CABALLERO FERNÁN

LA GAVIOTA

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La Gaviota / A Spanish novel:

Содержание

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PREFACE, BY THE TRANSLATOR

GAVIOTA (sea-gull) is the *sobriquet* which Andalusians give to harsh-tongued, flighty women of unsympathetic mien and manners; and such was applied to the heroine of this tale by a youthful, malicious tormentor – Momo.

Fernan Caballero is, indeed, but a pseudonym: the author of this novel, passing under that name, is understood to be a lady, partly of German descent. Her father was Don Juan Nicholas Böhl de Faber, to whose erudition Spain is indebted for a collection of ancient poetry. Cecelia, the daughter of Böhl de Faber, was born at Morges, in Switzerland, in 1797, and subsequently married to a Spanish gentleman. Indeed, since the death of her first husband, she has successively contracted two other marriages, and is now a widow.

We have it on the authority of the Edinburgh Review, that the novels of this gifted authoress were "published at the expense of the Queen." The same authority remarks, "Hence it might have been foretold, that of the various kinds of novels, the romantic and descriptive was the least repugnant to the old Spanish spirit; and that in order for a writer successfully to undertake such

a novel, it would be necessary for him to have a passionate attachment to the national manners and characteristics, and a corresponding dislike to the foreign and new – such are the qualities we find united in Fernan Caballero: *La Gaviota is perhaps the finest story in the volumes*." Its advent is a real literary event: the most severe critics have dissected this new work, and have unhesitatingly proclaimed the authoress to be the Spanish *Walter Scott*. Among the painters of manners, the best, without doubt, are the Spanish writers. We are certain to find there truth, joined to a richness and piquancy of details; and, above all, a spirited tone, which singularly heightens and sets off their recitals. They have, however, what in us is a defect, but with them a natural gift —*the being a little prolix*.

In translating it is easy to avoid this prolixity. This has been attended to in the present translation. I have preserved all the character of truth and originality of this novel; curtailing only such passages as seemed, in my judgment, too long and tedious for those who are not initiated into those *agreeable familiarities* of Spanish intimate conversation, and others, which are without attraction to those who were not born under the bright sun of Iberia. In regard to the translation, I would again quote from the review of it by the "Edinburgh Review:" "One quality which distinguishes their talk it is impossible to give any notion of in translation, and that is the enormous quantity of proverbs, in rhyme or in assonance, with which they intersperse their speech; and even when they are not actually quoting a proverb, their

expressions have all the terseness of proverbial language."

In rendering into English the ballads and other poetry, so profusely interspersed throughout this novel, I had to decide between the preservation of the original thoughts and ideas, in all their quaintness and integrity, and wrest from my translation that poetic elegance which, as English poetry, I could have wished to have clothed it in; or to abandon all the original, save the mere text, and write independent stanzas in English, as though I had composed original poetry, borrowing only the *thought* from the Spanish text. My habitual desire, in *all* my translations, being to preserve the *original* sense in its *fullest force*, I adopted the former of these two views; and thus, while the reader will find no poetic beauty, he will have before him the entire original thoughts. The translation of any foreign poetry into chaste and elegant English verse is acknowledged to be a very difficult task. At the end of this volume are four specimens, to satisfy the curious, of a *strictly literal* verbal translation of short poetic sprinklings towards the conclusion of the tale.

A writer remarks, on the Andalusian character: "Seeing nothing about them but a smiling fertility, the hierarchy of the Catholic Heaven are to them beneficent beings, to be approached with trust and confidence, and the familiarity with which they speak of God, the Saviour, the Virgin, and the saints, *must not be mistaken for irreverence*; on the contrary, it springs from the belief that they are really the favored sons of the faith, and from the vividness with which they realize the existence and

beneficent watchfulness of their Divine protectors."

And again. "There is hardly a bird, or a shrub, or an odor, about which the Andalusians have not some pious and simple legend. The white poplar was the first tree the Creator made, and therefore it is hoary, as being the oldest. San Joseph told the serpent to go on its belly, because it attempted to bite the infant Saviour in their flight into Egypt. Rosemary has its sweetest perfume and its brightest blossoms on Fridays, the day of the Passion, because the Virgin hung on a rosemary-bush the clothes of the infant Christ. Everybody loves the swallows, because they plucked out the thorns of our Saviour's crown on the cross; while the owl, who dared to look impassively on the Crucifixion, has been sick and afflicted ever since, and can utter nothing but *Cruz! Cruz!* The rose of Jericho was once white, but a drop of the blood of the wounded Saviour fell on it, and it has been red ever since. Children smile in their sleep because angels visit them. When there is a buzzing noise in the ears, it is because a leaf of the tree of life has fallen."

LA GAVIOTA. [1]

[1] Gaviota is the name of a sea-gull. It applies familiarly to the female scold, imprudent, stupid, and of harsh manners, indicated by the well-known proverb: "The sea-gull – the older she is, the louder she screams."

CHAPTER I

IN November, in the year 1836, the steamer "Royal Sovereign" took her departure from the foggy coast of Falmouth, lashing the waves with her paddle-wheels, and spreading her sails, gray and wet, in the mist still grayer and more wet than they.

The interior of the hull presented the uncheerful spectacle of the commencement of a sea voyage. The passengers, crowded together, were struggling with the fatigue of sea-sickness. Women were seen in extraordinary attitudes, with hair disordered, crinolines disarranged, hats crushed; the men pale, and in bad-humor; the children neglected and crying; the servants traversing the cabin with unsteady steps, carrying to their patients tea, coffee, and other imaginary remedies; while the ship, queen and mistress of the waters, without heeding the ills she occasioned, wrestled powerfully with the waves, triumphing over resistance, and pursuing the retreating billows.

The men who had escaped the common scourge were enabled to walk the deck, either by being so constituted as to withstand the ship's motion, or by being accustomed to travel.

Among them was the governor of an English colony, a tall, fine-looking fellow, accompanied by two of his staff officers. There were several who wore their mackintoshes, thrusting their hands into their pockets; some had flushed countenances, others blue, or very pale, and, generally, all were discontented. In fine,

that beautiful vessel seemed to be converted into a palace of discontent.

Among all the passengers was distinguished a youth, who appeared to be about twenty-four years of age; gallant, noble, and of ingenuous countenance, and whose handsome and affable face gave no signs of the slightest caprice. He was tall, and of gentlemanly manners; and in his deportment there was grace, and an admirable dignity. A head of black, curly hair adorned his fair and majestic forehead; the glances of his large, black eyes were placid and penetrating by turns. His lips were shaded by a light, black mustache; his bland smile indicated talent and vivacity; and in his noble person, in his actions, and in his gestures, there were evidences of the elevated class to which he belonged, with a soul freed from the least symptom of that disdainful air which many unjustly attribute to all kinds of superiority. He travelled for pleasure, and was essentially good; nevertheless, a virtuous sentiment of anger impelled him to launch out against the vices and extravagances of society. He often affirmed that he did not feel it to be his vocation to battle with windmills, like Don Quixote. He would much more agreeably consort with those who seek the good, with the same satisfaction and purity that the artless young damsel feels in gathering violets. His physiognomy, his grace, the freedom with which he muffled himself in his Spanish cloak, his insensibility to cold and to the general disquietude around him, established decidedly that he was Spanish.

He was walking backwards and forwards, observing at a glance the assemblage which, mosaic-like, chance had thrown together on those boards which constitute a large ship, and which, in smaller dimensions, would constitute a coffin. But there is not much to be observed in men who thus presented the appearance of those who are intoxicated, or in women whose appearance resembles that of a corpse.

Notwithstanding, he was much interested in the family of an English official, whose wife had been brought on board greatly indisposed, and who was immediately carried to her berth; the same was done with the nurse, and the father followed, with the infant boy in his arms; afterwards he led in three other little creatures, of two, three, and four years of age, enjoining upon them to remain silent, and not to move from thence. The poor children, although they felt inclined to cry, remained motionless and silent, like the angels which are represented in paintings at the feet of the Virgin. Little by little the beautiful bloom of their cheeks disappeared; their large eyes opened wide, and they remained mollified and stupid; and while no movement or expression of anger announced that they suffered, such was clearly denoted by the expression of their frightened and pallid countenances. No one noticed this silent torment, this amiable and sad resignation.

The Spaniard went to summon the steward, while that official was answering a young man, who, in German, and with expressive gestures, appeared to be imploring assistance in favor

of some wretched victim of sea-sickness.

As the person of this young man did not indicate either elegance or distinction, as he spoke nothing but German, the steward turned his back, saying he did not understand him.

Then the German descended to his berth in the forecastle, and returned immediately, bringing a pillow, a quilt, and a heavy overcoat. With these auxiliaries he made up a kind of bed. He laid the children in it, and covered them with great care, and stretched himself on the deck beside them. But the sea-sick man had scarcely reclined, when a violent vomiting commenced, despite his efforts, and, in an instant, pillow, quilt, and great-coat were bespattered and ruined. The Spaniard then noticed the German, in whose physiognomy he saw a smile of benevolent satisfaction, which seemed to say, "Thank God, these little ones are cared for!"

He attempted a conversation with him in English, in French, and in Spanish, and received no other answer than a silent inclination of the head, and with but little grace, repeating this phrase: "Ich verstehe nicht" (I do not understand).

When, after dinner, the Spaniard again ascended to the deck, the cold had increased. He enfolded himself in his cloak, and commenced promenading. Then he noticed the German seated on a bench, and looking at the sea; which, as if to exhibit its sparkling, displayed on the sides of the ship its pearls of foam, and their brilliant phosphoric light. This young observer was dressed very insufficiently, because his frock-coat had become

worn and unserviceable, and the cold must have pierced him.

The Spaniard advanced several paces to approach him; but he hesitated, he knew not how to institute a conversation. Immediately he smiled, as if a happy thought had occurred to him, and that he was going the right way towards it, and said to the German, in *Latin*: "You must feel very cold."

That voice and short phrase produced on the stranger the most lively satisfaction, and harmonized, also, with his questioner, they were in accord in the same dialect; he replied:

"The night is, indeed, somewhat severe; but I was not thinking of that."

"Then what were you thinking of?" demanded the Spaniard.

"I was thinking of my father and mother, and of my brothers and sisters."

"Why do you travel, then, if you so much feel the separation?"

"Ah! señor; necessity – that implacable despot."

"Why not travel for pleasure?"

"Pleasure is for the rich, and I am poor. For my pleasure! If I avow the motive of my voyage, then truly pleasure would be very far off."

"Where then do you go?"

"To the war. To the civil war, the most terrible of all, at Navarre."

"To the war!" exclaimed the Spaniard, examining the kind and docile, almost humble, and very little belligerent, countenance of the German. "Then you would become a military man?"

"No, sir; that is not my vocation. Neither my affections nor my principles induce me to take up arms, if it were not to defend the holy cause of the independence of Germany, if the foreigner will become the invader. I go to the army of Navarre to procure employment as a surgeon."

"You do not know the language?"

"No, sir; but I can learn it."

"Nor the country?"

"Neither. I have never left my native town, except for the university."

"But you are provided with recommendations?"

"None whatever."

"Do you count upon any patron?"

"I know nobody in Spain."

"What then do you rely upon?"

"My conscience, my good-will, my youth, and my confidence in God."

This conversation rendered the Spaniard thoughtful. He gazed on that face, in which candor and docility were impressed; those blue eyes, pure as those of a girl; those smiles, sad, but at the same time confident, earnestly interested him, and moved his pity.

"Will you descend with me," he said, after a brief pause, "and accept some hot punch to keep out the cold? In the interim let us converse."

The German inclined his head in token of his gratitude, and

following the Spaniard, they descended to the dining-room.

At the head of the table were seated the governor, with his two officers; on one side were two Frenchmen. The Spaniard and the German seated themselves at the foot of the table.

"But how," exclaimed the first, "have you ever conceived the idea of going to this distracted country?"

The German hesitated, and then related to him faithfully his life: "I am the sixth son of a professor in a small city of Saxonia, and who had spent much in the education of his sons. Finding ourselves without occupation or employment, like so many young paupers you find in Germany, after having devoted their youth to excellent and profound studies, and who had studied their art under the best masters, our maintenance was a burden on our family; for which reason, without feeling discouraged, with all my German calmness, I took the resolution to depart for Spain, where the disgraceful and sanguinary wars of the North opened up hopes that my services there might be useful.

"Beneath the linden-trees which cast their shadows on the door of my homestead, I decided to carry out this resolution. I embraced for the last time my good father, my beloved mother, my sister Lotte, and my little brothers, who clamored to accompany me in my peregrinations. Profoundly moved, and bathed in tears, I entered on life's highway, which others find covered with flowers. But – courage; man is born to labor, and I felt that Heaven would crown my efforts. I like the profession which I had chosen, because it is grand and noble; its object is the

alleviation of our fellows, and the results are beautiful, although the drudgery seems painful."

"And you made progress?"

Fritz Stein replied in German, inflicting an excited blow on his seat, and making a slight reverence.

A short time afterwards, the two new friends separated. One of the Frenchmen, who was placed in front of the door, saw that he was about to ascend the staircase, and offered to place on the shoulders of the German his Spanish cloak, lined with fur, to which the other showed some resistance, and the Frenchman, with a look of scorn, replaced it in his berth.

"Have you understood what they were talking about?" demanded he of his countryman.

"Truly," rejoined the first (who was a commission merchant), "Latin is not my forte; but the red and pale youth seems to me a species of pale *Werther*, and I have heard there is in his history something of Charlotte. So is it with those little children described in a German novel. By good luck, instead of recurring to the pistol to console him, he prefers punch; it is less sentimental, but much more philosophical, and more German. As to the Spaniard, I believe he is a species of Don Quixote, protector of the destitute, who shares his cloak with the poor; that joined to these high allurements, his look, firm and ardent like a flame, his countenance, dull and wan like the light of the moon, form an altogether perfect Spaniard."

"You know," said the first, "that in my quality of painter of

history, I go to Tarifa with the object of painting the siege of that city at the moment when the son of Guzman made a sign to his father to sacrifice him before surrendering the place, and this young man will serve me for a model, and I am thus sure to succeed with my tableau. I have never in my life seen nature approach so near the ideal."

"There, then, ye gentlemen-artists! Always poets!" replied the commercial traveller. "For my part, if I am not deceived by the natural grace of this man, his lady foot well cast, the elegance of his profile, and his form, I would characterize him as a taureador (bull-fighter). Who knows? perhaps it is Montés himself, possessing the joint attractions of riches and generosity."

"A taureador!" cried the artist; "a man of the people! You jest."

"Not at all," said the other; "I am very far, indeed, from jesting. You have not lived, like me, in Spain, and you do not know the aristocratic type of the nation. You will see, you will see. This is my opinion. Thanks to the progress of equality and fraternity, the insulting manners of the aristocracy disappear daily, and in a short time hence they will be found only among the men of the people."

"Believe that this man is a taureador!" repeated the artist, with a smile so disdainful that the commercial traveller, wounded by the reply, rose and said:

"We will know very soon who he is; come with me, we will

get information of him from his servant."

The two friends mounted to the deck, where they were not long in meeting the man they searched for.

The commercial traveller, who volunteered to converse with the Spanish servant, led the conversation, and, after some trivial remarks, asked: "Your master," he said to him, "has he retired to his chamber?"

"Yes, sir," replied the servant, casting on the questioner a look full of penetration and malice.

"Is he rich?"

"I am not his intendant, I am only his valet-de-chambre."

"Is he travelling on business?"

"I do not believe he has any."

"Is he travelling for his health?"

"His health is excellent."

"Is he travelling incognito?"

"No, sir; he travels with his name and Christian names."

"And he is called – "

"Don Carlos de la Cerda."

"An illustrious name, very certainly," cried the painter.

"My name is Pedro de Guzman," added the servant, "and I am humble servant to you both." He then made a very humble reverence, and went away.

"Gil Blas is right," said the Frenchman, "in Spain nothing is more common than glorious names. It is true that in Paris my boot-maker was named Martel, my tailor called himself Roland,

and my laundress, Madame Bayard. In Scotland, there are more Stuarts than paving-stones."

"We are humbugged! That insolent servant is mocking us. But, every thing considered, I have a suspicion that he is an agent of the factions, an obscure emissary of Don Carlos."

"Certainly not," replied the artist; "it is my Alonzo Perez de Guzman the Good – the hero of my dreams." The other Frenchman shrugged his shoulders.

When the ship arrived at Cadiz, the Spaniard took leave of Stein. "I am obliged to remain some short time in Andalusia," he said to him. "Pedro, my servant, will accompany you as far as Seville, and take a place for you in the diligence for Madrid. Here are some letters of recommendation for the Minister of War and the general-in-chief of the army. If it happens that you have any friendly service to ask of me, write to me at Madrid, to this address."

Stein, stifled with emotion, could not speak. With one hand he took the letters, and with the other he pushed back the card which the Spaniard presented to him. "Your name is engraven here," he said in placing his hand on his heart. "Oh! I will not forget it while I live; it is that of a soul the most noble, the most elevated, the most generous; it is the name of the best of men."

"With this address," replied Don Carlos, smiling, "your letters would never reach me. You must have another, more clear and more brief," and he handed him his card, and departed.

Stein read: "The Duke of Almansa."

And Pedro de Guzman, who was close by, added: “Marquis de Guadalmonte, de Val-de-Flores, and de Loca-Fiel; Comte de Santa-Clara, de Encinasala, et de Laza; Chevalier of the Golden Fleece, and Grand Cross of Charles III.; Gentleman of the Chamber of his Majesty; Grandee of Spain, of First Class; &c., &c., &c.”

CHAPTER II

ONE morning in October, in the year 1838, a man on foot descended a little hill in the county of Niebla, and advanced towards the coast. His impatience to arrive at a little port which had been indicated to him was such that, thinking to shorten his route, he found himself in one of those vast solitudes so common in the south of Spain, real deserts, reserved to raise cattle, and in which the flocks never go beyond the limits. This man, although not more than twenty-six years of age, appeared already old. He wore a military tunic, buttoned up to the chin. On his head he wore a common cloth cap. He carried on his shoulder a large stick, at the end of which was suspended a little casket of mahogany, covered with green flannel, a package of books, fastened together with pack-thread, a handkerchief covering a little white linen, and a great cloak rolled up. This light baggage appeared to be beyond the strength of the traveller, who, from time to time, paused, supporting one hand on his oppressed chest, or passing it over his burning forehead. At times he fixed his looks on a poor dog which followed him, and which, whenever he halted, stretched himself at full length at his feet. “Poor Fidele!” said the master; “the only being who makes me believe there is yet in the world a little of affection and of gratitude. No! I will never forget the day when I saw you for the first time. Thou wast, with a poor herdsman, condemned to be shot, because he would

not be a traitor. He was on his knees, he awaited his death, and it was in vain he supplicated a respite. He asked that thou shouldst be spared, and no one listened to him. The shots were fired, and thou, faithful friend of the unfortunate, thou didst fall cruelly wounded beside the inanimate corpse of thy master. I rescued thee, I cured thy wounds, and since then thou hast not abandoned me. When the wits of the regiment called me a dog-curer, you came and licked the hand that had saved you, as if you would say to me, 'Dogs have gratitude.' Oh! my God, I have a loving heart! It is two years since, full of life, of hope, and good-will, I arrived in this country, and offered to my brethren my will, my care, my knowledge, and my heart. I have cured many wounds; for my recompense they have made me feel sorrow the most profound, and it is my soul they have lacerated. Great God! great God! discouragement has seized me. I see myself ingloriously driven from the army, after two years of incessant labor – labor without repose. I see myself accused and pursued, for nothing but for having given my care to a man of an opposite party; to an unhappy man, who, driven like a beast, fell dying into my arms. Is it possible that the rules of war convert into a crime what morality recognizes as a virtue, and which religion proclaims to be a duty!

"What can I do at present? Go and repose my head, prematurely bald, and cure my lacerated heart in the shade of the linden-trees which surround my father's house. There, at least, they will not charge me with crime for having showed pity for a dying man."

After the pause of a few minutes, the unhappy man made an effort. “Let us go, Fidele,” said he; “move on! move on!” and the traveller and his faithful animal pursued their painful route.

But soon the man lost the right path, which he had until now followed, and which had been beaten by the steps of the shepherds. The ground was covered more and more with briers and with high and thick bushes; it was impossible to follow a straight line; he must turn aside alternately to the right and left.

The sun had finished his course, and no part of the horizon discovered the least appearance of any human habitation. There was nothing to be seen but limitless solitude; nothing but the desert tinged with green, and uniform as the ocean.

Fritz Stein, whom our reader no doubt already recognizes, perceived too late that he had placed too much confidence in his strength. With pain and difficulty his swollen and aching feet could barely sustain him. His arteries throbbed with violence, a sharp pain racked his temples, an ardent thirst devoured him, and to heighten the horror of his situation, the deafening and prolonged bellowings announced the approach of some droves of wild bulls, so dangerous in Spain.

“God has saved me from many perils,” said the poor traveller; “he will yet protect me. If not, his will be done.”

He redoubled his speed; but what was his terror, when, after having passed a little plantation of mastic-trees, he found himself face to face with a bull!

Stein remained immovable, and, to say truly, petrified.

The animal, surprised at this encounter and at so much audacity, remained also without motion; his eyes were inflamed like two burning coals. The man immediately understood that at the least movement he was lost. The bull, who was, by instinct, conscious of his strength and his courage, waited to be provoked to fight; lowering and raising his head three or four times impatiently, he began to paw the earth and to fill the air with dust, in token of his defiance. Stein preserved his immobility. The animal then stepped one pace backward, lowered his head and prepared for the attack – when he felt himself bitten in the ham. At the same time the furious barking of his brave companion informed Stein who was his rescuer. The bull, full of rage, turned to repel this unlooked-for attack; Stein profited by this movement and took to flight. The horrible situation from which he had with so great difficulty escaped, gave him new strength to fly past the green oaks and through the briers, the thickness of which sheltered him from his formidable adversary.

He had already passed a little dale, and climbed a hillock, and then he stopped nearly out of breath. He turned round to observe the place of his perilous adventure. He saw through the clearing his poor companion, which the ferocious animal tossed in the air as if diverting himself.

Stein extended his arms towards his dog, so courageous, so devoted, and, sobbing, he exclaimed:

"Poor Fidele! poor Fidele! my only friend! you well merit your name! You pay dear for the affection you have shown for your

masters."

Then, to distract his thoughts from this frightful spectacle, Stein hurried on, shedding profuse tears. He thus arrived at the summit of another hill, where was spread open to his view a magnificent landscape. The ground sloped almost insensibly to the borders of the sea, which, calmly and tranquilly, reflected the last rays of the sun, and presented the appearance of a vast field spangled with rubies and sapphires.

The white sail of a vessel, which appeared as if held stationary by the waves, seemed detached like a pearl in the midst of these splendid riches.

The line formed by the coast was marvellously uneven; the shore seemed covered with golden sands, where the sea rolled its long silver fringes.

Bordering the coast, rose rocks whose gigantic boulders seemed to pierce the azure sky. In the distance, at the left, Stein discovered the ruins of a fort – human labor which could resist nothing; and whose base was the rock – divine work which resisted every thing: at the right he perceived a cluster of houses, without being able to perceive whether it was a village, a palace, or a convent.

Nearly exhausted by his last hurried walk, and by his saddened emotions, it was towards this point he would direct his steps. He could not reach it until night had set in. What he saw was, in fact, one of those convents constructed in the times of Christian faith and enthusiasm. The monastery had been in the olden

time brilliant, sumptuous, and hospitable; now it was abandoned, poor, empty, dismantled, offered for sale – as was indicated by some strips of paper pasted on its ruined walls. Nobody, however, desired to purchase it, however low was the price asked.

The wide folding-doors which formerly offered an easy access to all comers, were now closed as if they would never again be opened.

Stein's strength abandoned him, and he fell almost without consciousness upon a stone bench: the delirium of fever attacked his brain, and he was only aroused by the crowing of a cock.

Rising suddenly, Stein with pain walked to the door, took up a stone and knocked. A loud barking replied to his summons. He made another effort, knocked again; but his strength was exhausted – he sank on the ground.

The door was opened, and two persons appeared.

One of them was a young woman, holding a light in her hand, which she directed towards the object lying at her feet.

"Jesus!" she cried, "it is not Manuel – a stranger! God aid us!"

"Help him," replied the other, a good and simple old woman. "Brother Gabriel! brother Gabriel!" she called out in entering the court, "come quickly, there is here an unfortunate man who is dying."

Hurried steps were heard: they were those of an old man of ordinary height, with a placid and high complexioned face. His dress consisted of pantaloons and a large vest with gray sleeves, and the remnant of an old frock-coat; he had sandals on his feet;

a cap of black wool covered his shiny forehead.

"Brother Gabriel," said the elder female, "we must succor this man."

"He must be cared for," replied brother Gabriel.

"For God's sake," cried the woman who carried the light, "where can we place here a dying man?"

"We will do the best we can, my daughter, without being uneasy about the rest. Help me."

"Would to God," said Dolores, "that we may have no disagreement when Manuel returns."

"It cannot be otherwise," replied the good old woman, "than that the son will concur in what his mother has done."

The three conveyed Stein to the chamber of brother Gabriel. They made up for him a bed with fresh straw, and a good large mattress filled with wool. Grandma Maria took out of a large chest a pair of sheets, if not very fine, at least very white. She then added a warm woollen counterpane.

Brother Gabriel wished to give up his pillow; the Grandma opposed it, saying she had two, and that one would suffice for her. During these preparations some one knocked loud at the door, and continued to knock.

"Here is Manuel," said the young woman. "Come with me, mother; I do not wish to be alone with him, when he learns that we have admitted a stranger."

The mother-in-law followed the steps of her daughter.

"God be praised! Good evening, mother; good evening, wife,"

said, on entering, a strong and powerfully constructed man. He seemed to be thirty-eight to forty years old, and was followed by a child of about thirteen years.

"Come, Momo![2] unlade the ass and lead him to the stable; the poor beast is tired."

Momo carried to the kitchen, where the family was accustomed to assemble, a supply of large loaves of white bread, some very plump woodcock, and his father's cloak.

Dolores went and closed the door and then rejoined her husband and her mother in the kitchen.

"Have you brought my ham and my starch?" she asked.

"Here there are."

"And my flax?"

"I had almost a desire to forget it," answered Manuel, smiling, and handing some skeins to his mother.

"Why, my son?"

"Because I recollected that villager who went to the fair, and whom all the neighbors loaded with commissions: Bring me a hat, said one; Bring me a pair of gaiters, said another; a cousin asked for a comb; an aunt wished for some chocolate; and for all these commissions no one gave him a *cuarto*. He had already bestrode his mule, when a pretty little child came to him and said: 'Here are two cuartos for a flageolet, will you bring me one?' The child presented his money, the villager stooped, took it, and replied, 'You shall be flageoleted.' And in fact when he

[2] Brief name for Geronimo, in Andalusia.

returned from the fair, of all the commissions they had given him he brought only the flageolet."

"Be it so! it is well," said the mother: "why do I pass every day in sewing? Is it not for thee and thy children? Do you wish that I imitate the tailor who worked for nothing, and furnished the thread below the cost?"

At this moment Momo reappeared on the threshold of the kitchen; he was small and fat, high shouldered; he had, besides, the bad habit to raise them without any cause, with an air of scorn and carelessness, almost to touch his large ears which hung out like fans. His head was enormous, his hair short, lips thick. Again – he squinted horribly.

"Father," said he, with a malicious air, "there, is a man asleep in the chamber of brother Gabriel."

"A man in my house!" cried Manuel, throwing away his chair. "Dolores, what does this mean?"

"Manuel, it is a poor invalid. Your mother would that we receive him: it was not my opinion: she insisted, what could I do?"

"It is well; but however she may be my mother, ought she for that to lodge here the first man that comes along?"

"No – he should be left to die at the door like a dog, is it not so?"

"But, my mother," replied Manuel, "is my house a hospital?"

"No. It is the house of a Christian; and if you had been here you would have done as I did."

"Oh! certainly not," continued Manuel; "I would have put him

on our ass and conducted him to the village, now there are no more convents."

"We had not our ass here, and there was no one to take charge of this unfortunate man."

"And if he is a robber?"

"Dying men do not rob."

"And if his illness is long, who will take care of him?"

"They have just killed a fowl to make broth," said Momo, "I saw the feathers in the court."

"Have you lost your mind, mother!" cried Manuel furiously.

"Enough, enough," said his mother, in a severe tone. "You ought to blush for shame to dare to quarrel with me because I have obeyed the law of God. If your father were still living, he would not believe that his son could refuse to open his door to the unfortunate, ill, without succor, and dying."

Manuel bowed his head: there was a moment of silence.

"It is well, my mother," he said, at last. "Forget that I have said any thing, and act according to your own judgment. We know that women are always right."

Dolores breathed more freely.

"How good he is!" she said joyously to her mother-in-law.

"Could you doubt it?" she replied, smiling, to her daughter, whom she tenderly loved; and in rising to go and take her place at the couch of the invalid, she added:

"I have never doubted it, I who brought him into the world."

And in passing near to Momo, she said to him:

“I already knew that you had a bad heart; but you have never proved it as you have to-day. I complain of you: you are wicked, and the wicked carry their own chastisement.”

“Old people are only good for sermonizing,” growled Momo, in casting a side look at his grandmother.

But he had scarcely pronounced this last word, when his mother, who had heard him, approached and applied a smart blow.

“That will teach you,” she said, “to be insolent to the mother of your father; towards a woman who is twice your mother.”

Momo began to cry, and took refuge at the bottom of the court, and vented his anger in bastinadoing the poor dog who had not offended him.

CHAPTER III

THE grandma and the brother Gabriel took the best care of the invalid; but they could not agree upon the method which should be adopted to cure him.

Maria, without having read Brown, recommended substantial soups, comforts, and tonics, because she conceived that Stein was debilitated and worn out.

Brother Gabriel, without ever having heard the name of Broussais pronounced, pleaded for refreshments and emollients, because, in his opinion, Stein had a brain fever, the blood heated and the skin hot.

Both were right, and with this double system, which blended the soups of the grandma with the lemonade of brother Gabriel, it happened that Stein recovered his life and his health the same day that the good woman killed the last fowl, and the brother divested the lemon-trees of their last fruit.

"Brother Gabriel," said the grandma, "to which State corps do you think our invalid belongs? Is he military?"

"He must be military," replied brother Gabriel, who, except in medical or horticultural discussions, had the habit of regarding the good woman as an oracle, and to be guided wholly by her opinion.

"If he were military," continued the old woman, shaking her head, "he would be armed, and he is not armed. I found only a

flute in his pocket. Then he is not military."

"He cannot be military," replied brother Gabriel.

"If he were a contrabandist?"

"It is possible he is a contrabandist," said the good brother Gabriel.

"But no," replied the old woman, "for to be a contrabandist, he should wear stuffs or jewelry, and he has nothing of these."

"That is true, he cannot be a contrabandist," affirmed brother Gabriel.

"See what are the titles of his books. Perhaps by that means we can discover what he is."

The brother rose, took his horn spectacles, placed them on his nose, and the package of books in his hands, and approached the window which looked out on the grand court. His inspection of the books lasted a long time.

"Brother Gabriel," asked the old woman, "have you forgotten to know how to read?"

"No – but I do not know these characters; I believe it is Hebrew."

"Hebrew! Holy Virgin of Heaven, can he be a Jew?"

At that moment, Stein, awaking from a long lethargy, addressed him, and said in German:

"Mein Gott, wo bin ich? My God, where am I?"

The old woman sprang with one bound to the middle of the chamber; brother Gabriel let fall the books, and remained petrified after opening his eyes as large as his spectacles.

"In what language have you spoken?" she demanded.

"It must be Hebrew, like these books," answered brother Gabriel. "Perhaps he is a Jew, as you said, good Maria."

"God help us!" she cried. "But no, if he were a Jew, would we not have seen it on his back when we undressed him?"

"Good Maria," replied the brother, "the holy father said that this belief which attributes to a Jew a tail at his back is nonsense, a piece of bad wit, and that the Jews laugh at it."

"Brother Gabriel," replied the good Mama Maria, "since this holy constitution, all is changed, all is metamorphosed. This clique, who govern to-day in place of the king, wish that nothing should remain of what formerly existed; it is for that they no longer permit the Jews to wear tails on their backs, although they always before carried them, as does the devil. If the holy father said to the contrary it is because it is obligatory, as they are obliged to say at Mass, 'Constitutional king.' "

"That may be so," said the monk.

"He is not a Jew," pursued the old woman; "rather is he a Turk or a Moor, who has been shipwrecked on our coast."

"A pirate of Morocco," replied the good brother, "it may be."

"But then he would wear a turban and yellow slippers, like the Moor I have seen thirty years ago, when I was in Cadiz. They called him the Moor Seylan. How handsome he was! But for me his beauty was nothing: he was not a Christian. After all, be he Jew or Moor let us relieve him."

"Assist him, Jew or Christian," repeated the brother. And they

both approached the bed.

Stein had raised himself up in a sitting position, and regarded with astonishment all the objects by which he was surrounded.

"He does not understand what we say to him," said the good Maria. "Let us try, nevertheless."

"Let us try," added Gabriel.

In Spain, the common people believe that the best way to make themselves understood is to speak very loud. Maria and Gabriel, with this conviction, cried out both together: "Will you have some soup?" said Maria. "Will you have some lemonade?" said the brother.

Stein, whose ideas became clearer little by little, asked in Spanish:

"Where am I? who are you?"

"He," replied the old woman, "is brother Gabriel; I am grandma Maria, and we are both at your orders."

"Ah!" said Stein, "from whom do you take your names? The holy archangel and the holy Virgin, guardians of the sick and consolers of the afflicted, will recompense you for your good action."

"He speaks Spanish!" cried Maria with emotion; "and he is a Christian! and he knows the litanies!"

In her access of joy, she approached Stein, pressed him in her arms and bravely kissed his forehead.

"Decidedly, who are you?" she said, after having made him take a bowl of soup. "How, ill and dying, have you reached this

depopulated village?"

"I am called Stein, and I am a surgeon. I was in the war at Navarre. I came by Estremadura to seek a port whence I could embark for Cadiz, and then regain Germany, my country. I lost myself in my route: I made a thousand detours and finished by arriving here, worn out by fatigue and ready to give up the ghost."

"You see," said Maria to brother Gabriel, "that his books are not in the Hebrew language, but in the language of surgeons."

"That's true," repeated brother Gabriel.

"And which party do you belong to?" asked the old woman. "Don Carlos, or the other?"

"I serve in the troops of the Queen," replied Stein.

Maria turned towards her companion, and with an expressive gesture, said in a low voice:

"He is not with the good."

"He was not with the good," repeated brother Gabriel, in bowing his head.

"But where am I?" again demanded Stein.

"You are," replied the old woman, "in a convent which is no longer a convent. It is a body without a soul. There remain but the walls, the white cross, and brother Gabriel. The *others* have taken away all the rest. When there was nothing more to take, some *gentlemen* whom they call the public credit searched for a good man to guard the convent – that is to say, its carcass. They heard my son spoken of, and we came and established ourselves here, where I live with my son, the only one who would remain. When

we entered into the convent, the fathers went away. Some retired to America or rejoined the missions in China; some returned to their families; some demanded their subsistence or work, or had recourse to alms. We have with us a monk, borne down by age and grief, who, seated on the steps of the white cross, weeps sometimes for the absent brethren, sometimes for the convent which they have abandoned. 'Will not your Reverence come here,' a child but lately attached to the services of the chapel said to him. 'Where would you that I go?' he replied. 'I will never go away from these walls, where I was, poor and an orphan, received by the good fathers. I know nobody in the world, and know nothing but how to take care of the garden of the convent. Where shall I go? What shall I do? I can live only here.' 'Then remain with us.' 'Well said, mother,' replied my son; 'we are seven seated at the same table; we will be eight, and, as the proverb says, We will eat more, and we will eat less.' "

"Thanks to this act of charity," said Gabriel, "I remain here, I take charge of the garden; but since they have sold the large pump, I do not know how to water a foot of ground; the orange and lemon trees dry up under my feet."

"Brother Gabriel," continued the grandma, "will not quit these walls to which he is attached like the ivy; he also says, 'Very well, there remain but the walls. The barbarians! They have proved this maxim: Destroy the nest, the birds will never come back again.' "

"Notwithstanding," hazarded Stein, "I have heard said there are too many convents in Spain."

Maria fixed her black sparkling eyes on the German, and said to herself in an undertone:

“Were our first suspicions well founded?”

CHAPTER IV

THE end of October had been rainy, and November sheltered herself under her thick green mantle.

Stein took a walk one day in front of the convent. A magnificent panorama presented itself to his sight: at the right, the limitless sea; at the left, solitude without end. Between them, on the horizon, was painted the black profile of the fort San Cristobal. The sea undulated softly, in raising without effort the waves gilded by the sun's rays, like a queen who spreads out her gorgeous mantle.

Not far from thence was situated the village of Villamar, near a river as impetuous during winter, as calm and muddy during summer. The grounds around, well cultivated, presented the aspect of a chess-board, where each square revealed the thousand shades of green. Here shone the warm tints of the vine, then covered with leaves; there, the ash-colored green of the olive-tree; the emerald green of the fig-trees, which the rains of autumn had imparted growth to; further off still, the bluish-green hedges of aloes. At the mouth of the river were collected several fishermen's boats.

Near the convent, upon a light hillock, stood a chapel; in front, a cross based on a block of masonry whitened with lime; behind this cross, a retreat of verdure: it was the cemetery. Stein went there to meditate upon the powerful magic of the

works of nature, when he saw Momo leaving the farm and going towards the village. In perceiving Stein, Momo proposed to him to accompany him, and they both commenced their route. They arrived soon at the top of the hillock, near the cross and the chapel. This ascension, however short and easy, had taken away Stein's strength, who was yet scarcely convalescent. He rested an instant; then he entered the chapel, whose walls were covered with "*exvotos*." Among these *exvotos* there was one which singularly attracted by its strangeness. The front of the altar contracted itself towards the base in describing a curved line. Stein perceived there in the obscurity an object supported against the wall, and the form of which he could not distinguish. Fixing his earnest scrutiny on this object, he became assured it was a carbine. The size was such, and the weight must have been so great that it was incomprehensible how one single man could have the strength to place it in that position: it is but the reflection which is always inspired by the sight of the armor of the middle ages. The mouth of the carbine was so large that an orange could easily be introduced. The arm was broken, and the pieces were artistically put together by means of little cords.

"Momo," said Stein, "what does this signify? Is it really a carbine?"

"In looking at it," replied Momo, "it seems to me to be one."

"But why do they place a murderous weapon in this holy and peaceful place? In truth, it is not sense to arm Christ with a pair of pistols."

"But see, then," replied Momo, "the carbine is not placed in the hands of our Lord; it is at his feet, as an offering. The day on which this carbine was brought here, they called this Christ, the Christ of *Good Help*."

"And from what motive?" demanded Stein.

"For what motive!" said Momo in opening his eyes, "everybody knows that, and you know it not!"

"Have you forgotten that I am a stranger?" replied. Stein.

"That is true; I will tell you then: there was formerly in this country a highway robber who did not content himself with robbing, he murdered the people as if they were insects, whether from hatred, whether from fear of being denounced, or whether from caprice. One day two men of this village, two brothers, would undertake a journey. All their friends assembled to conduct them part of the way. There were abundance of good wishes that they might not encounter the bandit who gave quarter to no one, and who terrified everybody. But they, good children, commended themselves to Christ, and departed full of confidence in his protection. At the entrance of a wood of olives, they found themselves face to face with the robber, who came before them, with carbine in hand, rested his gun and aimed. In this extreme peril the two brothers fell on their knees, addressing themselves to Christ: 'Help us, Lord!' The bandit pulled the trigger, but whose soul was launched into another world? It was that of the robber: God caused the carbine to burst in the hands of the bandit. And you see now that, in memory of this miraculous

assistance, they repaired the carbine with cords, and deposited it here, and it is the Christ who, since then, we implore help from. You knew nothing about it, Don Frederico?"

"Nothing, Momo," he replied, in adding as if his own reflections: "If you know all that others are ignorant of, they who pretend know every thing."

"Let us go! will you come?" said Momo after a moment's silence. "You know I cannot wait."

"I am fatigued," replied Stein; "go along, I will wait for you here."

"God protect you!" and Momo resumed his route, singing:

> "God's sweet protection be your lot,
> Is the usual affiance.
> Poor be ye rich! for science,
> The rich can buy it not."

Stein contemplated this little village, so tranquil, at once fishing, commercial, and laborious.

It was not like the villages of Germany, an assemblage of houses scattered without order, with their roofs of straw, and their gardens; they resembled in no way those of England, sheltered by the shades of their large trees; nor those of Flanders, which retired to the borders of the roads. It was composed of large streets, although badly made, where the houses, without separate stories, were of various heights, and covered with old tiles; windows were rare, and still more rare, glass and every

species of ornament.

But the village contained a grand square, which, in spring, was green as a prairie; on this square was situated a beautiful church: the general aspect was one of charming neatness.

Fourteen crosses, of dimensions equal to that which was near to Stein, were placed equidistant from each other; the last, which was raised in the middle of the square, was opposite to the church: it was the *Road of the Cross*.

Momo came back, but with a companion, who was old, tall, dry, thin, and stiff as a wax taper. This man was dressed in a coat and pantaloons made of coarse gray cloth; a waistcoat enamelled in faded colors, and embellished with some repairs, real *chef-d'œuvres* of their kind; a red belt, such as is worn by the peasants; a slouched hat with large rim, ornamented with a cockade which had been red, and which time, the rain, and the sun had colored with the brilliant shades of a watermelon. On each shoulder was a narrow strip of lace, probably destined to secure two much-used epaulets; and then an old sword, suspended from a belt of the same age, completed this *ensemble*, half military and half rural. Long years had exercised great ravages upon the front part of the long and narrow skull of this being. To supply the natural ornament, he had coaxed towards the forehead the sad remnant of his head of hair, and fixing them there by means of a cord of black silk on the top of his skull, he formed a tuft as gracious as that of a Chinese coxcomb.

"Momo, who is this man?" asked Stein in a low voice.

"The commandant," the other replied, very simply.

"The commandant of what?" anew asked Stein.

"Of the Fort de San Cristobal."

"The Fort de San Cristobal!" cried Stein in ecstasy.

"Your servant," said the newly arrived, saluting him with courtesy; "my name is Modesto Guerrero, and I place at your entire command my useless services."

The compliment of usage had an application so exact to him who made it, that Stein could not resist a smile in returning his military salute.

"I know who you are," pursued Don Modesto; "I have taken a prominent part in your *contretemps* and your misfortunes; I congratulate you on your re-establishment, and on your rencounter with the Alerzas, who are, by my faith, very good kind of people. My person and my house are entirely at your orders; I reside at the *Plaza de la Iglesia*, that is to say, Place of the Constitution, for that is the name at present. If sometime you would favor it with a visit, the inscription will indicate to you the place."

"As if he possessed all the village!" said Momo with a sneer.

"Then there is an inscription?" again demanded Stein, who, in the busy life of a camp, had never had time to learn the language of studied compliments, and could not therefore reply to those of the courteous Spaniard.

"Yes, sir," replied Don Modesto, "the subordinate should obey the orders of his superiors. You should comprehend that in this

little village it is not easy to procure a slab of marble with letters of gold, like those you can purchase in Cadiz or Seville. We must have recourse to the schoolmaster, who writes a good hand, and who, to paint the inscription on the walls of common houses, is obliged to place himself at a certain height. The schoolmaster prepared a black color with soot and vinegar mixed, mounted the ladder, and commenced the work by tracing the letters about a foot long. Unfortunately, in wishing to make an elegant flourish, he gave such a violent shake to the ladder that it fell to the earth, carrying with it in its fall the schoolmaster with his pot of black, and all rolled together into the stream. Rosita, my hostess, who from the window had been a witness of this catastrophe, and having seen the unfortunate man come out black as coal, was frightened to that degree that she went into spasms, and continued thus for three days; and in truth I was myself not without some uneasiness. The Alcalde, notwithstanding, gave orders to the poor bruised schoolmaster to complete his work, and saw that the inscription gave only the letters CONSTI. The unfortunate man was ill at ease, but this time he would not use the ladder; he would bring a cart, and place a table on it, and secure it with strong cords. Hoisted upon this improvised scaffolding, the poor devil was so astounded that, reflecting on his accident, he had but one thought, which was, to complete his work as speedily as possible. This is the reason why the last letters, in lieu of being a foot long like the first, are not longer than your thumb; and that is not the worst of it – in his eagerness he forgot one letter at the

bottom of his pot of black; and the inscription thus appears:

PLAZA DE LA CONSTItucin

"The Alcalde was thrown into a pious fury; but the schoolmaster stoutly declared that neither for God nor for all the Saints would he recommence it, and that he preferred to mount a bull of eight years old rather than to work upon that mountebank plank. Thus has the inscription remained as it was: happily no one reads it. He is sorry that the schoolmaster had not completed it, for it would have been very handsome and done great honor to Villamar."

Momo, who carried on his shoulder some saddlebags, well filled, and who was in a hurry, asked the commandant if he was going to Fort San Cristobal.

"I go there, and on my way I will first go to see the daughter of Pedro Santalo; she is ill."

"Who! The Gaviota?" asked Momo; "don't believe it: I saw her yesterday on the top of a rock, screaming like the sea-gull."

"Gaviota!" said Stein, with surprise.

"It is," said the commandant, "a wicked nickname, which Momo has given this young girl."

"Because she has long legs," replied Momo, "because she lives equally on the sea and on the earth, because she sings, cries, and leaps from rock to rock like the seagulls."

"Your grandmother," replied Don Modesto, "loves her much,

and never calls her any thing but Marisalada (witty Maria), on account of her piquant frolics, the grace of her song and her dance, and her beautiful imitation of the singing of birds."

"It is not that," replied Momo. "It is because that her father is a fisherman, and brings us salt and fish."

"And does she live near the port?" asked Stein, whose curiosity was much excited by all these details.

"Very near," replied the commandant. "Pedro Santalo possessed a bark: having made sail for Cadiz he encountered a tempest, and was shipwrecked on our coast. All perished, crew and cargo, with the exception of Pedro and his daughter, whom he had with him; the desire to save her doubled his strength: he gained the shore, but his ruin was complete. His sadness and discouragement were so profound that he would not return to his country. With the debris of his bark he constructed a little skiff among the rocks, and commenced as a fisherman. It was he who furnished the convent with fish: the brothers in exchange gave him bread, oil, and vinegar. It is now twelve years that he has lived here in peace with all the world."

This recital finished when they had arrived at a point where the paths divide into two roads.

"I will return soon," said the old commandant; "in an instant I will be at your disposal, and salute your hosts."

"Say to Gaviota," cried Momo, "that her illness does not alarm me, bad weeds never die."

"Has the commandant been long at Villamar?" asked Stein of

Momo.

"Let me count – a hundred and one years before the birth of my father."

"And who is this Rosita, his hostess?'

"Who? Señorita Rosa Mistica!" replied Momo, with grotesque gesture. "It is a first love: she is uglier than hunger; she has one eye which looks to the east, and the other to the west; and her face, which the small-pox has not spared, is filled with cavities, each sufficient to hold an echo. But, Don Frederico, the heavens scorch, the clouds rush as if they would pursue us – let us hasten our steps."

CHAPTER V

BEFORE we continue our recital, it is well, we believe, to make the acquaintance of this new personage. Don Modesto Guerrero was the son of an honorable farmer, who, like many others, was possessed of excellent parchments of nobility. During the war of independence, the French burned these parchments in burning his house, under the pretext that the children of a laborer are brigands, – that is to say, that they have committed the unpardonable crime of defending their country. The brave man could reconstruct his house; but as to the parchments, they were not of the class of phœnix. Modesto was called to the military service, and, in default of a substitute, he entered a regiment of infantry as a cadet. Sufficiently good-natured, he was not long in becoming a butt, the object of coarse jokes from his companions. These, encouraged by his forbearance, pushed their mockeries so far that Don Modesto put an end to them, as we will directly see. On a grand parade day he took his station at the end of a file. Near by was a cart. His comrades, with as much address as promptitude, passed a noose round his leg, and attached it to the wheels of the cart. The colonel gave the orders to "March!" The trumpets sounded, and all the men were in motion, with the exception of Modesto, who was brought up with his feet in the air, in the position which the sculptors give to the Zephyrs ready to fly.

The review ended. Modesto returned to quarters calm and tranquil as he had set out, and, without changing his step, he demanded satisfaction of his companions. Neither of them would assume the responsibility of the trick played. He then declared he would fight with them all, one after the other. Then he who had planned and executed the trick came forward, and they went out to fight. In the combat, Modesto's adversary lost an eye. "If you desire to lose the other," the vanquisher said to him, with his habitual phlegm, "I am at your service when you please."

Without relations or patrons at court, without ambitious views, and no fondness for intrigue, Modesto continued his career at a tortoise pace, until the siege of Gaëte, in 1805, a period at which his regiment received an order to join the troops of Napoleon. Modesto distinguished himself so well by his bravery and coolness, that he merited a cross, and the praises of his chiefs. His name was blazoned at Gaëte like a meteor, to disappear immediately in eternal obscurity.

These laurels were the first and the last which he had an opportunity of gathering during his military career: severely wounded in the arm, he was obliged to quit active service, and received as compensation the post of commandant of the ruined fort of San Cristobal. It was then forty years that he had under his orders the skeleton of a fort, and a garrison of lizards of all varieties. In the commencement, our Guerrero could not content himself with this abandonment. No one year passed without his pressing a request to the government to

obtain the necessary repairs; also the guns and troops which this point of defence demanded. All these requests remained unnoticed, although, according to circumstances, he did not fail to represent the possibility of an invasion, whether by the English or the American insurgents, whether by the French, or the revolutionists, or the Carlists. A similar reception was accorded to his continual solicitations to obtain part: the government took no account whatever of these two ruins – the fort, and its commander. Don Modesto was patient; he finished by submitting to his destiny. When he arrived at Villamar, he lodged with the widow of the sacristan, who, in company with her then young daughter, lived a life of devotion. It was the abode of excellent women, a little meagre, and tainted with excessive intolerance, and scolds; but good, charitable, and of exquisite neatness.

The inhabitants of the village, who had great affection for the commandant, and who, at the same time, knew how irksome his position was, did all they possibly could to render his situation less irksome. They never killed a pig without sending him a supply of lard and pudding. At harvest-times they brought him some wheat, pease, oil, and honey. The women made him presents of the fruits of their orchards; and his happy hostess had always an abundance of provisions, thanks to the generous kindness which inspired the good Modesto, who, of a nature corresponding with his name, far from feeling pride from so many favors, was accustomed to say that Providence was everywhere, but that his headquarters were at Villamar. He

knew, in truth, how to show his gratitude for all these bounties by being serviceable to every one, and complaisant in the extreme. He arose with the sun, and his first duty was to assist the cura in the services of the mass. One villager charged him with a commission; another besought him to write to his son, who was a soldier; a mother confided to his care her little children, while she attended out doors to some little household affairs: he watched at the bedsides of the sick, and mingled his prayers with those of his hostesses; indeed, he sought to be useful to everybody in all that was in his power, consistent with decorum or honor. The widow of the sacristan died, leaving her daughter Rosa, now full forty-five years of age, and of an ugliness which you would travel far to see the like of. The mournful consequences of the varioloid did not contribute a little to augment this last misfortune. The evil was concentrated on one of her eyes, and chiefly on the pupil, which she could but half open; and it resulted that the pupil half effaced gave to all her physiognomy an aspect devoid of intelligence and mind, forming a singular contrast with the other eye, from which shot out flames like the fire of a brier-bush at the slightest cause of scandal; and certainly the occasions which presented themselves were frequent enough.

After the funeral, the nine days of mourning passed, the Señorita Rosita said one morning to Don Modesto: "I regret much, señor, the duty of announcing to you that we must separate."

"We part!" cried the brave man, opening his large eyes, and

placing his cup of chocolate on the table-cloth, instead of placing it on the tray. “And why, Rosita?”

Don Modesto was accustomed, during thirty years, to employ this pet name when he spoke to the daughter of his old hostess.

“It seems to me,” she replied, elevating her eyelids, “it seems to me you need not ask me why. You know it is not proper that two honest persons live together under the same roof. It gives rise to scandal.”

“And who could bring scandal against you?” replied Don Modesto; “you, the village model!”

“Are you sure there will not be something? What will you say when you learn that you yourself, despite your great age, your uniform, and your cross, and I, a poor girl who thinks only of serving God, that we afford amusement to these scandal-mongers?”

“What say you?” demanded Don Modesto, saddened.

“What you have just heard. And no one knows us but under nicknames which they apply to us, these cursed!”

“I am stunned, Rosita. I cannot believe – ”

“So much the better for you if you do not believe it,” said the devout girl; “but I avow to you that these impious ones, – God pardon them! – when they see us arrive together at the church, at the early morning mass, they say, one to the other: ‘Sound the mass, here come the *Mystic Rose* and the *Tower of David*, in armor and in company, as in the litanies.’ They have thus dubbed you, because your figure is so erect, so tall, and so solid.”

Don Modesto remained, his mouth open, and his eyes fixed on the ground.

"Yes, señor," continued the Mystic Rose; "the neighbor who told me this was scandalized, and advised me to go and complain to the cura. I replied to her it were better that I restrained myself, and suffered. Our Lord suffered more than I, without complaining."

"Well!" said Modesto; "I will not permit that they mock me, and still less you."

"The best will be," continued Rosa, "to prove by our patience that we are good Christians, and by our indifference that we care little for the world's opinion. Beyond this, if these wicked persons are punished, they will be worse, believe me, Don Modesto."

"You are, as always, right, Rosita. I know these babblers; if you cut out their tongue, they will speak with their nose. But if, in by-gone days, any of my comrades had dared to call me *Tower of David*, he would have had to add, 'Pray for us!' How is it that you, a saint, have any fear of these slanders?"

"You know, Don Modesto, what say the vulgar, who think evil of all the world: 'Between saint and saint there should be a strong wall.' "

"But between you and I there is no need of a wall. I am old, and never in all my life was I ever, except once, in love; and then it was with a very pretty young girl, whom I would have married, if I had not surprised her in a counter-flirtation with the drum-major, who – "

"Don Modesto!" cried Rosita, choked with this discourse. "Honor your name and your position, and abandon your souvenirs of love."

"My intention was not to offend you," replied Don Modesto, in a contrite tone. "Know that well; and I swear to you that I never had, and never will have, an evil thought."

"Don Modesto," replied Rosa, with impatience (she looked on him with her eye of fire, while the other eye made vain efforts in the hope of being inflamed in unison), "do you judge me so simple as to think that two persons, like you and I, having both the fear of God, could conduct ourselves like those hair-brained people who have neither shame nor horror of sin? But in the world it is not sufficient to do well. We must even not give cause for scandal, and guard on all sides even against appearances."

"That is another thing," replied the commandant. "What appearances can there be between us? Do you not know that they who excuse, accuse themselves?"

"I tell you," replied the devotee, "there will not be wanting persons to blame us."

"And what can I do without you?" demanded Don Modesto, afflicted. "Alone in the world, what can you do without me?"

"He who gives food to the little birds," said Rosita, in a solemn tone, "will take care of those who trust in Him."

Don Modesto, disconcerted, and knowing not what further to say, went to consult with the cura, who was at the same time his friend and Rosita's.

The cura persuaded the good girl that her scruples were exaggerated, and her fears without reason; that the projected separation would much more give rise to ridiculous comments.

They continued then to live together, as formerly, in peace, and in the fear of God; – the commandant always good and useful; Rosa always careful, attentive, and disinterested: because, on the one hand, Don Modesto was not the man to take any recompense for his services; and, on the other, if the handle of his gala-sword had not been silver, she could well have forgotten the color of that metal.

CHAPTER VI

WHEN Stein returned to the convent, all the family were assembled in the court. Momo and Manuel arrived at the same time, each from his direction. The last had been going his rounds of the farm in the exercise of his functions as gamekeeper; he held his gun in one hand, and in the other three partridges and two hares.

The children ran to Momo, who at once emptied his wallet, from which escaped, as from a horn of abundance, a multitude of winter fruits, which, according to Spanish custom, served to celebrate All Saints' Eve; viz., nuts, chestnuts, and pomegranates.

"If Marisalada brings us the fish," said the eldest of the little girls, "to-morrow we will have a famous feast."

"To-morrow," said Maria, "is All Saints; father Pedro will certainly not go out to fish."

"Then," said the little one, "it will be for the next day."

"They no longer fish on the 'Dia de los Difuntos.' "

"And why?" demanded the child.

"Because it would be to profane a day which the church consecrates to sanctified souls. The proof is, that the fishermen having once cast their lines on such a day, and delighted with the weight they were drawing in, were doomed to find only snakes instead of fish. Is it not true, brother Gabriel?"

"I did not see it, but I am sure of it," replied the brother.

"And is it for that you make us pray so much on the 'day of the dead?' " asked the little girl.

"For that same," said the grandma; "it is a holy custom, and God is not willing that we should ever neglect it."

"Certainly," added Manuel, "nothing is more just than to pray to the Lord for the dead; and I remember a fellow of the Congregation of Souls who begged for them in these terms, at the door of the chapel: 'He who places a small piece of money in this place, withdraws a soul from purgatory.' There came along a wag who, after having deposited his piece: 'Tell me, brother,' asked he, 'do you believe the soul is yet clear of purgatory?' 'Do you doubt it?' replied the brother. 'In that case,' replied the other, 'I take back my piece; I know this soul; she is not such a fool as to go back when she is once out.' "

"You may be assured, Don Frederico," said Maria, "that with every thing, good or bad, my son finds always something appropriate to a story, a witticism, or a *bon-mot*."

At this moment Don Modesto entered by the court; he was as stiff and grave as when he was presented to Stein at the end of the village. The only change was, that he carried suspended to his stick a large stock of fish covered over with cabbage leaves.

"The commandant! The commandant!" was the general cry.

"Do you come from your citadel, San Cristobal?" asked Manuel of Don Modesto, after exchanging the preliminary compliments, and an invitation to be seated on the same stone bench where Stein was seated.

"You might join my mother, who is so good a Christian, to pray to the saints to build again the walls of the fort, contrary to that which, by report, Joshua did at the walls of Jericho."

"I have to ask of the Lord things more important than that," replied the grandma.

"Certainly," said brother Gabriel, "Maria has more important things than the reconstruction of the walls of a fort to ask of the Lord. It would be better of her to implore Him to reconstruct the convent."

Don Modesto, on hearing these words, turned with a severe gesture towards the monk, who, at this moment, went and placed himself behind the old mother, and dissimulated so well, that he disappeared almost entirely to the eyes of the others present.

"After what I see," continued the old commandant, "brother Gabriel does not belong to the church militant. Do you not remember that the Jews, before building their Temple, had conquered the promised land, sword in hand? Would there have been churches and priests in the Holy Land if the crosses had not conquered it, lance in hand?"

"But," then said Stein, with the laudable intention to divert from this discussion the commandant, whose bile commenced to be stirred, "why does Maria ask for what is impossible?"

"That signifies little," replied Manuel; "all old women act the same, except she who asked God to tell her a good number in the drawing of a lottery."

"Was it sent her?" they asked.

"It had been well kept, if I had gained the prize. He who could do all things, where the miracle?"

"That which is certain," declared Don Modesto, "is, that I will be very grateful to the Lord, if he will inspire the government with the happy idea of re-establishing the fort of San Cristobal."

"To rebuild, would you say?" observed Manuel; "take care and repent at once, as it happened to a woman consecrated to the Lord, and who had a daughter so ugly, so stupid, and so awkward, that she could not find even a despairing man to espouse her. The poor woman, much embarrassed, passed all her days on her knees at prayer, asking a husband for her daughter. At last one presented himself: the joy of the mother was extreme, but of short duration. The son-in-law was so bad, he so maltreated his wife and his mother-in-law, that the latter went to the church, and there posted before the saint this inscription:

'Saint Christopher! with hands and feet,
Whose measure could a giant's meet!
(And with a head of bony horns),
Is't thou among the saints I saw?
Thou – Jewish as my son-in-law.' "

While the conversation was going on, Morrongo, the house cat, awoke from a long sleep, bent his croup like the back of a camel, uttered a sharp mew, opened out his mustaches, and approached, little by little, towards Don Modesto, just so as to place himself behind the perfumed pocket suspended to the

baton. He immediately received on his velvet paws a little stone thrown by Momo, with that singular address which children of his age so well know how to cast. The cat skipped off in a gallop, but lost no time in returning to his post of observation, and made believe to sleep. Don Modesto saw him, and lost his tranquillity of mind.

"You have not said, Señor Commandant, how Marisalada is?"

"Ill, very ill, she grows weaker every day. I am much afflicted to see her poor father, who has had so much to suffer. This morning his daughter had a high fever; her cough did not quit her for an instant."

"What do you say, Señor Commandant?" cried Maria.

"Don Frederico, you who have made such wonderful cures, you who have extracted a stone from brother Gabriel and restored the sight of Momo, can you not do something for this poor creature?"

"With great pleasure," replied Stein; "I will do all in my power to relieve her."

"And God will repay you. To-morrow morning we will go and see her. To-day you are too much fatigued from your walk."

"I am not jealous of his kind," said Momo, grumbling. "The proudest girl – "

"That is not so," exclaimed the old woman; "she is a little wild, a little ferocious; one can see she has been educated alone, and allowed to have her own way by a father more gentle than a dove, although a little rough in manner, like all good sailors. But

Momo cannot bear Marisalada, since one day when she called him Romo (flat-nosed), as indeed he is."

At this moment a noise was heard; it was the commandant pursuing at a quick pace the thief Morrongo, who had deceived the vigilance of his master and ran off with the stock fish.

"My commandant," cried out Manuel to him, laughing, "the sardine which the cat carries will not come to the dish except late or never, but I have here a partridge in exchange."

Don Modesto seized the partridge, thanked him, took leave of the company, and went away, inveighing against cats.

During all this scene, Dolores had given the breast to her nursing infant; she tried to hush him to sleep, cradling him in her arms and singing to him:

> "There high on Calvary, in their fresh retreats,
> Woods of olives, wood of perfume meets;
> A nightingale – four larks – whose breath,
> Would warble forth a Saviour's death."

For those who suppress the circulation of poetry of the people, as the child crushes with its hand the feeblest butterfly, it would be difficult to say why larks and nightingales warble the death of Christ; why the swallow plucked out the thorns of his crown; why the rosemary is an object of veneration, in the belief that the Virgin dried the swaddling-clothes of the infant Jesus on a bush of this plant? Why, or rather how do they know that the willow is a tree of bad augury, since Judas hung himself on a

branch of this tree? Why does no misfortune ever happen in a house if it has been perfumed with rosemary during Christmas eve? Why in the flower which is called the *passion-flower* are found all the instruments of the passion of Christ? In truth, there are no answers to these questions. The people do not possess them, nor demand them. These beliefs have accumulated like the vague sounds of distant music, without research into their origin, without analyzing their authenticity.

"But, Don Frederico," said Maria, while Stein was occupied with reflections on the proceedings, "you have not told us how you find our village."

"I have seen nothing," replied Stein, "save only the chapel of our Lord of Good-Help."

"Miraculous chapel, Don Frederico. Hold," pursued the old woman, after some instants of silence, "the only motive why I am not as much pleased here as in the village is, that I cannot follow out my devotions. Yes, Manuel, thy father, who had not been a soldier, thought like me. My poor husband! – he is in heaven – my poor husband was brother of Rosaire of the dawn; Rosaire who went out after midnight to pray for souls. Fatigued with a long day's work he slept profoundly; and precisely at midnight a brother rang a bell, came to the door, and chanted:

'Here is then the faithful bell!
It is not she the warnings tell;
Of thy parents 'tis the voice!
The cross's foot then make thy choice;

Raise thee, my son, so full of zeal,
And prayerful in the chapel kneel.
On thy knees in the holy place,
For parents supplicate God's grace.'

When thy father heard this chant, he felt no longer fatigue nor need of sleep. In the twinkling of an eye he got up and followed the other brother. It seems to me I yet hear him singing in the distance:

'The Virgin raised the Sovereign crown,
And meekly laid the sceptre down;
Presenting them to Christ was seen,
Exclaiming – I no more am Queen.
If not held back thy wrath from o'er the human race,
Then is thy crown divine with too just rigor placed.'

Jesus answered her:

'My mother!
Without thy grace so pure, and thy sweet hallowed prayer,
The thunderbolt had hurled the sinner to despair.' "

The children, who love so much to imitate what they see as at all great or remarkable, undertook to sing in a beautiful tone the couplets of the aurora:

"Hark! how the trumpet's shrill-blast clarion sounds!

The voice of the Angel through Heaven resounds:
Jerusalem! within thy walls,
An infant's foot triumphant falls;
What was the people's homage in that hour?
What grand equipments decked the kingly bower?
The all-powerful whom Heaven had sent,
Rode on an ass which men had lent."

"Don Frederico," said Maria, after a moment's silence, "in the world which God has made, is it true that there have been men without faith?"

Stein was mute.

"Can you not cure the blindness of their intelligence, as you have cured the eyes of Momo?" replied, with sadness, the good old woman, who remained altogether pensive.

CHAPTER VII

THE following day Maria set off for the house of the invalid, in company with Stein and Momo, foot-equerry to his grandmother, who travelled mounted on the philosophic Golondrina. The animal, always good, gentle, and docile, trotted on the road, the head lowered, ears depressed, without making a single rough movement, except when he encountered a thistle in proximity with his nostrils.

When they were arrived, Stein was astonished to find, in the middle of this arid country, of a nature so dry and so sterile, a village so leafy and so coquettish.

The sea had formed, between two great rocks, a little circular creek, and surrounded by a coast of the finest sand, which appeared like a plateau of crystal placed on a table of gold. Several rocks showed themselves timidly, as if they wished to repose themselves, and be seated on the tranquil shore. At one of them was made fast a fisherman's bark; balancing herself at the will of the waves, she seemed as impatient as a horse reined in.

On one side of the rocks was elevated the fort of San Cristobal, crowned by the peaks of wild figs, like the head of an old Druid adorned with green oak-leaves.

The fisherman had constructed his cabin with the wrecked remains of his vessel, which the sea had thrown on the coast; he had based all against the rocks, which formed, in some sort, three

stories of the habitation. The roof was horizontal, and covered with *aquatica*, the first layer of which, rotted by the rains, had given growth to a great quantity of herbs and of flowers; so that in the autumn, when the dryness disappeared with the heat of summer, the cabin appeared covered as with a delicious garden.

When the persons just arrived entered the cabin, they found the fisherman sad and cast down, seated near the fire, opposite to his daughter; who, her hair in disorder, and falling down on both sides of her pale face, bent up and shivering, her emaciated limbs enveloped in a rag of brown flannel. She seemed to be not more than thirteen years of age. The invalid turned, with an expression of but little kindliness, her large, black, and sullen eyes upon the persons who entered, and instantly sank down anew in the corner of the chimney.

"Pedro," said Maria, "you forget your friends, but they do not forget you. Will you tell me why the good God has given you a mouth? Could you not have let me known of the illness of the little girl? If you had let me known of it sooner, I had sooner come with this gentleman, who is such a doctor as is seldom seen, and who in no time will cure your daughter."

Pedro Santalo rose brusquely, and advanced to Stein; he would speak to him, but he was so overcome with emotion that he could not articulate a single word, and he covered his face with his hands. He was a man already advanced in life, his aspect sufficiently rude, and his form colossal. His countenance, bronzed by the sun, was crowned by a gray head of hair, thick

and uncombed; his breast, red as that of an Ohio Indian, was also covered with hair.

"Come, Pedro!" said Maria, from whose eyes the tears began to flow at the sight of the poor father's despair; "a man like you, big as a church, a man they believe ready to devour infants uncooked, to be discouraged thus without reason! Come! I see here nothing but what appears solid."

"Good mother Maria," replied the fisherman, in a feeble voice, "I count, with this one, five children in their tombs."

"My God! and why thus lose courage? Remember the saint whose name you bear, and who threw himself into the sea when he had lost the faith which sustained him. I tell you that, with the grace of God, Don Frederico will cure the child in as little time as you could call on Jesus."

Pedro sadly shook his head.

"How obstinate are these Catalans!" said Maria, with a little anger; and passing before the fisherman, she approached the invalid: "Come, Marisalada, come; rise up, daughter, that this gentleman may examine you."

Marisalada did not stir.

"Come, my daughter," repeated the good woman; "you will see that he will cure you as by enchantment." At these words, she took the girl by the arm, and wished to raise her up.

"I have no desire," said the invalid, rudely disengaging herself from the hand which held her.

"The daughter is as sweet as the father; 'he who inherits steals

not,' " murmured Momo, who appeared at the door.

"It is her illness that renders her impatient," added the father, to exculpate his child.

Marisalada had an access of coughing. The fisherman wrung his hands with grief.

"A fresh cold," said Maria; "come, come, it is not a very extraordinary thing. But then he will consent to what this child does; the cold she takes, running, with naked feet and legs, on the rocks and on the ice."

"She would do it," replied Pedro.

"And why not give her healthy food – good soups, milk, eggs? But no, she eats only fish."

"She does not wish them," replied the father, with dejection.

"She dies from negligence," suggested Momo, who, with arms crossed, was posted against the door-post.

"Will you put your tongue in your pocket!" said his grandma to him. She returned towards Stein:

"Don Frederico, try and examine our invalid, as she will not move, for she will let herself die rather than make a movement."

Stein commenced by asking of the father some details of the illness of his daughter. He then approached the young girl who was drowsy, he remarked that the lungs were too compressed in their right cavity, and were irritated by the oppression. The case was grave, the invalid was feeble, from want of proper food; the cough was hard and dry, the fever constant; the consumption indeed would not allow it to pause.

"Has she always had a taste for singing?" demanded the old woman during the examination.

"She would sing crucified, like the bald mice," said Momo, turning away his head, that the wind would carry his hard speech, and that his grandma could not hear him.

"The first thing to do," said Stein, "is to forbid this girl to expose herself to the rigors of the season."

"Do you hear, my child?" said the father with anxiety.

"She must," continued Stein, "wear shoes and dress warm."

"If she will not?" cried the fisherman, rising suddenly, and opening a box of cedar, from whence he took numerous objects of toilet.

"Nothing is wanting: all that I have and all that I can amass are hers. Maria! my daughter! you will put on this clothing! Do this for the love of heaven! – Mariquita, you see it is what the doctor orders."

Marisalada, who was aroused by the noise made by her father, cast an irritated look on Stein, and said to him in a sharp voice:

"Who governs me?"

"And say that they do not give this government to me, by means of a good branch of wild olive!" murmured Momo.

"She must have," continued Stein, "good nourishment, and substantial soups."

Maria made an expressive gesture of approbation at the same time.

"She should be nourished with milk diet, and chickens, and

fresh eggs."

"Did I not tell you so!" interrupted the old woman, exchanging a look with Pedro: "Don Frederico is the best doctor in the world."

"Take care that she does not sing," remarked Stein.

"Am I never to listen to her again?" cried poor Pedro with grief.

"See, then, what a misfortune!" replied Maria. "Let her be cured, and then she can sing night and day, like the ticking of a watch. But I think it will be best to have her taken to me, for there is no one to nurse her, nor any one who knows like me how to make good soup for her."

"I can prove that," said Stein, smiling, "and I assure you one might set before a king a soup prepared by my good nurse."

Maria never felt more happy.

"Thus, Pedro, it is useless talking of it; I will take her home."

"Remain without her! no, no, it is impossible."

"Pedro, Pedro, it is not thus we should love our children," replied Maria. "To love them is to do above all that which will benefit them."

"So let it be!" replied the fisherman, rising with resolution; "I place her in your hands, I confide her to this doctor's care, and commend her to the divine goodness."

With difficulty could he pronounce these last words, which flowed rapidly, as if he feared to recall his determination; and he went to harness his ass.

"Don Frederico," asked Maria, when they were alone with the invalid, who remained drowsy, "is it not true, that, with God's help, we will cure her?"

"I hope so," replied Stein; "I cannot tell you how much this poor father interests me."

Maria made a package of the linen which the fisherman had taken out of the box, and Pedro came back leading the ass by the bridle. They placed the invalid on the saddle: the young girl, enfeebled by the fever, opposed no resistance. Before Maria had mounted Golondrina, who appeared quite content to return in company with Urca (name given to a great sea-fish, and which was that of Pedro's ass), the fisherman took Maria aside, and said to her, in trying to slip some pieces of gold in her hand:

"This is all I could save from my shipwreck, take it, and give it to the doctor, for all I have is for him who can give me back my daughter."

"Keep your gold," replied Maria, "and know, in the first place, it is God who has conducted the doctor hither; in the second place – it is I."

Maria pronounced these last words with a light tinge of vanity.

They commenced their journey.

"Do not stop, grandma," said Momo, who walked behind; "however large may be the convent, it must be filled with people. Eh! what? the cabin was not good enough for the Princess Gaviota?"

"Momo," replied the grandma, "mind your own affairs."

"But what do you see in her? And what touches you in this wild Gaviota, to take her thus under your care?"

"Momo, a proverb says, 'Who is thy sister? thy nearest neighbor;' another adds, 'Wipe the nose of thy neighbor's child, and take her to thee.' And here is the moral: 'Treat thy neighbor as thyself.' "

"There is yet another proverb," added Momo, "which says, 'He is mad who occupies himself about others.' But it is of no use. You were obstinate about raising the palm to *San Juan de Dios*."

"You will not be the angel to aid me," said Maria with sadness.

Dolores received the invalid with open arms, as approving the resolution of her mother-in-law.

Pedro Santalo, who had accompanied his daughter, called the charitable nurse before he returned, and, putting the pieces of gold in her hand, said —

"This is to defray the expenses, and that she may want for nothing. As to your care, God will recompense you."

The good old woman hesitated an instant, took the gold, and said —

"It is well, she shall want for nothing. Depart without uneasiness, Pedro, your daughter is in good hands."

The poor father went away hurriedly, and did not stop till he reached the coast. Then he returned to the side of the convent, and wept with bitterness.

Maria said to Momo: "Bestir yourself. Go to the village, and bring me a ham from Serrano's, who will please send me a good

one, when he knows it is for a poor sick girl. Bring me at the same time a pound of sugar and a quart of almonds."

"Just so, always sent about! Throw away every thing you possess," cried Momo. "Think you they will give me all this on credit, and for my handsome face?"

"Here is to pay for them," replied the grandma, and she placed in his hand a piece of gold of four *duros* (about 4 dollars).

"Gold!" cried Momo, stupefied: for the first time in his life he saw this metal in the form of money. "From what demons have you snatched this?"

"What is it to you?" replied Maria; "don't worry yourself."

"It needs no more than this," replied Momo, "that I serve as domestic to this magpie, this accursed Gaviota! I will not go."

"Go, boy, at once, and nimbly too."

"Ha! Well – no, I will not go; I will not annoy myself," repeated Momo.

"José," said Maria, on seeing the shepherd go out, "do you go to the village?"

"Yes, Señora; what orders have you for me?"

The good woman gave him the commission, and added —

"This Momo has a bad heart, and will not go. And I have not the strength to complain to his father, who would make him march quickly, and caress him in a manner to break his bones."

"Yes, yes, do every thing to take care of this crow who will tear out your eyes," said Momo. "You will receive payment in the trouble she will give you; if it is not so now, it will be in time."

CHAPTER VIII

A MONTH after the scenes we have described, Marisalada was more sensible, and did not show the least desire to return to her father's. Stein was completely re-established; his good-natured character, his modest inclinations, his natural sympathies, attached him every day more to the peaceful habits of the simple and generous persons among whom he dwelt. He felt relieved from his former discouragements, and his mind was invigorated; he was cordially resigned to his present existence, and to the men with whom he associated.

One afternoon, Stein, leaning against an angle of the convent which faced the sea, admired the grand spectacle which the opening of the winter season presented to his view. Above his head floated a triple bed of sombre clouds, forced along by the impetuous wind. Those lower down, black and heavy, seemed like the cupola of an ancient cathedral in ruins, threatening at each instant to sink down. When reduced to water, they fell to the ground. There was visible the second bed, less sombre and lighter, defying the wind which chased them, and separating at intervals sought other clouds, more coquettish and more vaporous, which they hurried into space, as if they feared to soil their white robes by coming in contact with their companions.

"Are you a sponge, Don Frederico, so to like to receive all the water which falls from heaven?" demanded José, the shepherd,

of Stein. “Let us enter, the roofs are made expressly for such nights as these. My sheep would give much to shelter themselves under some tiles.”

Stein and the shepherd entered, and found the family assembled around the hearth.

At the left of the chimney, Dolores, seated on a low chair, held her infant, who, turning his back to his mother, supported himself on the arm which encircled him, like the balustrade of a balcony; he moved about incessantly his little legs and his small bare arms, laughing, and uttering joyous cries addressed to his brother Anis. This brother, gravely seated opposite the fire, on the edge of an empty earthen pan, remained stiff and motionless, fearing that, losing his equilibrium, he would be tossed into the said earthen pan, an accident which his mother had predicted.

Maria was sewing at the right side of the chimney; her grand-daughters had for seats dry aloe-leaves, excellent seats, light, solid, and sure. Nearly under the drapery of the chimney-piece slept the hairy Palomo, and a cat, the grave Morrongo, tolerated from necessity, but remaining, by common consent, at a respectful distance from each other.

In the middle of this group there was a little low table, on which burned a lamp of four jets; close to the table the brother Gabriel was seated, making baskets of the palm-tree; Momo was engaged in repairing the harness of the good “Swallow” (the ass); and Manuel, cutting up tobacco. On the fire was conspicuous a stew-pan full of Malaga potatoes, white wine, honey, cinnamon,

and cloves. The humble family waited with impatience till the perfumed stew should be sufficiently cooked.

"Come on! Come on!" cried Maria, when she saw her guest and the shepherd enter. "What are you doing outside in weather like this? 'Tis said a hurricane has come to destroy the world. Don Frederico, here, here! come near the fire. Do you know that the invalid has supped like a princess, and that at present she sleeps like a queen! Her cure progresses well – is it not so, Don Frederico?"

"Her recovery surpasses my hopes."

"My soups!" added Maria with pride.

"And the ass's milk," said brother Gabriel quietly.

"There is no doubt," replied Stein, "and she ought to continue to take it."

"I oppose it not," said Maria, "because ass's milk is like the turnip – if it does no good it does no harm."

"Ah! how pleasant it is here!" said Stein, caressing the children. "If one could only live in the enjoyment of the present, without thought of the future!"

"Yes, yes, Don Frederico," joyfully cried Manuel, " '*Media vida es la candela; pan y vino, la otra media.*' " (Half of life is the candle; bread and wine are the other half)

"And what necessity have you to dream of the future?" asked Maria. "Will the morrow make us the more love to-day? Let us occupy ourselves with to-day, so as not to render painful the day to come."

"Man is a traveller," replied Stein, "he must follow his route."

"Certainly," replied Maria, "man is a traveller; but if he arrives in a quarter where he finds himself well off, he would say, 'We are well here, put up our tents.' "

"If you wish us to lose our evening by talking of travelling," said Dolores, "we will believe that we have offended you, or that you are not pleased here."

"Who speaks of travelling in the middle of December?" demanded Manuel. "Goodness of heaven! Do you not see what disasters there are every day on the sea? hear the singing of the wind! Will you embark in this weather, as you were embarked in the war of Navarre, for, as then, you would come out mortified and ruined."

"Besides," added Maria, "the invalid is not yet entirely cured."

"Ah! there," said Dolores, besieged by the children, "if you will not call off these creatures, the potatoes will not be cooked until the last judgment."

The grandmother rolled the spinning-wheel to the corner, and called the little infants to her.

"We will not go," they replied with one voice, "if you will not tell us a story."

"Come, I will tell you one," said the good old woman.

The children approached. Anis took up his position on the empty earthen pot; and the grandma commenced a story to amuse the little children.

She had hardly finished the relation of this story, when a great

noise was heard.

The dog rose up, pointed his ears, and put himself on the defensive. The cat bristled her hair, and prepared to fly. But the succeeding laugh very soon was frightful: it was Anis, who fell asleep during the recital of his grandmother. It happened that the prophecy of his mother was fulfilled as to his falling into the earthen pan, where all his little person disappeared, except his legs which stuck out like plants of a new species. His mother, rendered impatient, seized with one hand the collar of his vest, raised him out of this depth, and, despite his resistance, held him suspended in the air for some time – in the style represented in those card dancing-jacks, which move arms and legs when you pull the thread which holds them.

As his mother scolded him, and everybody laughed at him, Anis, who had a brave spirit, a thing natural in an infant, burst out into a groan which had nothing of timidity in it.

"Don't weep, Anis," said Paca, "and I will give you two chestnuts that I have in my pocket."

"True?" demanded Anis.

Paca took out the two chestnuts, and gave them to him. Instead of tears, they saw promptly shine with joy the two rows of white teeth of the young boy.

"Brother Gabriel," said Maria, "did you not speak to me of a pain in your eyes? Why do you work this evening?"

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.