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THE STUDENT OF SALAMANCA

Part the Last

There was a crowd and a clamour in the principal coffee-house of Pampeluna at nine o'clock on a July evening, that of the first day after Don Baltasar's escape from the town. The numerous tables were surrounded by officers of Cordova's army, still flushed with their recent victory, and eager to enjoy to the utmost a period of relaxation, which, for aught they knew, the next day might bring to a close. Great was the clattering of glasses and the consumption of ices and *refrescos*, rendered especially grateful by the extreme heat of the weather; long and loud were the peals of laughter that echoed through the apartments, and dense the clouds of tobacco smoke, which, in spite of open doors and windows, floated above the heads of the jovial assembly.

In one room a party of monté-players, grouped round a baize-covered table, on which were displayed piles of gold and silver coin, and packs of Spanish cards, with their queer devices of horses, suns, and vases, notwithstanding the numerous general orders prohibiting gambling in the army, were busy in increasing or getting rid of a small and recently made issue of pay. Here comparative stillness reigned, only broken by the monotonous voices of the bankers, or by an occasional angry ejaculation from some unlucky subaltern who saw his last dollar drawn into the vortex, without any means occurring to him whereby to replenish his empty pockets. The other apartments were thronged to suffocation; even the balconies were filled with idlers, leaning over the balustrade, puffing their cigars and listening to a band of amateur musicians, who performed a serenade, in honour of his late victory, under the windows of the commander-in-chief.

In a corner of the coffee-house two persons were seated, both of remarkable appearance, although in very different styles. One was a young man of about six-and-twenty years, low in stature and slightly built; his features regular, without beard, and of an expression of countenance rather pleasing than otherwise. His dress was a short braided jacket, unbuttoned on account of the sultriness of the evening, and disclosing a shirt of fine texture, and a coloured silk handkerchief tied loosely about his throat, which was round and moulded as that of a woman. His cavalry overalls were strapped and topped with leather, and had rows of large bright buttons down the sides; double-

rowelled spurs were fixed to his boots, and on a chair beside him lay a foraging-cap and a light sabre. Although his features were small and delicately chiselled, there was great daring and decision in the thin compressed lips, slightly expanded nostril, and keen grey eye; and when he smiled, which was but rarely, certain lines around his mouth gave a cruel, almost a savage expression to his otherwise agreeable physiognomy. A Navarrese by birth, and of a roving and adventurous disposition, this man, at the commencement of the civil war, had espoused the cause of Don Carlos; but a violent quarrel with a superior officer, punished, as he considered, with undue severity, soon induced him to transfer his services to the Christinos. He raised a free corps, composed of Carlist deserters, smugglers, and desperadoes of every description, and made war upon his former friends with unbounded vindictiveness and considerable success. At the period now referred to, he had already, by various well-planned and boldly-achieved expeditions, accomplished chiefly in the nighttime, gained a high reputation, and the *sobriquet*, by which he was generally known, of El Mochuelo, or the Night Owl.

The man seated opposite to the partisan just described, was of a totally different stamp. Several inches taller than his companion, broad-shouldered and powerful, he had the careless weatherbeaten look of an old campaigner, equally ready to do his devoir in the field, or to enjoy a temporary repose in snug quarters. A bushy beard covered the lower part of his face, which

was further adorned with a purple scar reaching completely across one cheek, the result of a sabre cut of no very ancient date. He wore a dragoon's uniform: his right arm, which rested on the table before him, was large and brawny, apparently well fitted to wield the ponderous sword that hung from his hip; but his left had been severed between wrist and elbow, and in its stead an iron hook protruded from the empty coat-cuff. On his right shoulder a single epaulet, with long silver bullion, marked his rank as that of lieutenant of free corps.

"I tell you I'm sick of it, Velasquez," cried the Mochuelo, striking the table impatiently with his fist. "Why are we idling in towns instead of following up our late victory? When there's work to be done, do it at once, say I. If there's no sign of a move to-morrow, I shall venture something by myself, that I'm determined."

"Can't say I'm so impatient," returned his companion. "Fighting is very well in its way, and I believe I take to it as kindly as most men; but a feast after a fray, that's fair play and the soldier's privilege. But you are never easy without your foot is in the stirrup. Give the poor devils a day's rest; if it's only time to shake their feathers after their last thrashing."

"Curse them!" cried the Mochuelo; "not an hour, if I could help it. They treated me like a dog, and my debt of ill-usage is not half paid. No, to-morrow I move out, come what may."

"And why not to-night, Mochuelo?" said a young staff-officer who had approached the table and overheard the last words of

the revengeful guerilla. "It is yet early, the night is dark, why not at once?"

The Mochuelo sprang to his feet.

"Do you bring me orders, Señor Torres?" said he in a low eager tone to the aide-de-camp. "So much the better! Whither to go? In half an hour my men are ready."

"Not so fast, amigo," answered Mariano Torres, smiling at the guerilla's impatience. "It's no ordinary or easy expedition that I propose to you, nor need you undertake it unless you choose. I bring the general's authorization, not his order. The risk is great, and the object a private one; but by accomplishing it you will lay my friend Captain Herrera, and consequently myself, under deep obligation.

"I would gladly oblige Captain Herrera," said the Mochuelo, bowing to Luis, who accompanied Torres. "Velasquez once served in his squadron." And he pointed to his one-handed companion.

"You have forgotten Sergeant Velasquez, captain," said the latter. "He escaped the ambuscade in which you were taken prisoner. You see I've got the epaulet at last."

"I remember you well," replied Herrera, cordially shaking the hand of his former subordinate. "Your promotion has been dearly purchased," added he, glancing at the mutilated limb; "and I am sure well deserved."

"No time for compliments, señor," said the Mochuelo. "To business."

He again seated himself, and the others following his example, Herrera in few words exposed to the guerilla the nature of the projected expedition.

Notwithstanding the precautions taken to prevent Don Baltasar from leaving Pampeluna, precautions which, as the reader already knows, proved fruitless, Herrera, finding after a lapse of twenty-four hours that no tidings were obtained of the fugitive, resolved not to trust to the chance of his recapture, but at once to execute the plan he had formed when first he became aware of Rita's state of durance. This plan, it will be remembered, was to penetrate clandestinely and with a small force into the enemy's country, to surprise the convent and rescue his mistress. Impracticable when first devised at Artajona, the difficulties besetting the scheme, although diminished by the comparative proximity of Pampeluna to Rita's prison, still appeared almost insuperable. Could the expedition have commenced and terminated between sunset and sunrise, a party of active guerillas, well acquainted with the country and accustomed to such enterprises, might have accomplished it without incurring more than a moderate amount of danger; but, at that season of the year especially, a great part of the march would have to be made in broad daylight, through a district whose population was exclusively Carlist, and which was occupied by detachments and garrisons of the Pretender's troops. Indeed the risk was so great and manifest, and the chances of success apparently so slender, that Cordova, when applied to by

Herrera, at first positively refused to allow him to go on so mad an expedition. He at last yielded to the young man's reiterated entreaties, and even permitted Torres to accompany his friend, but refused to give them any troops of the line, saying, however, that the Mochuelo might go, if willing. That he was so, the reader, after the glimpse that has been given of the guerilla's daring character and impatience of inaction, will have small difficulty in conjecturing. He acknowledged that the proposed expedition was most difficult and dangerous; but confident in his own resources, and in the men under his command, he by no means despaired of its being successful. He should have liked, he said, to postpone it for two or three days, in order to send out spies and ascertain the exact position of the Carlist troops; but on learning from Herrera how urgent it was to lose no time, and how fatal might be the delay of even a single day, he made no further difficulties, but agreed to start at once.

Although in the month of July, the night was overcast and dark when the little band who undertook this perilous service left the town of Pampeluna, and, passing through the outer fortifications, struck into the open country. It consisted of four horsemen and two to three hundred foot soldiers, the latter almost without exception young men between twenty and thirty years of age, scarcely one of whom but might have been cited as an example of the highest perfection of hardiness and activity to which the human frame can be brought by constant exposure to climate, by habit of exertion and endurance of fatigue. Long-

limbed, muscular and wiry, lightly clad in costumes remarkable for their picturesque and fantastical variety; unencumbered by knapsacks, or by any baggage save a linen bag slung across the back, and containing rations for two days; their long muskets over their shoulders; belts, full of cartridges and supporting bayonets, strapped tightly round their waists, they strode over hill and dale at a pace which kept the officers' horses at an amble. Fine studies were these for a painter desirous of depicting banditti or guerillas. Their marked features and sunburnt cheeks were shaded by broad flat caps, from beneath which shining ringlets of black hair hung down to their bare bronzed necks. Contempt of danger and reckless daring were legibly written on every one of their countenances, accompanied, it is true, in some instances, by the expression of less laudable qualities. In the plain and in a regular action, they might have been no match for more highly disciplined troops; but it was evident that as light infantry, and for mountain warfare, their qualifications were unsurpassed, if not unequalled, by any troops of any country.

Whilst a few of the guerillas acted as scouts, and, scattering themselves over the fields on either side of the road which their comrades followed, kept a sharp look-out for lurking foes and ambushed danger, the remainder moved onwards in compact order and profound silence. In front came Herrera and Torres, the former thoughtful and anxious, the latter sanguine and *insouciant* as usual, ambling along as contentedly as if he were riding to a rendezvous with his mistress, instead of on an expedition

whence his return was, to say the least, doubtful. Velasquez accompanied them, the bridle hooked on to his iron substitute for a hand, and guiding his horse rather by leg than rein. At starting, the Mochuelo, who had had little time to mature a plan of operations, appeared grave and pre-occupied. For a while he rode in rear of his men, talking in low tones with Paco the muleteer, who accompanied the party, and with an old grim-visaged Frenchman, a sergeant in his corps, who, on account of his having but one eye, went by the name of El Tuerto. The result of his conversation with these two men seemed satisfactory to him, and, on taking his place at the head of the column, he told Herrera that he had good hopes of success. Silence, however, was the order of the night, and he entered into no details. Paco and the Tuerto kept near him, apparently as guides. The former had testified no slight surprise on recognising his antagonist in the ball-court, and the skirmish, in the new character of a commissioned officer; but respect for the epaulet, and a few friendly words addressed to him by Velasquez, dissipated his angry feelings, if such indeed he still harboured, and he marched peaceably along beside the stirrup of his former opponent.

Steadily and silently the little party continued its march, winding like some dark and many-jointed snake over the inequalities of the ground, now disappearing in the hollow of a ravine, then toiling its way up rugged mountain sides. The road had long been abandoned, and only here and there the adventurous troop were able to avail themselves of a cart track

or country lane, whose deep ruts, however, rendered it but little preferable to the fields and waste land over which they at other times proceeded. After leaving the immediate vicinity of Pampeluna, and during several hours' march, but few words were exchanged between any of the party, and those few were uttered in a cautious whisper. Although the pace was a killing one, no man had flagged or straggled; when at last, after completing a tortuous and rugged descent, the Mochuelo commanded a halt. The place where this occurred was in a narrow gorge between two lines of hills, or it should rather be said of mountains; for although their altitude was only here and there very considerable, their cragged and precipitous conformation and rocky material entitled them to the latter denomination. The passage between them continued narrow only for a few hundred yards, after which, at either of its extremities, the mountains receded, and the valley opened into plains of some extent. To the right of the defile was a considerable tract of undulating and wooded country; the level on the left extended to a less distance, before the hills, closing in again, restricted it within narrow limits.

The thick clouds which had veiled the sky during the early part of the night, had now broken and dispersed, the stars shone out and disclosed the outline of surrounding objects, assuming in the dim light all manner of fantastic forms. A cool wind, the forerunner of morning, swept across the valley, bringing pleasant refreshment to the heated soldiery, as they leaned upon their muskets and waited the orders of their chief. On either hand

videttes were advanced, keeping vigilant watch. El Mochuelo exchanged a few words with Paco and the Tuerto, and then turned to Herrera.

"We are now," said the guerilla, "within a short league of the convent. It is in the valley beyond the mountains in our front. But we are also within less than an hour of daybreak, and if we execute the surprise now, our return to Pampeluna will be scarcely possible. The country in our rear swarms with Carlists; the first shot will bring overpowering numbers against us, and we shall be cut off. Our march has been rapid and fatiguing, and we shall have little chance of escape from fresh and unwearied troops. Hazardous as it may appear to you, Captain Herrera, I have decided to pass the day in the neighbourhood of this spot, and to defer our visit to the convent till nightfall. Under cover of the darkness, and guided by these men," he pointed to Paco and the old sergeant, "our retreat will be comparatively easy, even should the enemy get the alarm, which, as we have no resistance to expect at the convent, I trust may be avoided. What say you to my plan?"

"I am willing," replied Herrera, "to be guided by you in the matter; but this arrangement strikes me as extremely hazardous. Where can three hundred men conceal themselves during a whole day, even in this wild and thinly peopled district, without imminent risk of discovery? Remember that a glimpse obtained by a passing peasant of but one of our number, ensures our destruction. The forests and mountain passes are traversed by

woodcutters and shepherds; the chances against us would be innumerable. Is it not better, without loss of time, to proceed to the convent, accomplish our object, and cut our way back to Pampeluna?"

"Not one of us would ever enter its gates," answered the Mochuelo. "It would be certain death to us all. But my plan is not so desperate as it seems. El Tuerto, here, is well acquainted with these mountains, and has had many a narrow escape amongst them whilst pursuing a less honest calling than the present. He has told me of a place of concealment, where it is scarcely possible we should be discovered. At any rate we must leave this spot, or some early-rising peasant will stumble upon us. There is danger here."

At that moment, as if to confirm his last words, the note of a bugle, sounded apparently at less than a mile off, was borne upon the breeze to the ears of the adventurers.

"You hear," said the Mochuelo. "We must begone, and quickly. There are cantonments of the enemy a little to our right. Call in the videttes."

The order was obeyed, and, turning to the left, the guerillas quitted the defile and entered the smaller of the two valleys connected by it. Guided by the Tuerto, they presently approached a projecting hill, jutting out into the valley like some huge buttress placed there to support the mountain wall. It was of small elevation, but its sides were too perpendicular to be climbed, although that circumstance was partially concealed by the trees

growing at its base. Its summit also was covered with trees, and its rocky flanks were clothed with ivy. The guerillas turned into a wood extending to some distance along the foot of the mountain, and made their way with some difficulty through the closely planted trunks and thick brushwood. Presently the sound of falling water was audible, increasing in loudness as they proceeded, until its cause became visible in a cascade that splashed down the mountain side. A rocky pool received the foaming element, and fed a pellucid stream that soon disappeared amongst the trees, on its way to irrigate and fertilize the neighbouring fields. The water fell from the least elevated part of the mountain buttress above described, a height of seventy or eighty feet.

"This is the place," said El Tuerto to the Mochuelo. The latter nodded, and again ordering a halt, passed the word for the men to sit down upon the grass and observe the strictest silence. Divesting themselves of their belts and muskets, El Tuerto and Paco now approached a lofty tree growing at a short distance from the cascade, and whose upper boughs reached to the top of the precipice, and to the astonishment of Herrera and Torres, and indeed of all who were sufficiently near to distinguish their movements, began to climb its knotty and uneven trunk. In obedience, however, to the order for silence, no one asked a question of the Mochuelo, who alone seemed aware of the meaning of this manœuvre. Soon the two climbers reached the uppermost limits of the gigantic tree, and creeping cautiously

along one of them, landed safely at the top of the precipice. For an instant they were visible like dark shadows against the starry sky, and then they disappeared amongst the trees.

Scarcely five minutes had elapsed, when Herrera and Torres, who were nearest to the torrent, observed, to their great surprise, that the fall of water seemed of less volume. They watched it, the diminution continued, and presently its bed remained bare and dry, with the exception of a slight trickling, which each moment lessened. At the same instant, Paco and El Tuerto re-appeared on the summit of the precipice, and began to descend the water-course. Herrera now perceived that the latter was in fact a rude and irregular staircase, or rather a ladder of steps cut in the rocky surface, some perhaps naturally indented, but others evidently chiselled out by the hands of man. By means of these steps, which afforded a slippery but sufficient footing, it was not difficult for active men to ascend and descend in perfect safety. To increase this facility, wooden pegs had in various places been driven into the interstices of the rock; but when the water flowed, both these and the steps were so far concealed as not to attract notice.

Whilst Herrera gazed in mute astonishment at this singular staircase, the Mochuelo approached and tapped him on the shoulder.

"What say you to yonder hiding-place?" said he, pointing up to the wooden platform above them. "Will they seek us there, think you? Could we not lie hidden for a week instead of a day?"

"If that be the only road to it," said Herrera, indicating the

water-course, "we need hardly fear intruders. But can it not be approached from the mountains in the rear?"

"Hardly," answered the Mochuelo, "as you shall see when there is light enough. We shall be safe there, señor."

"And the horses?" said Herrera.

"Shall be cared for," replied the Mochuelo. "We must risk their loss, although even that is not probable. But we shall have daylight here directly. Time is precious."

It was as he said. Already a brightness was visible in the eastern sky, and the stars in that quarter of the heavens began to fade and disappear. A word from the Mochuelo brought his men to their feet, and, slinging their muskets on their backs, they ascended the water-course. Meanwhile the horses were stripped of their equipments, and, taking hold of the halters, Paco and El Tuerto led them into the wood. A cord was lowered from the top of the precipice, and the saddles were drawn up. The men continued to ascend. Velasquez, on account of his mutilation, had some difficulty in climbing; but by the aid of a powerful guerilla, who went behind, and afforded him support, he succeeded in reaching the top. The Mochuelo, after ascertaining by the report of his sergeants that all the men who had left Pampeluna with him were present, still stood with Herrera at the foot of the water-course, waiting for El Tuerto and Paco, who in a few minutes made their appearance.

"You have disposed of the horses?" said the Mochuelo.

The answer was in the affirmative. The horses had been

securely tethered in the thickest part of the wood, and left with an ample feed of corn before them. It was most improbable that they should be discovered during the few hours they must remain there; but even if they were, their presence in that retired spot, whatever surprise it might awaken, could afford, owing to the absence of the saddles and trappings, no clue to their owners. To obviate any risk of their hoof-prints being traced, Paco had had the forethought to take them into the stream, and lead them for some distance along its shallow bed.

Upon reaching the top of the precipice, the first care of the Mochuelo was to assemble his men, and warn them of the necessity of perfect silence and extreme caution, upon which the lives of all depended. Under pain of severe punishment, he commanded them to avoid the slightest noise, and forbade their walking about, or leaving the place he assigned to them. This was under the shadow of some ancient trees, whose bushy crowns and branches were mingled and interlaced, so as to form a roof impervious to the sun, and almost to rain. Amongst them meandered one of two small streams, which, rising at different points of the adjacent mountains, flowed down to the platform, and uniting upon it, dashed over its brink, and formed the waterfall already described. For the present, at least, there was little need of the Mochuelo's command to ensure silence. Wearied by their rapid and toilsome march, the guerillas stretched themselves upon the grass, and seemed disposed to make amends by a morning nap for the vigilance and fatigues of

the night.

The Mochuelo took Herrera's arm. "I will show you," he said, "that I have not overrated the security of our hiding-place."

Following the course of the rivulet, he led him to a place where a contrivance of great simplicity explained the sudden, and, as it had seemed, miraculous cessation of the waterfall. Just above the confluence of the two streams, which were of moderate width, and not deep, but which received, even in the summer months, an abundant supply of water from the mountain-springs, were a couple of rough-fashioned sluice-gates, consisting of strong boards, sliding down between grooved posts, and which the strength of two men sufficed to remove or return to their places. Above these gates, trenches, now overgrown with grass and bushes, had been cut; so that when the sluices were closed, and the confined water rose to a certain height, it found a vent in another direction, and the original channel remained dry. The gates had been taken out and concealed amongst the brushwood, where Paco and El Tuerto had found them, and, by forcing them down the grooves, had stopped the waterfall. They were now busied in removing them, and the Mochuelo and Herrera, on approaching the edge of the rock, found the torrent once more plashing down its accustomed bed, and the strange staircase, by which their ascent had been accomplished, concealed by its flow.

In reply to Herrera's enquiries as to the original authors of this curious contrivance, and the manner in which he had discovered it, the Mochuelo informed him that the Frenchman, Roche, or

El Tuerto, as his Spanish comrades styled him, had, previously to the war, been one of a band of outlaws, smugglers avowedly, and on occasion, as it was affirmed, something worse, who for a considerable period had carried on their illegal avocations in the Navarrese Pyrenees and their contiguous ranges. Exposed to frequent pursuit, they had discovered and contrived hiding-places in various parts of the district they infested, and that now occupied by the guerillas was the one on the ingenuity of which they most prided themselves. In order to keep it secret, they resorted thither only in extreme cases, usually contriving to arrive and depart in the nighttime, and carefully avoided making any of the peasantry aware of its existence. The scanty population of the district, which consisted chiefly of rock and mountain, forest and waste land, favoured the preservation of their secret. At the commencement of the war the gang broke up, and its members joined various guerilla corps. Roche was for some time with the Carlists, but finding pay and plunder less plentiful than hard duty and long marches, he deserted, and put himself under the orders of the Mochuelo. The latter knew something of his previous history, and, on leaving Pampeluna, had consulted him as a person likely to possess valuable information concerning the wild district whither they were about to proceed.

It seemed probable, from the appearance of the platform, that it had been unvisited, certainly unfrequented, since the dissolution of the honourable society to which El Tuerto had belonged. The grass was long and untrodden; no woodman's axe

had been busy with the trees; save foxes and birds, no living creature had left traces of its presence. Only in one place Herrera and the Mochuelo discovered a number of sheep bones scattered amongst the long grass, remnants doubtless of some former banquet of the smugglers; and not far off, in the hollow of a tree, serving as a niche, a small plaster figure of the Virgin and child, that had once been painted, but of which the damp had long since strangely confounded the colours, told of a lingering devotional qualm on the part of the wild law-breakers.

Still keeping under shelter of the abundant trees, the Mochuelo led his companion to the rear of the platform. There the mountains rose in precipices, and the most careful examination only showed one path, that being such as few besides a mountain-goat or a chamois-hunter would willingly have ventured upon, by which the lurking-place of the guerillas could on that side be approached. At the foot of this path, concealed amongst the bushes, crouched two sentries. At another point also, where, from the loftiest part of the platform, a view was obtained over the tree-tops up the defile between the mountains, other two watchers were stationed, stretched at full length amongst the fern, and peering out through laurel bushes, with whose dark foliage their bronzed physiognomies were confounded beyond a possibility of detection.

Fully satisfied of the security of their position, the Mochuelo and Herrera returned to their companions. The soldiers were for the most part asleep; some few, whose appetite was even greater

than their drowsiness, were breaking their fast with black ration-bread, seasoned with an onion or sausage, and washed down, in the absence of better beverage, with draughts from the diamond-bright stream that rushed and tinkled past them. Torres, with his head on his saddle, was soundly sleeping; his dreams, to judge by the smile on his pleasant countenance, being of a more agreeable nature than the realities of his position. Velasquez had followed his example, and snored in a key that almost induced his chief to awaken him, lest his nasal melody should be heard at too great a distance.

"Can you depend on your men?" said Herrera to the Mochuelo. "A desertion would be ruin, and yet the temptation is great. What would the man get who delivered the dreaded Mochuelo and his band into the hands of the enemy?"

"Thanks and reward to-day, distrust and disgrace to-morrow," replied the guerilla. "Even those who profit by treason, hate and despise the traitor. Besides, most of my fellows have been with the Carlists, and have little fancy to return thither. At the same time, as the majority of them are infernal scoundrels, I neglect no precaution. There are only two ways of leaving this platform without the certainty of breaking one's neck; the mountain-path, where two of my most devoted followers are on sentry, and the waterfall, where Paco and Roche have taken the first turn of guard. You may go to sleep, therefore, in all security, and it is what I would advise you to do; for if our last-night's work was severe, you may be sure that our next will be far more so. And so

good-night, or rather good-morning." And, throwing himself on the grass, the guerilla, accustomed to snatch sleep at all hours, had his eyes shut in an instant.

Although not less in want of repose, Herrera was hardly in a frame of mind to obtain it so easily. His reason, as well as the consciousness that opposition would be unavailing, had induced him to agree to the delay deemed necessary by the Mochuelo, but he was not the less impatient and irritated at the inaction to which he saw himself condemned. If Baltasar had succeeded in leaving Pampeluna, and the fruitlessness of the minute search made for him caused Herrera to fear that such had been the case, the twelve hours' delay might frustrate all his hopes of liberating Rita. In the anticipation of a forward movement of Cordova's army, it was highly probable that Baltasar would remove her to some less accessible part of the Carlist country; perhaps, even, exasperated by the severity with which he had been treated at Pampeluna, and by the reproaches and menaces of the Count, he might proceed to extremities, of which Herrera shuddered to think. The fevered and excited imagination of Luis conjured up the most maddening visions. He saw Rita dragged half-lifeless to the altar, compelled by atrocious menaces to place her hand in that of her abhorred kinsman, whilst a venal priest blessed the unholy union. He heard the cries of the trembling victim imploring mercy from those who knew not the name, and calling on him, by whom she deemed herself deserted, for succour in her extremity. Tortured by these and similar imaginings, Herrera paced wildly up and

down in the gloom and silence of the forest, and accused himself of indifference and cowardice for yielding to the representations of the Mochuelo, plausible and weighty though they were, and for not proceeding at once, alone even, and unaided, to the assistance of the defenceless and beloved being, the uncertainty of whose fate thus racked his soul. Cooler reflection, however, came to his aid, dissipating, or at least unveiling, these phantoms of a diseased fancy, and convincing him that precipitation could but ruin his last chance of success. It would indeed, he felt, be impracticable to regain the Christino lines in broad daylight. Had his own life alone been at stake, that he had willingly set upon the hazard; or rather he would at once and joyfully have sacrificed it to restore Rita to the arms of her father. But the same conflict in which he perished, would also ensure the return of Rita to her captivity and its terrible consequences. Moreover, it would have been an ungenerous requital of the promptness with which the Mochuelo had undertaken a most perilous enterprise, solely to oblige Herrera, and without a chance of advantage to himself, had he insisted upon his converting the risk into almost the certainty of destruction. Patience, then, was the only alternative; and, feeling the necessity of repose after the fatigues and agitation of the preceding night, Herrera lay down upon the ground, and physical exhaustion overcoming mental activity, he sank into an uneasy and broken slumber.

It was afternoon, and the valley and mountains were glowing and glittering in the ardent sun-rays, although within the bower

of foliage where the guerillas had established themselves, all was cool and dark, when the Mochuelo awakened Herrera. With a vague fear of having slept too long, Luis started to his feet.

"Is it time to move?" he hurriedly demanded.

"Hush!" said the guerilla. "Come with me."

One of the Mochuelo's men stood by: he led the way to that lofty part of the platform whence a view of the defile was commanded. On approaching it, the two guerillas threw themselves on their hands and knees, and making signs to Herrera to imitate them, crept forward till they gained the bushes fringing the precipice. Through these a small party of cavalry was visible, riding along the mountain pass. By aid of his field-glass, Herrera was enabled to distinguish almost the features of the men. At the head of the detachment rode an officer, whose figure and general appearance he thought he recognized. A second glance confirmed his first impression. The leader of the troop was Baltasar de Villabuena.

Utterly bewildered by what he saw, Herrera turned to the Mochuelo.

"What are they?" he demanded, "and whither going?"

"You see what they are," answered the partisan. "Carlist lancers. They are going, I fear, to the convent."

"How, to the convent? Does that road lead to it?"

"It does. At some distance up this valley the mountains sink, and there is a track over them practicable for horsemen; the same which we shall follow. When they reach the other side of the

mountain they are within ten minutes' ride of the convent."

Herrera remained for a moment as if petrified by what he heard.

"There can be no doubt," he exclaimed, "they go to remove her. Baltasar is with them. We shall come too late. Mochuelo, you will no longer refuse to act, and that on the instant. We must surprise and destroy the detachment, then at once attack the convent and make our way back to Pampeluna as best we may. If we wait till evening, the expedition might as well not have been attempted. It will be too late."

For an instant or two the Mochuelo stood silent and thoughtful, endeavouring to reconcile in his mind compliance with Herrera's passionately urged wishes, and the dictates of common prudence.

"It is impossible, Captain Herrera," said he. "If there were only one chance in twenty in our favour I would attempt it, but there would not be one in a thousand. If we leave this before evening, we shall never see to-morrow's sun. Much against my will I must refuse your request."

The firm and decided tone of this refusal exasperated Herrera, already almost frantic at the thoughts of the new peril to which Rita was to be exposed. He lost all self-command, his lip curled with a smile of scorn, his look and tone expressed the most cutting contempt as he again addressed the Mochuelo.

"What!" cried he, "is this the renowned, the fearless guerilla, whose deeds have made him the dread of his foes and the

admiration of his friends! This the daring soldier whom no peril deters, who now talks of danger, and calculates chances like a recruit or a woman! Oh, no! It is not the same, or if it be, his courage has left him, and cowardice has replaced daring."

On hearing himself thus unjustly and intemperately reproached, the Mochuelo turned very pale, and his left hand sunk down as though seeking the hilt of his sabre. His two followers, on sentry among the bushes, who had not lost a word of the brief dialogue, turned their heads and glared savagely at the man who dared to accuse their leader of cowardice. One of them muttered a half-audible oath, and was about to spring to his feet, but a gesture from the Mochuelo checked him. The Carlist cavalry had now passed the defile, and were no longer visible on the platform. The Mochuelo turned away and walked in the direction of the bivouac, and Herrera mechanically followed him, rage and despair in his heart. When out of earshot of the sentries the guerilla paused, and, leaning his back against a tree, folded his arms on his breast. His features, still pale, had assumed an expression of calm dignity, strongly contrasting with the hushed and agitated countenance of his companion.

"Señor de Herrera," said the Mochuelo, "you have surprised me. Before two of my men you have taxed me with cowardice – fortunately they know me well enough to despise the accusation, and discipline will not suffer. Of the outrage to myself I say nothing. I make all allowance for your excited state. Many would think it necessary to repay your hard words by a shot or a stab;

I can afford to laugh at any who blame my forbearance. When next we meet the enemy, look where the fire is hottest, and you will be convinced that the names of coward and of the Mochuelo can never be coupled."

Touched by this manly address, and already ashamed of the intemperate words which mental suffering had wrung from him, Herrera held out his hand to the Mochuelo.

"Pardon me," he said "pardon a man whose agony at seeing all he loves on earth about to be snatched away, has made him forget what is due to you and to himself. Misery is ever selfish; but believe me I am not ungrateful for your willing aid. All that human courage can accomplish I know you will do. But alas! alas! this fatal though unavoidable delay is the ruin of all my hopes."

"Perhaps not," said the Mochuelo cheeringly, and cordially pressing Herrera's hand. "The horses we saw pass must be wearied by their mid-day march. Unsuspicious of danger, Baltasar will probably remain a while at the convent. The case is by no means so hopeless as you imagine. At any rate we will risk sending a scout to keep an eye upon their movements. For that service Paco is the man."

Within ten minutes after this conversation, Paco left the platform and commenced the ascent of the mountain. A contribution had been levied amongst the motley habilimented guerillas to equip him in a manner unlikely to attract suspicion, and it was in the dress of a peasant of the province that he

departed on his hazardous mission. Herrera would fain have undertaken it, but for the arguments of the Mochuelo and Torres, who convinced him how much more effectually it would be performed by the muleteer. Stationing himself at the foot of the mountain, he watched Paco, as, with extraordinary daring and activity, he climbed its rugged sides, availing himself, with intuitive skill and judgment, of every description of cover, creeping up water-courses and amongst bushes; and when compelled to expose himself to observation from the valley in his rear, bounding and striding along as if insensible alike to fatigue and to the scorching heat of the sun. In half the time that appeared necessary for the painful ascent, he disappeared over the summit of the mountain.

An hour elapsed, and Herrera, who had not ceased to watch for Paco's re-appearance, became impatient and uneasy. The muleteer had been ordered to go no farther than was necessary to get a view of the convent, and that, El Tuerto affirmed, he would obtain within a few hundred yards of the mountain-top. The Mochuelo argued favourably from his prolonged absence, which proved, he said, that Baltasar's party were still at the convent, and that Paco was watching their movements. But when a second hour lagged by with like result, the guerilla, in his turn, became anxious; whilst Herrera made sure that Paco had ventured too far, and fallen into the hands of the enemy. In that case the Mochuela feared that, to save his life, he might betray their hiding-place; but Luis's assurances of the stanch and faithful character of

the muleteer, partly dissipated his apprehensions. Nevertheless, additional videttes were posted round the edge of the platform, the guerillas looked to their arms, and every precaution was taken against a sudden attack. If discovered, said the Mochuelo, they could none of them hope to escape; but the natural fortress which they occupied would enable them to sell their lives at a dear rate.

In this state of suspense we will temporarily leave Herrera and his friends, to follow in the footsteps of the muleteer. So rapid had been his ascent of the mountain, that when he reached its summit the Carlists had not yet completed their circuit, and entered the valley where the convent stood. With a feeling of huge satisfaction Paco looked down upon his former prison, and chuckled at the thought that he should soon have an opportunity of revenging himself for his sufferings within its walls. To make the most of his time before the appearance of Baltasar, he hastily descended the naked rock on which he stood, and sought shelter amongst the bushes and straggling trees clothing the middle and lower slopes of the mountain. Thence he commanded a near view of the convent. No change was visible in the grey, ghostly-looking edifice; so still was every thing about it, that it might have been deemed uninhabited but for the portress, who sat knitting in the shadow of the gateway, and for the occasional apparition of some ancient nun, showing her face, yellow and shrivelled as parchment, at a casement, or flitting with bowed head, and hands lost in the wide sleeves of her robe, across the spacious and solitary court. The red moss mantled the old

walls, the bright green creepers dangled from their summits, the gardens and vineyard covering the slope in front of the convent, teemed with vegetable life. From where he stood Paco could discover the very point where he had entered the forest after his escape from the dungeon. As he gazed, it suddenly occurred to him that the same friendly shelter which had enabled him to leave the neighbourhood of the convent unperceived, put it in his power to return thither without detection. Bold to temerity, and forgetful of the Mochuelo's injunctions to expose himself to no risk of discovery, Paco no sooner conceived the project than he proceeded to execute it. The convent, it will be remembered, was situated at the extremity of the valley; the pass or rather dip in the surrounding hills, by which Baltasar and his companions would approach it, was to the east of the building; whereas Paco, by the short cut he had taken, found himself on the contrary or western side. Concealed amongst the trees, he moved stealthily but swiftly along, and was within a few hundred yards of the spot whence he proposed to reconnoitre the enemy's proceedings, when he heard the jingling noise of cavalry at the trot, and, looking through the branches, he saw Baltasar and his party sweep round the base of the little eminence on which the convent stood, and ascend the path leading to its gate. Baltasar alone entered the court; the troopers, about thirty in number, halted outside, and remained mounted. Paco plunged deeper into the forest; five more minutes completed his circuit, and he found himself, still concealed by the trees, within a few

paces of the convent wall. Opposite to him was the window whence Rita had held her conversation with the gipsy; below it, Paco saw traces of the loophole through which he had escaped. The long grass and bushes had been cleared away, and the rusty grating which Paco had so easily removed was replaced by solid masonry. At none of the casements on that side of the convent was any person visible. Both shutters and windows were open; but Venetian blinds masked the interior of the apartments from the view of the muleteer, who stood still and listened. Scarcely a minute elapsed, when a loud noise, as of a door dashed violently open, reached his ears. This was succeeded by a burst of furious vociferation in a voice which Paco knew to be that of Baltasar. Although his tones were loud, his utterance was so rapid and incoherent, the effect apparently of passion, that only a word here and there was intelligible to the muleteer, and these words were for the most part execrations. He seemed to lash himself into the most unbounded fury against some person who had entered the apartment in his company, and from the epithets he made use of, it was clear that that person was a woman. At first no reply was made to his violence, although Paco could distinguish that he put questions, and became more and more infuriated at the silence of her to whom they were addressed. Presently there was a momentary pause, and a female voice was heard. The accents were distinct though tremulous.

"Never!" it said, "never! You may murder me; but that, never!"

A blasphemy too horrible to transcribe, burst from the lips of

Baltasar. A blow followed – a heavy, cruel, unmanly blow; there was a faint cry and the sound of a fall. Paco's blood grew cold in his veins, he ground his teeth, and his hand played convulsively with the knife in his pocket. He looked up at the window as though he would have sprung to the assistance of the helpless victim of Baltasar's barbarity. Again the room-door opened, and was again violently slammed. All was now silent in the chamber.

With heavy heart, and a countenance pale with horror and suppressed rage, Paco left the spot, and hastened to another, whence he could see the front of the convent. The Carlist horsemen were filing in at the gate. Looking around him, Paco selected a lofty tree, easy of ascent; in an instant he was amongst its branches. Thence he commanded a view of the interior of the court. Baltasar was there giving orders to his men, who unbridled and watered their horses at a fountain in the centre of the court. This done, they proceeded to feed them, and to cleanse the legs and bellies of the wearied animals from the sweat and dust. Bread and a skin of wine were presently brought out of the convent; and by these and other indications, Paco became convinced that a halt of some duration, for the purpose of rest and refreshment, was intended, although, from the non-removal of the saddles, it was evident that the Carlists would not pass the night there. Having now obtained all the information he could hope for, and far more than he had expected to get, the indefatigable muleteer set out on his return to the platform.

Meanwhile Paco's prolonged absence had caused Herrera and

the Mochuelo the most serious uneasiness; and as Luis knew him to be incapable of treachery, and vouched for his fidelity, they could only suppose that he had been taken prisoner, or had fallen and killed or maimed himself amongst the precipices he had to traverse. Sunset was near at hand, when Herrera, who continued to sweep the mountain ridge with his telescope, saw a man roll off the summit and then start to his feet. It was Paco, who now bounded down the mountain with a speed and apparent recklessness that made those who watched his progress tremble for his neck. But the hardy fellow knew well what he did; his sure foot and practised eye served him well; and presently, reeking with sweat, and his hands and dress torn by rocks and brambles, he again stood amongst his friends. He was overwhelmed with enquiries concerning the result of his excursion, and gave a brief but lucid account of all he had seen. Only, with a delicacy and consideration hardly to be expected in one so roughly nurtured, he suppressed the more painful details, merely saying that he had heard a voice, which he believed to be that of Rita, in animated conversation with Baltasar, who seemed endeavouring to persuade her to something which she steadily refused to do.

"We may yet be in time," exclaimed Herrera, all his hopes revived by the muleteer's intelligence. And he looked anxiously at the Mochuelo.

"We will move at once," said the latter, replying to his look rather than to his words. "The sun is low. It will be dark before we reach the convent."

The flow of the waterfall was again stopped, and with the same caution that had marked all their movements since they left Pampeluna, the guerillas descended from their eyrie. Avoiding the open part of the valley, they kept within the forest, and reached the spot where the horses were concealed. They had not been meddled with; it was probable, indeed, that during the whole day Baltasar and his men were the only persons who had passed through the solitary valley. With strength restored by their long repose, the guerillas marched rapidly along, and soon found themselves in the vicinity of the convent. The sun had disappeared, leaving a red glow in the western sky; here and there a star shone out, and the heavens were of a transparent blue, excepting in the wind quarter, where the upper edge of a dense bank of cloud was visible. This, and the vapours, the result of the day's heat, which began to rise in the hollows and low grounds, the Mochuelo contemplated with much satisfaction.

"'Tis a bright evening," he said, "but the night will be dark. The better for our retreat, Captain Herrera; all is in our favour. Fortune befriends us."

Halting his men, the guerilla dismounted and advanced on foot till he came within sight of the convent. By the waning light he distinguished the figures of two or three soldiers lounging outside the gate. He returned to Herrera.

"They are still there," said he, "and cannot escape us. We will wait till it grows somewhat darker, that the surprise may be more complete."

A few minutes were allowed to elapse, minutes that seemed hours to Herrera's impatience, and then a small party, guided by Paco and under command of Torres, moved off to gain the rear of the convent. At the same time the remainder of the guerillas approached the building on the eastern side, stealing along behind banks and trees. Unperceived they had commenced the ascent of the uncultivated slope, when their foremost files stumbled upon a Carlist soldier who had sneaked down to the garden to make provision of the fruit growing there in abundance. So silent were the movements of the guerillas, (Herrera, Velasquez, and the Mochuelo going on foot, whilst their horses were led at some distance in the rear,) that the Carlist was not aware of their approach till they were close to him, and he himself, hidden amongst the fruit-trees, had escaped their notice. He uttered a shout of surprise and terror; it was his last. A blow from the sabre of Velasquez brought him to the ground; the next instant three bayonets were in his body.

"Forward!" cried the Mochuelo, who saw that further caution was useless; and, closely followed by his men, ran at the top of his speed towards the convent. But the soldier's exclamation had given the alarm to a second Carlist, who had been waiting his comrade's return from the orchard. He saw the guerillas rush forward, sprang within the gate, shut and barred it. The Mochuela came up in time to hear the last bolt drawn.

A great bustle and confusion were now audible in the court; the men hurrying to their horses, and questioning each other as

to the nature of the alarm. The Mochuelo lost not an instant. Two of his men carried axes; he took one, Herrera the other, and they dealt furious blows upon the gate, which shook and splintered under their efforts. The voice of Baltasar was heard loud in oath, and abusing his men for their cowardly panic. Not conceiving it possible that a party of Christinos should have advanced in broad daylight to so great a distance from their lines, he at first attributed the attack to some roving banditti, who had expected a rich, or, at any rate, an easy prey in the defenceless convent of nuns. He advanced to the gate.

"Scoundrels!" he exclaimed, – "What means this violence? Desist, or I fire upon you!"

A low laugh from the guerillas replied to his menace. With incredible hardihood, he opened the wicket and looked out. The Mochuelo had forbidden his men to fire, but nevertheless, at the sight of Baltasar, a dozen muskets were raised.

"For your lives not a shot!" cried the Mochuelo.

With his axe, Herrera made a furious blow at Baltasar, but the wicket was too small to admit the weapon, and the Carlist retreated into the interior of the court. The gate began to yield, fairly hewn in pieces by the axes; a few more blows and an opening was effected. The guerillas rushed with fixed bayonets into the court. It was deserted save by the horses. The doors and windows of the convent were closely shut, and not a single Carlist was to be seen. Just then several shots, fired in rear of the building, explained the solitude in its front. The besieged

had endeavoured to escape by the outer windows, but had been prevented by Torres and his detachment. Foiled in this attempt, Baltasar now showed himself, raging like a wolf at bay, at a window above the gate of the convent. Some of his men accompanied him, and fired their carabines at the assailants. By the Mochuelo's order, the fire was not returned. A few shots, he thought, might be unheard or pass unnoticed by the Carlist troops in the vicinity, but the fire of his men would inevitably attract attention. In silence, therefore, and partly sheltered by a projecting portico, he and Herrera assailed the convent door with their axes. The obstacle was a slighter one than that which had already been overcome, and its demolition seemed likely to be more speedy. There were other doors in the wings of the convent that would perhaps have been yet more easily broken down; but in the uncertainty of what the interior partitions and defences night be, the Mochuelo preferred attacking the principal entrance. The Carlists continued to fire, and several of the guerillas were already killed; but soon, in anticipation of their stronghold being speedily forced, the besieged ceased to defend themselves, and left the windows to seek concealment from the first fury of the foe. The door gave way, and the victorious Christinos, eager for booty, poured into the building. Herrera was the first who entered. He had ascertained from Paco the part of the convent where he might expect to find Rita; he darted up the stairs and along a gallery which ran completely round the first floor. The Mochuelo accompanied him. They were passing an open

window, whence the Carlists had fired, when a loud shout was uttered by a detachment, who, in obedience to the orders of their chief, remained formed up in the court. The shout was followed by a few musket shots. The Mochuelo stopped and looked out: Herrera, all his thoughts concentrated on one subject, still hurried on, but an exclamation from his companion arrested his steps.

"Escaped!" cried the Mochuelo.

"Escaped!" repeated Herrera, in his turn looking out; "Who?"

The question was answered by what he saw. Whilst the guerillas in the court-yard, resting upon their arms, gazed at the convent windows, now rapidly becoming illuminated, and envied their more fortunate comrades, who, to judge from the noise within, were using unsparingly their privileges as victors, a door in one of the projecting wings suddenly opened, and a man on horseback, with a woman before him on his saddle, dashed into the court. His spurs plunged in his charger's flanks, he rode through the astonished soldiers, and out at the gate. There was still enough light for Herrera to catch a glimpse of his figure before he disappeared below the brow of the slope. That glimpse told him that his hopes were again blasted. The horseman was Baltasar. There could be little doubt as to who was the companion of his flight.

In an instant Herrera was in the court. His horse stood near the gate; he leaped into the saddle, and galloped madly down the hill. Three or four of the guerillas had preceded him; but the captured horses of the Carlists, on which they were mounted,

were sorry beasts, and he soon left them far in his rear. He saw Baltasar galloping at full speed up the valley, the double burthen apparently unfelt by the vigorous animal he bestrode. But Herrera also was well mounted, his horse fresh, and he gained on the fugitive, gradually it is true, but still he gained on him. Selecting the most favourable ground, and avoiding plantations or whatever else might impede his progress, Baltasar spurred onwards, stimulating his steed with his voice, occasionally even striking his flanks with his sabre-flat. When dashing through the court, his companion, or, it should rather be said, his captive, had been seen to struggle, although the thick black veil in which her head was muffled prevented her cries, if any she uttered, from being audible. She now lay, as if insensible, on the left arm of the Carlist colonel. Behind came Herrera bareheaded, with clenched teeth, his drawn sword in his hand, in readiness to strike the very instant he should come within reach of the ravisher. Unfortunately the distance between them diminished but slowly, and Herrera trembled lest superior bone and endurance on the part of his enemy's charger should yet enable him to escape; when to his inexpressible relief he saw the horse stop, with a suddenness that almost threw his rider on his neck, and then, on being furiously spurred and urged forward, rear, turn round, and oppose all the resistance of a horse brought to a leap which he is afraid or unable to take. Whilst galloping down a rough and stony path, on one of whose sides was a high bank, and on the other an abrupt fall in the ground, Baltasar had come upon a

deep trench or rivulet of considerable width, and this his horse obstinately refused to cross. Casting a hasty glance back at his pursuer, who was still far behind, Baltasar turned his charger, and again rode him at the obstacle. Again the animal shyed, and refused. His rider uttered a furious oath, and resolutely turned about, as if resolved to fight now that he could no longer fly. Herrera's heart beat quick with hope. At length, then, he should rescue and revenge his Rita. He was within twenty yards of the Carlist, when the latter drew a pistol and fired at him. His horse received the ball in his breast, staggered forward, carried on by the impetus he had acquired, and fell, with his rider partly under him. Before Herrera could extricate himself, the sound of hoofs was heard, and another horseman galloped down the lane. Again Baltasar rode at the ditch, but his steed, discouraged and cowed by his violent treatment, made no effort to cross it. With a fierce execration, Baltasar threw the woman violently to the ground, and driving the point of his sword an inch or more into his horse's crupper, the animal, relieved of part of his load, and maddened by the cruel and unusual stimulus, cleared the ditch. As he did so, Herrera having regained his feet, hurried to the unfortunate creature of whom Baltasar had so brutally disencumbered himself. She lay upon her side, quite motionless and the veil that wrapped her head was wet with blood.

"Rita!" exclaimed Luis; "Rita!"

Raising her on his arm, he drew the covering from her face. The features disclosed were entirely unknown to him.

Just then Velasquez came up at speed, and, flying across the ditch, continued the pursuit.

The person whom Herrera supported in his arms was of middle age, and had the remains of great beauty, although her countenance was emaciated, and as pale as the white nun's robe in which she was clad. In falling she had received severe injury; her temple had struck against a sharp angle of the granite of which the path was chiefly composed, and blood flowed in abundance from a deep wound. Her eyes were closed, and her features wore a suffering expression. Amidst the various and opposite emotions that agitated Herrera when he found that it was not Rita whom he had rescued, the dominant impulse was to return immediately to the convent, there to seek his mistress. Nevertheless common humanity forbade his abandoning the nun, at least till her senses returned, or till he could leave her in proper care, and moreover he hoped to obtain from her some information concerning Rita. Raising her in his arms, he carried her to the bank of the little stream, laid her gently upon the grass, and, fetching water in the hollow of his hands, sprinkled it upon her face. It revived her, she opened her eyes, and by a convulsive movement assumed a sitting posture, but instantly fell back again. She glanced at Herrera's uniform in seeming surprise, and gazed around her with a haggard and terrified look.

"Have no fear," said Herrera; "you are in safety. Do I mistake, or are you Doña Carmen de Forcadell?"

The nun's lips moved, but no sound escaped then.

"And Rita?" said Herrera, unable to restrain the inquiry, "where is she?"

"Rita!" repeated the nun in a hollow broken voice, "What of her? Where am I? how came I here? Oh, oh!" she exclaimed in tones of anguish, "I remember!"

She put her hand to her head with a suffering gesture; a strange wild gleam shone in her eyes, her reason seemed departing. Herrera anxiously watched her. Her features became more composed, and for a moment she appeared to suffer less.

"And Rita?" he again asked.

She looked him full in the face, the fire of delirium in her eyes. "Rita!" she repeated. She paused, and then burst out into a scream of laughter that made Herrera shudder.

"Ha, ha!" she cried, "False! vile! faithless!" —

The laugh died away upon her convulsed lips, a deep sob burst from her breast, her head fell back. She was a corpse.

Herrera had but just assured himself that life had indeed fled, when he heard in two different directions the sound of horses' feet, and then Torres galloped up, followed by three of the guerillas.

"What do you here? The Mochuelo is furious at the delay. You will be left behind. Where is Rita? Who is this?" cried he, looking at the dead body of the nun.

Before Herrera could reply, Velasquez cleared the ditch. His face was covered with blood, his sabre, which dangled from his wrist, showed the same sanguine signals, and he led Baltasar's

horse by the rein.

"Mount!" cried he to Herrera, "and spur, all of you, like devils. We have been here too long already."

"You overtook him?" cried Herrera, springing into the saddle.

For sole reply, Velasquez raised his crimsoned sword, and dashing away with the back of his hand the blood that blinded him, and which flowed from a cut on his head, he set forward at full speed towards the convent.

The guerillas were already formed up in readiness to depart. The Mochuelo, chafing with impatience, had ridden a short distance to meet Herrera and Velasquez.

"By all the saints!" he exclaimed, as they came up, "this delay may cost us our lives, Captain Herrera. But how is this, you come alone? He has escaped then, and carried off the lady!"

"It was not her we seek," replied Luis; "she must still be in the convent."

"Impossible!" said the Mochuelo. "We have rummaged every corner of it."

"She must be there!" cried Herrera. "I will find her."

"We march instantly," said the Mochuelo, laying his hand on Herrera's bridle. "We have tarried too long."

"Go, then, without me," exclaimed Herrera. And, snatching his rein from the guerilla's grasp, he spurred his horse up the slope.

"Go with him, Señor Torres," said the Mochuelo. "Every moment is a man's life. Three minutes more and I march."

Torres rode after his friend.

"And Baltasar?" said the Mochuelo to his lieutenant.

"Lies yonder in the valley," was the reply of Velasquez, as he wiped his sword on his horse's mane, and returned it to the scabbard. "Wolves' meat, if they will have him."

The convent, when Herrera and Torres re-entered it, showed abundant traces of the rough visitors by whom it had recently been occupied. Doors broken down, windows smashed, the corridors and cloisters encumbered with broken furniture, and lighted here and there by the thick wax tapers used at the altar, some of which had fallen from the places where the guerillas had stuck them, and lay flaming on the ground, threatening the building with conflagration. Some of the nuns had shut themselves in their cells, others sat weeping and moping in the refectory; on all sides were desolation and the sound of lamentation. Here and there lay the bloody and disfigured bodies of the slain Carlists. Not one of them had been spared. The chapel had been ransacked, and although the Mochuelo had forbidden his men to encumber themselves with plunder, all the smaller and more valuable decorations of the sacred edifice had been transferred to the haversacks of the guerillas. He had been more successful in preserving the nuns from ill usage, although, in moments of license and excitement, even his commands did not always find obedience. But a few minutes, however, had been granted to the reckless invaders to complete their work of spoliation, before he cleared the convent, and, forming up

his men outside the gate, forbade their leaving their ranks. On Herrera's entrance, the terrified nuns thought that the guerillas were returning, and with cries of terror fled in all directions. He succeeded in calming their fears, and enquired for the abbess, although nearly certain that she it was to whose death he had been witness. None could tell him aught concerning her; nor was he able, either by threats or entreaties, to obtain any information with respect to Rita. Several of the nuns knew that she and her attendant had occupied apartments contiguous to those of the abbess; but they had none of them been admitted to see her, and knew nothing of her fate. A rapid search instituted by Herrera and Torres was entirely fruitless. Already two messengers had been sent by the Mochuelo to hasten their movements, and at last Torres succeeded in dragging his friend away. The guerillas had already marched with the exception of a small party who still waited at the foot of the slope, and now hurried after the main body.

Whilst traversing in silence and darkness the mountain in rear of the convent, Herrera was at length able to collect his bewildered thoughts, and with comparative calmness to pass in review the events of the evening, and the unsatisfactory results of his ill-fated expedition. Long used to disappointment, and aware of the difficulties environing his project, he had approached the convent in no sanguine mood; but still hopes he had, which were now blighted, and never, he feared, would be realized. What had become of Rita, and how could he obtain tidings of her?

Had she already been removed from the convent by Baltasar? But why, then, had he returned thither? His death, at least, was some consolation. Wherever Rita might be, she no longer had his persecution to dread. Against Herrera's will, and although he spurned the thought and blamed himself for entertaining it, even for a moment, the ominous words, the last the abbess had spoken, still rang in his ears, like the judge's sentence in those of a condemned criminal. False, vile, faithless! Could it be? Could Rita, by importunity, intimidation, or from any other motive, have been induced to listen otherwise than with abhorrence to Baltasar's odious addresses? Herrera could not, would not, think so; and yet how was he to interpret the words of the abbess? Were they the mere ravings of delirium, or had they signification? If Rita was false, then indeed was there no truth upon earth. Confused, bewildered, tortured by the ideas that crowded upon his heated brain, Herrera sat like an automaton upon his horse, unmindful of where he was, and utterly forgetting the dangers that surrounded him. He was roused by the Mochuelo from his state of abstraction.

"We shall not reach Pampeluna without a skirmish," said the partisan, in a low but cheerful and confident tone. "I am much mistaken or the enemy have got the alarm, and are on the look-out for us."

The prospect of action was perhaps the only thing that could then have diverted Herrera's thoughts from the painful subject pre-occupying them. In his galled and irritated mood, driven to

doubt of what he never before had doubted, the idea of something to grapple with, of resistance to overcome, an enemy to strive against, was a positive relief, and he answered the Mochuelo quickly and fiercely.

"The better," said he. "Our expedition will not have been entirely fruitless. Mochuelo, your men are brave and true. Night favours us. Let the rebels come. We will give then a lesson they shall long remember."

"Nevertheless," replied the guerilla, "I would rather avoid them, for they are twenty to one. One fight will not settle the matter, even though we be victors. But they are gathering. Listen!"

Herrera listened, and from various quarters sounds that warned of approaching danger reached his ears. On one hand, although at a considerable distance, the clang of a cavalry trumpet was audible; on the other, church and convent bells rang out a tocsin of alarm. The sounds were taken up by other bells; in their rear, in front, on all sides. The Mochuelo rode along the flank of the little column, which in dead silence, and with rapid steps, followed El Tuerto, who, with Paco and Velasquez, marched at its head. So dim and shadowy did the dark figures of the guerillas appear, as they noiselessly strode along, that they might have been taken for the spectres of the slain, risen from some bloody battle field, and condemned to wander over the scene of their former exploits. With words of praise and encouragement the Mochuelo stimulated their progress.

"Forward, men," he said, "steady and silent! Every moment is worth a million. There will be work for you before morning, but it is yet too soon."

Full of confidence in their leader, undeterred by danger, but knowing the necessity of speed and prudence in their perilous position, the guerillas pressed on, keeping well together, and at a pace which it seemed almost impossible they should be able to sustain. They did sustain it, however; and, thanks to that circumstance, to the darkness, and to the skilful guidance of El Tuerto, to whom each tree and rock of that wild district was familiar, the Mochuelo's predictions were but partially realized. More than once, indeed, the adventurous little band were within a hair's-breadth of stumbling upon patrols and pickets of the enemy; more than once, whilst they lay upon their faces in the long fern, or stood concealed amongst trees, parties of cavalry rode by within pistol-shot; but nevertheless all encounters were happily avoided, and it was not till the first grey light of morning, and within a short league of Pampeluna, that they fell in with a Carlist battalion, occupied in posting the advanced pickets. Skirmishing ensued, and the Carlists, superior in number, pressed their opponents vigorously, until Herrera and the Mochuelo placed themselves at the head of the guerillas and charged with the bayonet. The Carlists gave way and were pursued for a short distance, when the Mochuelo, not deeming it prudent to follow them further, ordered the recall to be sounded. A quarter of an hour afterwards he and his men were safely under

the cannon of Pampeluna.

The morning sun was brightly shining when Herrera entered the town. At that early hour the streets had few occupants besides the market people, who walked briskly along, balancing their vegetable stores upon their heads, and chattering noisely in the Basque tongue; at a stable-door some Andalusian dragoons groomed their horses, gaily singing in chorus one of the lively seguidillas of their native province; here and there a 'prentice boy, yawning and sleepy-eyed, removed the shutters from his master's shop. The dew lay in glistering beads upon the house-tops; there was a crispness in the air, a cheerful freshness in the appearance of all around him, that was in jarring discord with Herrera's gloomy and desponding mood, as, with fevered pulse and haggard looks, he guided his wearied horse towards Count Villabuena's quarters. He came in sight of the house; its upper windows had just caught the first sunbeams; the balconies were filled with plants, whose bright blossoms and fresh contrasted pleasantly with the ancient stone-work of the heavy façade; on a myrtle spray, a bird, capriciously deserting the greenwood for the city, trimmed his feathers and carolled a lively note; every thing about the dwelling seemed so gay and cheerful, that Herrera involuntarily checked his horse, and felt inclined to turn back. For the second time a messenger of evil, how could he break his sad intelligence to the Count – by what arguments console his heart-broken old man under this new and bitter disappointment? As he passed the angle of the house, he saw that the jalousies of

Count Villabuena's windows were open; doubtless he was already up, looking anxiously for the arrival of his daughter; perhaps, alarmed at the prolonged absence of Herrera, he had not been to rest. Luis dreaded the effect of his painful tidings upon the Count's feeble health, and he racked his imagination to devise a way of gradually imparting them, but it was in vain; for his mere appearance, unaccompanied by Rita, would be sufficient to make her father conjecture even worse than the truth.

The family of Basilio, the cloth-merchant, were early in their habits, and the house was already open. With heavy and reluctant step, Luis ascended the stairs, and then paused, irresolute and unwilling to enter the Count's apartment. At last, summoning resolution, he was about to lift the latch, when it was raised, and Count Villabuena, completely dressed, and pale as if from a sleepless night, stood before him. He started on beholding Herrera, and his countenance was lighted up with joy.

"Thanks be to God!" he exclaimed, clasping his hands with a gesture of profound piety and gratitude – "thanks be to God, you are safe!"

"Alas!" cried Herrera, "my safety matters little. We have been unsuccessful; Rita" —

He became suddenly mute, for at that moment the door of an inner room opened, a voice, long unheard but well remembered, uttered his name, and Rita, more lovely than ever, tears upon her cheeks and joy in her eyes, threw herself into his arms.

We will leave to our readers' imagination the transports of the

two lovers, who after so long a separation, and sufferings of so many kinds, found themselves thus happily, and, as far as one of them at least was concerned, unexpectedly reunited, and will confine ourselves to an explanation of the circumstances that led to so fortunate a result. It may be given in a few words.

Although Baltasar's ascendancy over Doña Carmen, partly the consequence of former complicity in crime, partly attributable to her dread of his brutal and violent character, had induced her to accept the custody of Rita, it was most unwillingly that she had done so, and with the full determination to protect to the utmost of her power the defenceless girl, of whom she was compelled to become the jailer. Rita's beauty and amiable qualities, and the angelic sweetness and patience displayed by her during the severe illness that followed her arrival at the convent, soon endeared her to the abbess, who became confirmed in her resolve to guard her interesting prisoner from harm. More than once, moved by Rita's tears and entreaties, she was tempted to set her at liberty, but was deterred by fear of Baltasar. The action of Mendigorria was fought – news came to the convent that Colonel Villabuena had been killed. The abbess hesitated no longer, but at once released Rita, who, accompanied by her waiting-maid, was escorted by a couple of sturdy and trustworthy peasants to the nearest town. Thence she safely reached the French frontier, which was at no great distance. Once in France, she learned to her unspeakable joy, from Spanish emigrants there resident, that her father still lived, although a prisoner, and that he was then at Logroño. At

all risks she resolved to rejoin him, and proceeding to a point of the frontier held by the Christinos, she re-entered Spain, and arrived at Pampeluna twelve hours after Herrera had left it with the purpose of rescuing her. She had friends in the town whom she hastened to visit, and by them she was conducted to her astonished and delighted father.

When Baltasar reached the convent, and found that Rita was no longer there, his fury was unbounded, and he loaded the abbess with reproaches and abuse. He became yet more violent when she refused to tell him the direction in which Rita had gone. Owing to the disturbed state of the country, and the recent movements of the Christino army, Doña Carmen could not be certain that her late prisoner had succeeded in leaving Spain, and she, therefore, resolutely refused to give Baltasar any information concerning her. It was then that occurred the scene of which Paco had overheard a part, when Baltasar struck and ill-treated the unfortunate nun, who with heroic courage remained firm in her refusal, submitting meekly to his cruelty, and trusting that her sufferings might be accepted as a partial expiation of her former offences, which she had long repented, if she could not atone them. Still, however, Baltasar did not despair of compelling her to reveal what he so ardently desired to know; and it was doubtless for that reason that he carried her with him when he fled from the convent. It has already been seen how care for his own preservation induced him to abandon her, although too late to save himself. Within a few hundred yards of the

place where he had so brutally thrown her from his horse, he was overtaken by Velasquez, at whose hand, after a brief but desperate conflict, he met a more honourable death than he deserved. Upon the following day, his body and that of his erring but repentant victim were brought to the convent by peasants of the neighbourhood, and both found sepulture in the chapel. The convent has since been abandoned and partly pulled down; but the chapel still stands, and on its paved floor may still be read inscriptions recording the date and manner of the death of Baltasar de Villabuena and Carmen de Forcadell.

As if fortune, weary of persecuting Herrera, had on a sudden determined to favour as much as she had previously slighted him, the same day that dawned upon his return to Pampeluna brought despatches from Madrid, announcing his promotion, and granting a free pardon to Count Villabuena, on the sole condition of his remaining neutral in the struggle between Carlists and Christinos. It was General Cordova, who, out of friendship for Herrera, and compassion for the sufferings and misfortunes of the Count, had exerted his influence, then almost unlimited, in favour of the latter. To the prescribed condition, Count Villabuena, already disgusted by the ingratitude of him whom he called his king, and despairing, since the death of Zumalacarregui, of the success of the Carlist cause, was without much difficulty induced to give his adherence.

Less successful were the Count and Rita in prevailing upon Herrera to leave the service, and, contenting himself with the

laurels he had already won, to retire into private life. Gladly, perhaps, would he have done so, had he consulted only his inclinations; but he had not forgotten his pledge to his dying father, never to sheath his sword till the right cause had triumphed. In common with many of his party, he believed that triumph to be near at hand. Their recent successes, and the death of the only man amongst the Pretender's partisans who had shown military talents of a high order, made the Christinos confident of the speedy termination of a war which was yet to be prolonged for four years. And when Herrera, in compliance with the Count's wishes, urged as entreaties rather than commands, agreed to wait its conclusion before claiming the hand of his daughter, he little dreamed how many hard-fought fields he should be present at, how many tearful partings and joyful meetings would occur, before peace should be restored to Spain, and Rita could become his wife without risk of finding herself the next day a widow. From summer to winter, from winter to spring, the marriage was deferred, until at length the Count was about to withdraw his opposition, well-founded though it was, and as Herrera felt it to be, when the convention of Vergara took place, and removed the only objection to the union of Rita and Luis. By that convention the war was in fact concluded; for although Cabrera and other chiefs still waved the banner of rebellion in the mountains of Catalonia and Arragon, there could now be no doubt of their speedy subjugation. Deprived of the support of Biscay and Navarre, and especially of the moral

weight which the adherence of those provinces gave to it, the Carlist rebellion was virtually crushed.

On a bright autumnal afternoon of the year 1839, a travelling carriage, of form and dimensions by no means incommodious, although its antique construction, and the tawny tint of its yellow paint, might in London or Vienna have subjected it to criticism, drove rapidly past the roadside inn at which our story commenced. As it did so, a young man of military appearance looked out of the window of the vehicle, and then turning his head caught the eye of the coachman, who had also glanced at the inn, and looked round at his master. Both smiled, although with a somewhat melancholy expression; the driver touched his cap, cracked his long whip, and the next instant the rapid gallop of the mules had taken the carriage out of sight of the venta. The driver was Paco the muleteer, the gentleman was General Herrera; and the sight of the inn, still shaded by the huge tree in its front, and flanked by the broken wall, had recalled to their recollection the famous game at ball played by Paco and Velasquez, and which subsequently cost the one a horse and the other a broken head. A ball of another description had since proved fatal to the dragoon. He had fallen in one of the last actions of the war, fighting gallantly by the side of the Mochuelo, whose fortunes he had continued to share.

Accompanied by his bride and father-in-law, Herrera was on his way to the villa near Tudela, now again the property of Count Villabuena. Desirous to conciliate a nobleman of

ancient name and high character, and out of consideration for the great services which Herrera's zeal and talents had rendered the cause, the queen's government had some time previously restored to the Count his confiscated estates. At length the clouds that had darkened the career of Louis Herrera were entirely dissipated, and the long perspective of happiness before him appeared the brighter, when contrasted with the misfortunes and sufferings that had embittered the early manhood of the Student of Salamanca.

SHAKSPEARE AND THE DRAMA

A Letter to T. Smith, Esq., Scene-painter and Tragedian at the Amphitheatre

My Dear Sir – or let me at once break through the formalities of a first acquaintance, and say, dear Smith; – Dear Smith, I am delighted to have been at last introduced to a real member of the theatrical profession – a *bonâ fide* flesh and blood, silk-stocking'd and tinsel-rapier'd "pride of Astley's stage." If you unite in your own person the artist and the player; if you occasionally handle the painter's brush as well as the field-marshal's truncheon – for have I not seen you lead the British troops with heroic valour through the awful passes of Cabul, which I had seen you creating with lamp-black and grey chalks in the morning? – it will only prove that your genius is universal, or, at least, not limited to one mode of development; but that, as D'Israeli is an orator and a statesman, you are a scene-painter and performer. But your qualities are not of so confined a nature even as this. For have I not seen you, in the intervals of your possessing the stage, employ your great strength in pushing forward the ponderous woods of Bondy you have painted? Have I not seen you dash off dungeon in the Castle of Udolpho with all the vigour

of Rembrandt, roll it forward on the stage with the strength of Hercules, and then murder the turnkey in it with the power and elegance of Thurtell? But it is not the multifariousness of your merits that makes me proud of calling you my friend: no, it is the modesty with which you bear your honours thick upon you – the ignorance, as it were, of your own position, as compared with that of others infinitely your inferiors – that shows you at once the man of genius and the gentleman. Macready, you acknowledge, is perhaps your superior in such parts as Lear and Hamlet; but did he ever paint a single side-scene in his life? Beverley, they say, is equal to Stanfield in the poetry of his landscapes; and you confess that in his airs and distances he surpasses your noblest efforts. Ask yourself, my dear friend, if he ever fought a terrific combat with a sword in each hand, with such courage as I have seen you display in front of one of your own scenes? Ask him if he ever painted his mother's cottage in one character, pushed it forward in another, and poisoned her in it in a third? No, no, dear Smith, do not try to hide from yourself that there is no man your equal in so many different walks; that some may approach you in one branch and some in another; but that, in the combination of high qualifications, you are yourself your only parallel.

When we had the pleasure to spend an hour or two together after the play, the last time I was in London, I ventured to make a few remarks on theatrical subjects that seemed to meet with your approbation; and as, in the midst of so much hiliarity as was raging round us in the tap-room of the Ducrow's Head,

you may have forgotten the purport of my observations, I will repeat them here. You were reclining with your back against the table, and a pewter pot of foaming beer resting on the knee of the red stocking-breeches in which you had performed the Crimson Fiend of the Haunted Dell, when, after some preliminary matter, I expressed an opinion – unusual, I grant, but still conscientiously entertained – of the immortal Shakspeare, on which you used language stronger perhaps than the occasion justified, and reminding me, by its conciseness and power, of some energetic M.P., against which I will enter a short protest before proceeding further in this letter. No, my dear Smith, Shakspeare was not "a bloody fool;" I should say he was very far from it; and you also added, that Fitzball would kick his soul out of his elbow in less than no time. What Mr Fitzball might be able to do by dint of great kicking, I have no means of judging; but I have no intention of placing the two authors in an antagonistic attitude on the present occasion, and therefore I trust the soul of Shakspeare will be left in peace.

What I stated was, as a general proposition, that Shakspeare has done more harm than good to the English stage.

It has always struck me that the phrase, "There is a time for all things," had a wider meaning than we usually attach to it. I think that the seed of all discoveries, past and present, was scattered ages ago – perhaps at the very creation of the world – in the mind of man; that when it had rested there long enough, and the season of its ripening came, up grew the stalk and the ear,

and the harvest was gathered, and mankind garnered it up as a provision for them and their heirs for ever. The sense of beauty lay for generation and generation, germinating in the intellects and hearts of men; and, when the time came, a whole harvest of it was gathered at one time in the statues and pictures and temples of ancient Greece. But it was only the greater and more flourishing portion of the increase that grew in that birth-place of gods and heroes. The seed was scattered over a wider surface; and, if we could recover proofs of it, I should not at all fear to bet you two half-pints to one, that there were sculptors and painters in Asia and in Egypt, equal, in their several manners, to Phidias and Apelles. When printing, in the same way, had lain in furrow the proper time, the first blades of it began to appear in many regions at the same period. With steam it is the same; and, when the next invention is brought into practical use, it will be found that the thought of it had agitated hundreds of minds by the Rhine, by the Thames, by the Hudson, and perhaps by the sacred Ganges, or the still more sacred Nile.

I think I hear your deep sepulchral tones in the exclamation of, "All that 'ere is rubbage – cut it short!" and it is my intention, my dear Smith, to cut it short at once. When the drama's time was come, the whole of civilized Europe saw the glorious birth. In Spain and in England the soil was found most congenial; and the theatre in those countries took at once its place as the best possible instructor – next, of course, to the church – and its lessons were inculcated by the inspired possessors of the art,

Lope de Vega and Shakspeare. The Spaniard was born in 1566 – the Englishman two years earlier; so that, allowing both to have reached the maturity of their powers at thirty years of age, and to have retained them twenty years, the appointed hour for the perfection of the drama was the end of the sixteenth century and the beginning of the next. Now, my dear Smith, cast your luminous eye over the state of society at that period. Lope was a volunteer on board of the Spanish Armada. Shakspeare, perhaps, saw Elizabeth ride forth to review the troops at Tilbury. Middle-aged men, with whom Shakspeare conversed in his youth, had seen the execution of Anne Boleyn. Old fellows, with whom both of them associated, had been present at the Field of the Cloth of Gold. And, above all, they had both of them watched, but with very different hopes, the ferocious progress of the Duke of Alva, and heard the echoes of the battle-cry of liberty and Protestantism beside the ditches and mounds of Holland; and the genius of these two men bears impress of the awful period in the world's history which had been reserved for their birth. They were both animated by the struggle in which the whole earth was engaged. Lope did battle for the church – the Pope – and, if need be, would have done so – for the devil, if he had worn a mitre; he wrote plays where the heretics required an immense quantity of rosin and blue lights to do justice to their appalling situation. He preached, and prayed, and excommunicated, and stirred up men's minds to enjoy the splendours of an *auto-da-fé*; and, for all these, he was honoured by Pope and Cæsar; was

created a knight of Alcantara; and, as the acme to his glory, was made a *familiar* of the Holy Inquisition. Shakspeare no less felt the influence of the time. The old oppressive bonds under which bone and sinew were compressed in order to make jolly old England a footstool for the gouty toes of a wicked old man at Rome, (unless you choose rather to consider him an unfortunate female, clothed in scarlet, and sitting on seven hills,) had been snapt asunder. Henry VIII. (to borrow your own classical expression, my dear Smith, as applied to your stage manager, "the regularest beast as ever was," but the most useful beast mentioned in any natural history I have ever met with) had determined to sit on the seven hills himself; and little Edward had built a nice villa on the sunny slope of one of them; and Mary had tried to tumble it down again; and Elizabeth had planted round it, and laid out the grounds for national recreation and use – like the park at Battersea, whenever that scheme is carried into effect; and all men's minds were in a flurry. Some drank themselves to death; some took to privateering; and many took to having visions and dreaming dreams; and, in the midst of it, Shakspeare rushed in a fury to his pen, and wrote play after play – very noble, very bright, very wonderful – but mad – decidedly mad – the whole time. Every body was mad; Essex galloped through London streets, thinking, by mere dint of hard riding, to rouse the peaceful citizens to take up arms in his behalf, as if the very stones would rise and mutiny – a very mad idea, you will grant; Raleigh set off to seize as much wealth as would have

bought the fee-simple of a moderate kingdom, with scarcely a sufficient force to follow the heroic Widdicombe at the battle of Waterloo – not a very wise proceeding, you will allow; and the greatest proof of the universal insanity is, that nobody thought Essex or Raleigh mad for doing as they did. Nor did the calmest observers – if there were any "calm observers" in those days – perceive that Shakspeare was labouring under an access of the most confirmed delirium. They listened to *Hamlet*, and *Lear*, and *Othello*, and did not discover that his inspiration was the effect of over-excitement; that his energy was the preternatural strength bestowed on him by convulsion; and that, in fact, instead of being a swan of Avon, he was neither more nor less than a March hare.

Pardon me, my dear Smith, in the escapade in the last page or two – it is a figurative mode of speech, and you will at once dissect the *alligator* through all its scales, and see every thing it is intended to convey. It was a mad world, my masters; and, as you generally find an inferior dauber magnify the peculiarities of a great man's style, so as to give a better idea of his manner than you gather from his own performances, let us see the prodigious insanity developed in the imitators of Shakspeare. Never, till I saw the brass knocker on the door of the Vizier's palace in Timor the Tartar, painted, you told me, by Wilkins of the *Yorkshire Stingo*, did I know how you produced your marvellous effects on the door of Billy Button, the tailor of Brentford. The Vizier's knocker was a caricature; but it showed your style. So, read the love-scenes of any dramatist during Shakspeare's period –

or the heroic passages of any poetaster copying his manner; – isn't that Bedlam, my dear Smith? isn't that Hanwell? Read the rhapsodies of Nat Lee – (by a stretch of truth-speaking which it would be wise to make more common) – called mad Nat Lee. What do you see in him more indicative of insanity than in any play of Shakspeare you like to name? Not, understand me, that Shakspeare was mad according to the standard of sanity in his own day. Far from it; he was infinitely wise compared to any man in his century, except, perhaps, Bacon and Burleigh, and retired to Stratford-on-Avon with a realized fortune equal to twelve or fifteen hundred a-year. But all mankind run the risk of having a different standard applied to them from that according to which they were measured during life. Diocletian was thought an excellent emperor for persecuting the Christians – we think him a considerable beast for doing so, now. Cortez was thought the perfect image of a hero for slaughtering the Mexicans, and the noblest of Christian missionaries for putting the heretical Montezuma to death – we think Cortez not quite so respectable a character as Greenacre or Burke. And it is most just that each century should pass its predecessors in review, and apply its own lights to bring every feature forward. What progress would there be open to the human mind if we were for ever to go on viewing incidents exactly as they were viewed when they occurred? Are we to go on believing Galileo an infidel, because his discoveries were condemned by his contemporaries? Are we to think all the butchers, conquerors, and destroyers of

mankind, great men, because their own age was terrified at their power, and proclaimed them heroes? The time may come when the great Bunn's efforts to make Drury-Lane into a squeaking, dancing, and dirty imitation of the Italian Opera, will not be considered conducive to the triumph of the legitimate English drama. Many things of this sort, my dear friend, may take place, and most justly; for each present generation is as the highest court of legislation – it can repeal all old acts, but it cannot bind its successors. Now, do me the favour to finish the pot of porter which, in my mind's eye, I see you dandling on your crossed knee, while your left hand, with easy elegance, is supporting the bowl of your pipe – and see how these observations apply to Shakspeare. He has ruined the stage; he has fixed its taste for ever, by establishing one unvarying standard for plot, language, and character – and that is his own. There can be no progress – not merely meaning, by progress, improvement, but, positively, no change. He blocks up every access to the dramatic Parnassus – he has acquired an entire monopoly of the heroines in Collins' Ode – and woe to the intruder into the sacred precincts of his zenana. Well, he *was* a tremendous Turk, that old swan of Avon – there is no denying the fact; but what I complain of is, that no other Leda should be looked at for a moment but only his. No man can look at the Swan for an instant, and doubt that the king of gods and men has disguised himself in that avatar of web-feet and feathers. Jupiter is only enveloped, not concealed; but, at the same time, is it possible to be blind to the fact, that he has

degraded himself to the habits of the flat-billed bird – that he waddles most unmercifully when by chance he leaves the lake? – that he hisses and croaks most unmusical, most melancholy? – and that he gathers all unclean garbage for his food – newts, and frogs, and crawling worms? In short, that though, in his pride, and grandeur, and passionate energy, he is the Tyrant of Olympus, he is, in many other respects, an animal not greatly to be admired – by no means comparable as a dish at Christmas to a well-fed goose, or even a couple of ducks. For reading aloud to ladies after tea, I prefer *Ion* to *Othello*. And now, my excellent friend, I will tell you the reason – not why I prefer *Ion*, which, though I have introduced it in this flippant manner, I consider a very beautiful and poetical drama – but why no play of Shakspeare is fit to be read to a party of ladies after tea. It is this – that ladies, in one sense of the word, were as unknown in Shakspeare's days as tea. There were certain human beings that wore petticoats, and, in due course of time, fulfilled the original command, and died; but, shades of Hannah More and Anne Seward! to call them ladies would be as absurd as to call Dulcinea del Tobosa a princess of the blood. A friend of mine – a well-known non-commissioned officer in the Devil's Own – told me this story, which I mention to you, my dear Smith, in strict confidence, in case the heroine of the anecdote should find that her confession is made known. An old lady – properly so called, both as respects the adjective and the noun, for she was past eighty, and was refined and pure – astonished my friend, by asking him one day to try and get a

volume or two for her of the works of Assa Behn. He did so – no little wondering at such a choice of books – and in a day the novel was returned, "I send you back these volumes," she said, "as I am unable to get through the first. Is it not strange that I, an old woman, sitting in my own room, am positively ashamed and disgusted at the scenes and conversations which were read aloud to me in mixed companies, without a blush or shudder, when I was eighteen?"

Now, in Shakspeare's time, there was no female in the land that would have stumbled at the grossest passages in Assa Behn. The tenderness, delicacy, and beauty of the feminine character were still in the future tense; and, therefore, it is not a matter of surprise that the female characters in Shakspeare were original *creations*, and not transcripts from human life. For the time and the state of society when the plays were written, they are instances of the most marvellous imagination. But they were as purely fictitious as Caliban or Ariel. They borrowed from the infinite riches of the poet their noble or tender thoughts; but whenever he tried to make them more than abstractions – to unite them to the sympathies of his audience – or to clothe them in real flesh and blood – look at the means he takes – listen to the conversations of Miss Juliet and the songs of Ophelia – and you will perceive what were the lessons his experience in actual men and women had taught him.

It is impossible, my dear Smith, for a Frenchman to write an English comedy – and why? Because the turn of his mind,

and unacquaintance with the peculiarities of our dispositions, unfit him for it. But not more separated from us is the Parisian Feuilletonist by his language and manners, not to mention the Channel, than the author of Elizabeth's and James's days by the lapse of two hundred years, and the total alteration of our modes of thought; and yet how frightfully you would be laughed at for applying the remark to Shakspeare, though, between ourselves, my dear fellow, he is the very man to call it forth! Oh, how vividly I can fancy the exclamations of Jiggles of the Victoria, or Pumpkins of the Stepney Temple of Thespis! "He is the poet of all time!" says Jiggles, with a thump on the table that sets all the pewter pots dancing. "Do you mean, Mr Bobson," cries Pumpkins, with a triumphant curl of his lip, "to say, that the laws of nature are transitory as the fashion of a coat, and that what was nature at one period will not be nature at another?" If he should ask you this question, my dear sir, tell him at once that that is decidedly your opinion, or, if it is not, tell him that it is most unquestionably mine; for most assuredly the same train of thought that would be natural among the chiefs of the Druids, would be most absurdly out of character if attributed to the bench of Bishops. "Oho!" exclaims Pumpkins, "what has the bench of Bishops to do with it? We maintain that Shakspeare, or any one else, having written a play wherein the sentiments of the Druids were once true to nature, those sentiments will continue true to nature to the end of time."

By no means, Mr Pumpkins. Certain sentiments were *thought*

true to nature by the critics and audience at the beginning of the seventeenth century; but nature, like every thing else, assumes a different appearance according to the point it is viewed from. At a time when human life was not very highly valued, and woman's feelings were held in no reverence or respect, it was, perhaps, thought "natural" that the Prince of Denmark should stab old Polonius and bully his daughter to death; but in this nineteenth century of time, no amount of insanity, real or assumed, will make us think it in accordance with the high and noble *nature* of the philosophic prince, either to sneer at the poor old whiteheaded courtier he has murdered, or taunt the little trusting girl he has taught to love him. If it were not for the name of Shakspeare, Hamlet would be set down as nearly the beau-ideal of a snob – a combination of the pedantry of James and the unmanliness of Buckingham. Read the play, with this key to the character, and you will find it quite as true to nature as in the laborious glosses of Schlegel and Göethe.

If I ever have the honour to meet you again at the Ducrow Arms, I will enter more fully into this part of my view of the injuries inflicted on the stage by Shakspeare. It will be sufficient, at the present time, to condense my meaning into this one remark, that the nature of 1600 is not necessarily the nature of 1846, and probably is as different as the statesmanship of Sir Robert Cecil from that of Sir Robert Peel. If there had been a controller of politicians as powerful as the controller of the stage, we should have had the right honourable baronet making Popery

punishable with death, dressed in trunk breeches and silver shoe-buckles – or taking measures to lessen the alarming power of Spain.

You think, perhaps, that I have let you off altogether, because I have declined enlarging on this particular point; but no, my dear Smith, I have not had half my say out yet. It is not only that things are presented to us in Shakspeare's plays in a way that *was* admirable, because adapted to the feelings and fancies of the time, when they first enriched the Globe, but not so admirable now: I have also to find fault with the manner in which the characters – granting that they are true to nature – are developed and made palpable to vulgar eyes. The fact is, my benevolent friend, that every thing is gigantic in his conceptions. He is like a sculptor who despises the easy flow of the resting figure, and fills his studio with agonizing athletes – every muscle on the stretch – the eyeballs projecting, and the hair on end. Even when he carves a slumbering nymph, her proportions are tremendous – she is like a sleeping tigress, calm and hushed, but giving evidence of preternatural strength; her very softness is the softness of melted gold – when it hardens it will kill like lead; or, if that is a bad image, her very quiet is the quiet of the sea – let the wind blow, and then – ! Don't you see that Ophelia – Juliet – Imogen – all of them, are endowed with tremendous *power*, as well as other qualities? And that, as to the heroes, they are regular volcanoes every one of them? Is not this proved by the fact, that there is no hero in Shakspeare who does not demand as much bodily labour

from his representative as would tire out a coal-whipper on the Thames? Is there one leading part in any of his plays that does not require an enormous outlay of voice? Now, can it be possible that no deep passion can coexist with a weak thorax? Run over the principal plays —*Macbeth*, *Richard*, *Romeo*, *Hamlet* again, *Lear*– and depend on it, that this loudness of exclamation is not stage trick; it is part of the development of the character; and therefore I shall always blame that infernal asthmatical tendency of mine for having induced Mr Whibbler, of the Whitechapel Imperial, to decline my services when I offered to act Coriolanus for my own benefit, gratis. The consequence, however, of this Shakspearian fancy, of placing characters of passion in positions where they must split the ears of the groundlings, is, that it has become an English article of faith, that without some prodigious explosions, calling out the whole strength of the actor's lungs, the character falls dead. The Indian could not believe the air-gun had killed the bird, because he did not hear the report. We have reversed the Indian mode of reasoning, and always believe it is the noise that kills the bird. Oh, Smith! think of the bellowings of Sir Giles Overreach – and Barbarossa – and Zanga – and the diabolical howlings of Belvidera, and Isabella, and the Mourning Bride. Can people have no passion that don't disturb the whole neighbourhood with their noise? Can a woman not find out she has been jilted without risking a bloodvessel? Is this the way they do in common life? I remember when that girl at Bermondsey hauled me up before David Jardine, and produced all my letters,

and the ring I had given her * * * * she never spoke above her breath. And I was very glad to hush it up with four-and-sixpence a-week.

Now the fault of Shakspeare is this, not that he puts tearing, ramping language in the mouths of his heroes – for in their positions it is the only language fit to use – but that, in accordance with the bullying, blustering habits of his day, he has placed every one of his heroes in such a situation, that blustering and bullying is the only thing he can do. And therefore every man who writes plays at the present, and at any future time, must have a hero first-cousin at least to Stentor. Who would venture to place Louis the Eleventh on the boards? He probably never spoke louder than a physician at a consultation – no, not when he confronted the Duke of Burgundy. He would have to glide noiselessly from scene to scene, a whisper here, a look there, and perhaps a shrug of the shoulder or scarcely perceptible motion of the hand; yet, all through, it would be evident that he was the snake on two legs, the anointed Mephistopheles, the intellect without the feeling – and, with all that, he could not be the hero of a play. Or, if he was made the hero, he would be changed from the quiet self-contained character I have supposed him, to a more *effective* one. He would have sudden starts of anger which would not be in keeping; outbursts of fiery imprecation which would not be in keeping; or, if the poet was much put to it, he might be shown, answering taunt for taunt, and threat for threat, with the ferocious Charles, which would certainly not be in such keeping

as he himself was at the fortress of Peronne. So you see the fact of Shakspeare covering the stage with Titans, and forming them with Titanic thoughts, and endowing them with Titanic voices, has rendered it indispensable for all the little fellows of the present time to be prodigiously Titanic too. Did you ever hear the skipper of a steamer bellowing and roaring through a speaking-trumpet, when his ordinary voice could have had no effect amidst the awful noises of a hurricane, and the sea and the breakers under his lee? Nothing could be fitter than his attitude on the creaking paddle-box, and the thunderous sound that issued from the tube. But wouldn't it be absurd for the commander of the Hugh Frazer, amid the quiet waters of Loch-Lomond, to give orders to the little boy that holds the helm, or point out the beauties of Inversnaid, through an instrument that would startle all the cattle on the surrounding hills? Just so with Shakspeare's kings and lovers. They have "prave 'ords enough, look you," to fill the biggest speaking-trumpet that ever was cast; but miserable is it for men who have not such "prave 'ords," to be forced to bellow their little ones through the portentous instrument which they have not breath enough to fill.

Let me point out, my dear Smith, to your particular notice, a play which I think you will agree with me illustrates all that I have said. In *Othello* you will find the nature of the seventeenth century still forced upon us in this prodigious power – with which, unless by the magic of the author's name, we should have no sympathy; and a decided proof of how nearly allied his genius,

like that of every body else worth mentioning of his day, was to madness.

First, No man of the nineteenth century who knew the noble position in which civilization and religion have placed woman, would have fixed on such a subject. In the closet, when you only see the courage, fame, and dignity of the hero, you can find some excuses for the girl who is won by these attributes, and bestows her love on the possessor of them, albeit he is fallen into the sere and yellow leaf. But look at him on the stage – though the best and most intellectual of our actors represent him, and this I can answer for, as the last I saw in the character was Macready – your sympathy with Desdemona is at once at an end. The woolly hair spoils all – the black face separates him as much from the pure and trusting love of a girl of eighteen, as if he were an ourangoutang. We agree at once with the sensible old gentleman her father, that no maid

> "So tender, fair, and happy,
> Would ever have to incur a general mock,
> Run from her guardage to the sooty bosom
> Of such a thing as he."

The sight of her endearments is nearly as horrid as those of Titania to Bottom are absurd. They are not paired, and all through the play you never can get quit of the disagreeable idea of the blubber lips. If he could be made into a noble statue in mahogany, (not ebony,) a Christianized Abdel Kader – a *real*

Moor and not a *blackâmoor*– the matter would be infinitely better; but no – Shakspeare meant him for a true specimen of the nigger, or why all the taunts about his colour, and the surprise that was evidently excited among the gossips of Venice by the match? The very refinement bestowed on Desdemona makes us have greater horror at her fault, and less sorrow at her griefs. If she had been a mere domestic piece of furniture, without any delicacy or sentiment, we should not have been more revolted at *her* wedding than at the nuptials of Dyce Sombre. But Desdemona, a gentle lady, married to a Sambo! – impossible! She was either not the fair and simple creature she is painted to us, or she did not outrage humanity so abominably as to follow the example of the brewer's maid in the charming song you favoured us with in the skittle-ground, of which the burden is —

"She ran away with a black man."

If she did, choking with a pillow is too good for her; she ought rather to have been done to death in a bag of soot.

But passing over the incongruity of the lovers, is not the whole play filled with convulsive energies and unhealthy bursts of passion? For my part – but in this, my dear Smith, I will willingly yield to your better judgment – I think Iago was intended for the hero of the play. He is the mainspring of the whole plot; he pulls all the wires; and, to use an elegant expression of your own, he twists them all round his thumb. Critically, if superiority in mere intellect and strong self-will, or even success in the object he designs, constitute a hero, the clear-witted, audacious, subtle

Ancient has entirely the upper hand of the trusting, hood-winked pigeon, Othello —

> "That thinks men honest that but seem to be so,
> And will as tenderly be led by the nose
> As asses are."

The only fault is, that, for a clever fellow, Iago takes too much pains to *show* his cleverness. If he does not wear his heart upon his sleeve for daws to peck at, it must be for two reasons; first, that no gentleman wears his heart any where but inside of his chest; and secondly, that hearts are not the favourite food of the bird mentioned; but he lets slip no opportunity of displaying his wit, ingenuity, and powers of acting – for Iago is a part in which the actor acts an actor – and precisely in proportion as he shows he is acting, is he successful in the character. The usual error is in showing too little of the actor in his interviews with Cassio and Othello; his friendliness, sycophancy, and good humour become too real, as if it were the performer's cue to enact those qualities, whereas he is only to assume them for the nonce – the real presentment of the man being a malicious, revengeful, and astute villain. I think, also, my dear fellow, that our friend Iago is too communicative, not only to such a noodle-pate as Roderigo, but to the many-headed monster the Pit. He comes forward, and exactly in the same way as M. Philippe informs his audience – "Now I vill show you a ver' vonderful trick. I vill put de tea into dis canister – I vill put de sugar into dat; and I vill put de cream

into dis leetle jug, and den you shall see dat you shall have de excellent cup of tea vidout any vater." And, by shaking first one canister and then another, out comes some capital tea, as hot as if you had seen the kettle boiling. So does the insinuating Iago, and says – "You shall see what you shall see. I will make Othello jealous of Cassio – I will make Cassio drunk, and get him into a quarrel on guard – and I will make him apply to Desdemona for her interest with her husband on his behalf;" and, *presto!* first one scene, and then another – Othello gets jealous – Cassio gets drunk – and Desdemona pleads most innocently for his forgiveness. It strikes me to be letting an audience too much into the secret. I prefer such a scene as that in which the Demon of the Blood-red Glen creates an effect by springing over the foot-lights, and landing (quite unexpected by boxes, pit, or gallery) on the back of the flying Arabian, completely apparelled as the American Apollo. I have seen the Kentucky voltigeur introduce a fancy-dance on two wild steeds, and jump through a fiery hoop in the character of Shylock; and I confess I liked him better in those happy days at New York, than since he has proclaimed himself as the great transatlantic tragedian, and has set up as an infallible critic because he has proved himself a fallible actor.

And then the death of Desdemona! My dear Smith – I appeal to your own noble feelings, as a husband and a Christian, – if you thought Mrs Smith a little too fond of Cassio – or any other lieutenant, – if you even found she had given him one of your best handkerchiefs to make him a nightcap – nay, if you had

determined even to achieve widowerhood with your own hands, would you take the instrument Othello uses for the purpose? I ask you as a man and a gentleman. You would borrow a pistol – you would take up a knife – you would purchase arsenic – but you would not undergo the personal fatigue of Burking her in her bed! But it is not with you I have to do just now. I go back to Shakspeare and his times – and I maintain that the manner of Desdemona's murder could only be tolerable in the state of society at the time it was presented. I suspect the very appliances of the modern stage bring the repulsiveness of the incident more prominently forward. There is a beautifully furnished room – a dressing-table beside the bed – nice curtains drawn all round it – snow-white sheets, and a pair of very handsome bed-room candles. The bed-room is brought too prominently forward; and when Desdemona is discovered asleep, it needs all the magic of Shakspeare's name, and the reverence that his genius has created and maintains, even upon the shilling gallery, to prevent the tragic interest from turning into another channel. The contrast is too great between the truthfulness of the bed-curtains and easy-chair, and the horrid purpose – which ought to be idealized, and not realized – for which the Moor enters the room. It is a frightful, blackfaced murderer – designed in the seventeenth century, and considered true to nature then, coming into the open daylight of the nineteenth, casting his Elizabethan energies into forms repulsive to the sentiments of our Victorian time; and we should also feel, if the play were presented to us for the first time, that

an Othello created by Shakspeare – if he had been left for these latter times – would not have murdered his wife with a pillow – if he had murdered her at all – and would not have brought forward on the stage the bed-room of a jealous husband, with his wife expecting his approach. The barrenness of the stage in Shakspeare's time was an advantage in a scene like this; – when people were told to fancy that old bench was a bed, and that the close-shaved stripling reclining on it was a woman – the imagination was set down to a feast of its own: the scanty scenery became an accessory – not a realization – all that was palpable was the innocence and sacrifice of the heroine – and the awful and inexpressible struggles of the man.

Do you see what I mean? Do you agree with me that it was a misfortune to the British drama that the summit of its glory was reached by Shakspeare so long ago; – a Shakspeare that knew the whole secrets of the human heart, as the human heart existed before his time – or at least as it was supposed in his time to exist; – a Shakspeare who was ignorant of the Great Rebellion – of the Restoration – of the Revolution – of the glorious First of June – of the Guillotine – of Napoleon – of Trafalgar – of Waterloo; – a Shakspeare who had never seen a telegraph – a mail-coach – a steam-boat – a railway. What sort of a man must this have been, that still maintains possession of the stage – that keeps (as I maintain) the British taste in a state of almost mediæval roughness, and chains the dramatic art itself to the slab over his grave? Perhaps, my dear Smith, the immortal

Bunn is right after all. Perhaps, if all managers were to follow his example for forty years – if for forty years mankind were condemned to the wilderness of operas, and divertisements, and farces – we should forget the flavour of the flesh-pots (furnished by Shakspeare) which has so completely mastered our taste; – some Joshua would lead us into a chosen land, and feed us with all manner of delights; – the stage, I mean, would come, like the aloe, to a second flower, only resembling its ancient crown in its life and beauty, but smelling of the present time.

For no beer, you will grant, is so pleasant as that which has the froth on. Its freshness even compensates for its want of strength. But if, in addition to being fresher by two hundred years than the tap of William Shakspeare of Stratford, it were as strong – as cunningly mixed of malt and hops – and had as beautiful a flavour as his had when it was first brewed – eh! Smith? What do you think, then? Isn't it worth while to live forty years on the chance? isn't it worth while to be teetotallers in the meantime? to live upon slops and gruel? Gentlemen, I propose the health of Mr Lumley and Mr Bunn.

I remain, my dear Smith,
Your admirer and friend,

G. Bobson.

BIRBONIANA; OR, ITALIAN ANTIQUARIES AND ANTICHITÀ

"Birbone – a Jew, a cheat, a rogue, a vagabond, a liar, a coiner, an utterer of all things base and false – an Antiquary!" – Baretti's *Italian Dict.*

"Ah me! it is a dangerous freak,
When men *will* dabble with Antique." —*Hudibras(?)*

Scene I. – The Introduction

We will now introduce the reader to an antiquarian scene or two *chez nous*, transcribed from our journal as we entered them therein at the time. When it was currently understood throughout Naples – it did not take long for the report to spread – that we were a professed purchaser of antiquities, and "at home" to antiquaries, we were besieged all day and every day by a host of dealers, jewellers and Jews, whom the waiters were weary of announcing, and were still obliged to announce, who came with bundles under their arms, filled with things "ugly and old exceedingly," which they wished to dispose of as bargains, and hoped we would purchase. They came early in the morning; they

braved the fiery heat of noon; they bided their time whilst we sat at dinner; and, on returning from our moonlit drive, we are prepared for the announcement that somebody still waits with something still unshown for us to see. Sometimes one man will come alone, and if he finds us unassailable or indifferent, he will take care to return next time in company with an accomplice, – an honest, plain fellow in his dealings, who, actuated by feelings of pure humanity, and in pursuance of his sturdy motto of "*fiat justitia ruat cœlum*," will, at the risk of offending his friend, alter his prices, and propose others vastly more equitable and advantageous for *us*. Enters one day a brace of these rogues at breakfast – two such palpable rogues *in face* that you needed no proficiency in Lavater to know at once with whom you had to deal. One of the pair, *par nobile fratrum*, gives a very respectful, the other, what is meant for a very courtly, bow. "*This gentleman*," says one unknown individual introducing the other – "*This gentleman* has just landed from Sicily, bringing with him a small collection of coins —*vergini tutti*– all virgins, and on which no amateur's eye has yet rested even for a moment." "*Non e vero, Cavaliere?*" "*Altro che vero!*" responds the cavalier. "I, sir," resumes the other, "am, as you have doubtless perceived, the poor *mezzano*, the mere umpire in this business; *I* have no interest in the sale of any articles in that gentleman's pockets; it was by the merest accident that I heard of his arrival an hour ago; and, as I know he must have something *good*, I pounced upon him at once – would not give him time even to shave, (*voyez*

un peu cette barbe farouche– it was so), but brought him hither in great haste, lest others —*vous concevez qu'à Naples*." "To be sure we did; but did not the Cavaliere understand French?" "Not a word." "What says the Signore?" interrogates the unshaved Sicilian noble; "*Domanda se lei capisce il Francese?*" "*Niente*," not a bit of it, returns he, shaking his head guilelessly. "*Non importa*, – it's of no importance. You, Cavaliere, will mention your prices to me, I will propose them to this gentleman – he his; I will then give *my opinion* as to what is *fair* between you, and thus we shall, I trust, do a little business to the satisfaction of both. Signor Cavaliere *s'accommodi*." Thus admonished of *our* breach of manners in having kept the Cavaliere standing, we would fain atone for it on the spot, by begging the "mezzano" also to take a chair; but he declines it with modest confusion of face. "*Come? ma che?*" he has no pretension or business to place himself between "*due illustrissimi signori*," whose poor interpreter he is. We overcome his scruples, and all sit down, closely packed round a small table; while the noble dealer was unshrouding what seemed, from the length of time and material employed upon it, to be a *mummy*, and, from its size, perhaps a *rat*. We were all eagerness and expectancy, forming, as we sat, a *capo d'opera* for Valentine or Caravaggio, well grouped, and ripe and ready for the canvass. At length the "unwinding bout" draws to its close; the last wrapping is unwrapped; and a small bronze Venus, without a shift, falls on her haunches on the table. "What a beautiful *pezzo* have we here!" says the umpire, assuming the

air of a man well versed in such matters, and turning her round to admire her proportions; "and where," asks he, in a manner that showed he had guessed the answer before receiving it; "where might this have been *dug up*?" "*Nei contorni di Lentine*," was the ready answer, and so *he* "had expected to hear it was; all the best *opere Greche* now come from that neighbourhood." We made no remark; there was a pause; we watched the countenance of the *mezzano*; he seemed to be getting more and more absorbed in the contemplation of the little Venus, till, after taking his time, while he appeared oblivious of time, his pent-up enthusiasm at the sight of charms which rivet his attention, but are beyond his powers of expression, finds vent in the very convenient formula of "*Pare impossibile!*" which, in the language of *English* dilletanteism has no equivalent; then suddenly recollecting himself, and fearing lest, if he kept her too long, we might be jealous, he confided her gently to our hands, and having done so, said a second time, "*Pare impossibile!*" We, too, turned her round, and (one good turn tending to another) in the absence of any better occupation at the moment, we turned her round a second time; and having done so, put her down upon the table, without a word of comment. It was a tolerably well-shaped little figure, in a very *green modern gown*, and when *we* were very green, three years ago, we had purchased a twin-born sister of hers at Capua, which we now rose to produce, and placed her side by side the other. Our visitors exchanged glances; the Cavaliere would have said that *ours* is a copy —*his* the original; but we remind him that a week ago his

model did not exist, from which to have made such a copy; and the *mezzano*, seeing that the game is up, says his friend must have been imposed upon! that there is not a more honest man breathing than the Cavaliere! that, in fact, it has been an awkward affair for *him*! *"Pare impossibile," thought* we, that rogues should be so bold! "Had he, the Cavaliere, any thing more to show?" ask we of the *mezzano* in French. "To what purpose," answers the Cavaliere, *suddenly understanding French*; "to what purpose should I waste that gentleman's time, and *my own*, in the long process of unwrapping things, which, when unwrapped, he is sure to pronounce modern?" and the Cavaliere went away in dudgeon, and quite "cavalierly."

It being generally understood that yesterday was to be our last day in Naples, our friends the *antiquari* flocked in from all quarters of the town to pay valedictory visits, and to hope, each man for himself, that *he*

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