between weeping over a sepulchre or in a convent cell. In either case Alcala, the joy, the sunshine of her life, would be lost to his only sister.

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

CHAPTER VII.

DRIVEN TO THE SLAUGHTER

During the reign of Queen Isabella there was no church in Seville in which Protestants could assemble for worship.¹¹ Deprived thus of outward means of grace, Lucius had formed a habit of walking on Sundays as far as he could into the country, and there, under the shade of some cork-tree, or clump of stone-pines, reading his Spanish Testament, and, in perfect solitude, lifting up his heart in prayer and in praise. On this Sunday he started on his walk rather more early than usual, glad to leave behind him the jarring sounds of the city. Already, however, Seville was all astir. Groups of people were passing to the different churches, but these groups consisted almost entirely of priests or women; by far the larger portion of the male population of Seville were drawn towards a centre of stronger attraction, — that centre was, as Lucius well knew, the Plaza de Toros. Thither, in an hour or two, gay carriages would be bearing their smiling occupants to gaze on scenes at which the bravest Briton might shudder. Already little streams of people were flowing forth from winding street and narrow lane, clad in holiday attire, eager to secure good places. Many a ragged beggar, many a barefooted

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

urchin, who could not hope to be admitted into El Coliseo (as the Spaniards proudly name their circus), went to swell the crowd round the entrance. They would at least enjoy a sight of the gay procession of picadors, matadors, and chulos; they would be able to join in the shout when a slaughtered bull should be dragged out by a team of gaudily caparisoned mules.

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

"Had Aguilera known the Word of Truth," was the young man's reflection, "he might have learned from its pages that his life is not his own, to be hazarded like the stake of a gambler on the cast of the dice! He might have learned that a nobler object

is offered for the aspirations of the soul than the plaudits of a Seville mob, or even the favour of a woman! I have feared to offend the prejudices and lose the friendship of Aguilera, – and all opportunity of doing him good may now be passed away. Buried talent – buried talent – taken from me for ever!"

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

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

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

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

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

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

It occurred to Lucius that here might be an opportunity given

to him of introducing into an abode of suffering the comfort of God's holy Word. "Can your brother read?" he inquired.

"Read! – ay, almost as well as the priest. Carlos always took to the learning, whilst most of our folk know no more of letters than one of the beasts that they drive." The man rose from his seat as he spoke, for he had finished repairing his sandal with a morsel of string.

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

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

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

Lucius with a sigh – for failure in an attempt to do good is always painful – picked up first the Testament, and then the scattered leaves, – all save one which escaped his notice, for a

light wind had whirled it away.

CHAPTER VIII.

WITHOUT AND WITHIN

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

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

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

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

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

Thus even in success there was nothing to attract the young Spaniard. But Alcala had scarcely any hope of success; and if the

brighter side of the picture was but dull, the darker was gloomy indeed. Alcala had not frequented bull-fights; the sport was little to his taste, though he did not regard it with all the horror and disgust which he would have felt had he been brought up in England. But though the cavalier had not been frequently seen at the Plaza de Toros, he had often enough been a spectator of the scenes acted in the circus to know well what dangers attend the contest with a furious bull, and how absolutely essential to the safety of a picador is skill in the use of his weapon. Such skill could only be acquired by practice, and until this time Alcala had never handled a spear. In the grasp of the young cavalier it felt unwieldy and cumbrous. He was as little likely to use it effectually, as he would have been to climb to the mast-head of a vessel in the midst of a storm, having never had nautical training.

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

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

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

and love – that could have enabled the Spaniard to throw down and trample under foot that Moloch of pride.

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

"Before him tortures which the soul may dare,

But doubts how well the shrinking flesh may bear,
Yet deeply feels a single cry would shame
To valour's praise his last, his dearest claim.
The life he lost below – denied above.

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

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

In the anguish of his spirit the mind of Alcala reverted again and again to Lucius Lepine. The Spaniard was of course aware that his English companion held views of religion very different from those adopted by the Roman Catholic Church. Alcala had secretly wished to know more of these Protestant views, and now the wish became intense when it was too late to gratify it. Alcala thought his English friend the most upright and highminded man with whom he had ever met, and was acute enough to distinguish that highmindedness from pride. The Spaniard saw that Lepine had a loftier standard of duty than those around him, and asked himself whence had that standard been drawn. Alcala had never

indeed heard his friend converse on the topic of Divinity; but in many things, some of them trifling in themselves, the observant eye of the cavalier had seen that his companion was guided by a sense of religion. No profane word ever crossed the lips of Lepine; he was pure in his life; he revered the Sabbath in a way that appeared novel and strange to Alcala, but which the Spaniard could not but respect.

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

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

"It must have embittered your trial," Alcala had observed, "that your father had no time for preparation for death – no time to receive the last rites of his Church." Greatly had the Spaniard been struck by his companion's reply, "No; for my father had

made his peace with God long before." Not a shadow of doubt had darkened the countenance of the Protestant as he uttered these words; Lepine had looked as fully assured of the happiness of his parent as if he had himself seen him carried by angels into the skies. Alcala could not utter the question which trembled on his lips, "Have you then no fear of the purgatorial pains which, as our priests tell us, are needed to purify even the good?" That question was answered, ere it was asked, by the peace – the more than peace – which shone in the eyes of Lucius.

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