VARIOUS

BLACKWOODS EDINBURGH MAGAZINE, VOLUME 59, NO. 365, MARCH, 1846

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Содержание

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THE TWENTY-FOURTH BOOK OF HOMER'S ILIAD,

Attempted in English Hexameters

[It may be thought idle or presumptuous to make a new attempt towards the naturalization among us of any measure based on the ancient hexameter. Even Mr Southey has not been in general successful in such efforts; yet no one can deny that here and there – as, for instance, at the opening of his *Vision of Judgment*, and in his Fragment on *Mahomet*– he has produced English hexameters of very happy construction, uniting vigour with harmony. His occasional success marks a step of decided progress. Dr Whewell also, in some passages of his *Hermann and Dorothea*, reached a musical effect sufficient to show, that, if he

had bestowed more leisure, he might have rendered the whole of Goethe's masterpiece in its original measure, at least as agreeably as the *Faust* has been presented to us hitherto. Mr Coleridge's felicity, both in the Elegiac metre and a slight variation of the Hendecasyllabic, is universally acknowledged.

The present experiment was made before the writer had seen the German Homer of Voss; but in revising his MS. he has had that skillful performance by him, and he has now and then, as he hopes, derived advantage from its study. Part of the first book of the *Iliad* is said to have been accomplished by Wolff in a still superior manner; but the writer has never had the advantage of comparing it with Voss. Nor was he acquainted, until he had finished his task, with a small specimen of the first book in English hexameters, which occurs in the *History of English Rhythms*, lately published by Mr E. Guest, of Caius College, Cambridge.

Like Voss and Mr Guest, he has chosen to adhere to the Homeric names of the deities, in place of adopting the Latin forms; and in this matter he has little doubt that every scholar will approve his choice. Mr Archdeacon Williams has commonly followed the same plan in those very spirited prose translations that adorn his learned Essay, *Homerus*.

It is hardly necessary to interpret these names: as, perhaps, no one will give much attention to the following pages, who does not already know that Zeus answers to Jupiter – and that Kronion is a usual Homeric designation of Zeus, signifying the son of

Kronos = Saturn: that Hera is Juno; Poseidon, Neptune: Ares, Mars; Artemis, Diana; Aphrodité, Venus; Hermes, Mercury; and so forth.

Should this experiment be received with any favour, the writer has in his portfolio a good deal of Homer, long since translated in the same manner; and he would not be reluctant to attempt the completion of an Iliad in English Hexameters, such as he can make them.

N.N.T.

London, *Jan.* 31, 1846.]

Now the assembly dissolv'd; and the multitude rose and disperst them,
Each making speed to the ships, for the needful refreshment of nature,
Food and the sweetness of sleep; but alone in his tent was Achilles,
Weeping the friend that he lov'd; nor could Sleep, the subduer of all things,
Master his grief; but he turn'd him continually hither and thither,
Thinking of all that was gracious and brave in departed Patroclus,
And of the manifold days they two had been toilfully comrades,
Both in the battles of men and the perilous tempests of ocean.
Now on his side, and anon on his back, or with countenance

downward,
Prone in his anguish he sank: then suddenly starting, he wander'd,
Desolate, forth by the shore; till he noted the burst of the morning
As on the waters it gleam'd, and the surf-beaten length of the sand-beach.
Instantly then did he harness his swift-footed horses, and corded
Hector in rear of the car, to be dragg'd at the wheels in dishonour.
Thrice at the speed he encircled the tomb of the son of Menœtius,
Ere he repos'd him again in his tent, and abandon'd the body,
Flung on its face in the dust; but not unobserv'd of Apollo.
He, though the hero was dead, with compassionate tenderness eyed him,
And with the ægis of gold all over protected from blemish,
Not to be mangled or marr'd in the turbulent trailing of anger.

Thus in the rage of his mood did he outrage illustrious Hector;
But from the mansions of bliss the Immortals beheld him with pity,
And to a stealthy removal incited the slayer of Argus.
This by the rest was approv'd; but neither of Hera, the white-arm'd,
Nor of the Blue-eyed Maid, nor of Earth-disturbing Poseidon.

Steadfast were they in their hatred of Troy, and her king, and her people,
Even as of old when they swore to avenge the presumption of Paris,
Who at his shieling insulted majestical Hera and Pallas,
Yielding the glory to her that had bribed him with wanton allurements.
But when suspense had endured to the twelfth reappearance of morning,
Thus, in the midst of the Gods, outspake to them Phœbus Apollo:
"Cruel are ye and ungrateful, O Gods! was there sacrifice never
Either of goats or of beeves on your altars devoted by Hector,
Whom thus, dead as he lies, ye will neither admit to be ransom'd,
Nor to be seen of his wife, or his child, or the mother that bore him,
Nor of his father the king, or the people, with woful concernment
Eager to wrap him in fire and accomplish the rites of departure?
But with the sanction of Gods ye uphold the insensate Achilles,
Brutal, perverted in reason, to every remorseful emotion
Harden'd his heart, as the lion that roams in untameable wildness;
Who, giving sway to the pride of his strength and his truculent impulse,

Rushes on sheep in the fold, and engorges his banquet of murder;
So has the Myrmidon kill'd compassion, nor breathes in his bosom
Shame, which is potent for good among mortals, as well as for evil.
Dear was Patroclus to him, but the mourner that buries a brother,
Yea, and the father forlorn, that has stood by the grave of his offspring,
These, even these, having wept and lamented, are sooth'd into calmness,
For in the spirit of man have the Destinies planted submission.
But because Hector in battle arrested the life of his comrade,
Therefore encircling the tomb, at the speed of his furious horses,
Drags he the corse of the fall'n: Neither seemly the action nor prudent;
He among Us peradventure may rouse a retributing vengeance,
Brave though he be, that insults the insensible clay in his frenzy."

Hera, the white-arm'd queen, thus answer'd Apollo in anger:
"Thou of the Silvern Bow! among them shall thy word have approval,
Who in equivalent honour have counted Achilles and Hector.
This from a man had his blood, and was nurs'd at the breast

of a woman;
He that ye estimate with him, conceiv'd in the womb of a Goddess,
Rear'd by myself, and assign'd by myself for the consort of Peleus,
Whom above all of his kindred the love of Immortals exalted.
And ye were witnesses, Gods! Thou, too, at the feast of the Bridal,
Thou, with the lyre in thy hand, ever-treacherous, friend of the guilty!"

But the Compeller of Clouds thus answer'd her, interposing:
"Hera! with Gods the debate, nor beseems the upbraiding of anger.
Not in equivalent honour the twain; yet was generous Hector
Dearest at heart to the Gods among Ilion's blood of the death-doom'd:
Dearest to me; for his gifts from his youth were unfailingly tender'd;
Never to altar of mine was his dutiful sacrifice wanting,
Savour, or costly libation; for such is our homage appointed.
Dear was the generous Hector; yet never for that shall be sanction'd
Stealthy removal, or aught that receives not assent from Achilles.
Daily and nightly, be sure, in his sorrow his mother attends him;
Swiftly some messenger hence, and let Thetis be moved to approach me:

So may some temperate word find way to his heart, and Peleides
Bend to the gifts of the king, and surrender the body of Hector."

Zeus having spoken, up sprang, for his messenger, swift-footed Iris;
And between Samos anon and the rocks of precipitous Imber
Smote on the black sea-wave, and about her the channel resounded:
Then, as the horn-fixt lead drops sheer from the hand of the islesman,
Fatal to ravenous fish, plung'd she to the depth of the ocean:
Where in a cavern'd recess, the abode of the sisterly Sea-nymphs,
Thetis the goddess appear'd, in the midst of them sitting dejected;
For she was ruefully brooding the fate of her glorious offspring,
Doom'd to a Phrygian grave, far off from the land of his fathers.
Near to her standing anon, thus summon'd her wind-footed Iris:
"Thetis, arise! thou art calléd by Zeus whose decrees are eternal."
But she was instantly answer'd by Thetis the silvery-footed:—
"Why hath the Mightiest calléd for me? Overburthen'd with sorrow,

How shall I stand in the place where the Gods are assembled in splendour?
Yet will I go: never word that He speaketh in vain may be spoken."

So having spoken, the Goddess in majesty peerless, arising,
Veil'd her in mantle of black; never gloomier vesture was woven;
And she advanced, but, for guidance, the wind-footed Iris preceded.
Then the o'erhanging abyss of the ocean was parted before them,
And having touched on the shore, up darted the twain into Æther;
Where, in the mansion of Zeus Far-seeing, around him were gather'd
All the assembly of Gods, without sorrow, whose life is eternal:
And by the throne was she seated; for Blue-eyed Pallas Athena
Yielded the place; and, the goblet of gold being tender'd by Hera
Softly with comforting words, soon as Thetis had drank and restored it,
Then did the Father of gods and of men thus open his purpose:
"Thou to Olympus hast come, O Goddess! though press'd with affliction;
Bearing, I know it, within thee a sorrow that ever is wakeful.

Listen then, Thetis, and hear me discover the cause of the summons:
Nine days agone there arose a contention among the Immortals,
Touching the body of Hector and Town-destroying Achilles:
Some to a stealthy removal inciting the slayer of Argus,
But in my bosom prevailing concern for the fame of Peleides,
Love and respect, as of old, toward Thee, and regard of hereafter.
Hasten then, Thou, to the camp, and by Thee let thy son be admonished:
Tell that the Gods are in anger, and I above all the Immortals,
For that the corse is detain'd by the ships, and he spurns at a ransom;
If there be awe toward me, let it move the surrender of Hector.
Iris the while will I send to bid generous Priam adventure,
That he may rescue his son, straightway to the ships of Achaia,
Laden with gifts for Achilles, wherewith to appease and content him."

Nor was the white-footed Thetis unsway'd by the word of Kronion;
But she descended amain, at a leap, from the peaks of Olympus,
And to the tent of her son went straight; and she found him within it
Groaning in heavy unrest – but around him his loving

companions
Eager in duty appear'd, as preparing the meal for the midday.
Bulky and woolly the sheep they within the pavilion had slaughter'd.
Then by the side of the chief sat Thetis the mother majestic,
And she caress'd with her hand on his cheek, and address'd him and named him —
"How long wilt thou, my child, thus groan, in a pauseless affliction
Eating thy heart, neither mindful of food nor the pillow of slumber?
Well were it surely for thee to be mingled in love with a woman;
Few are, bethink thee, the days thou shalt live in the sight of thy mother;
Near even now stands Death, and the violent Destiny shades thee.
Listen meantime to my word, for from Zeus is the message I bear thee;
Wrathful, he says, are the Gods, but himself above all the Immortals,
For that in rage thou detainest the dead, nor is ransom accepted.
Haste thee, deliver the corse, and be sooth'd with the gifts of redemption."

Ceased then Thetis divine, and Peleides the swift-footed answer'd:
"So let it be: let a ransom be brought, and the body

surrender'd,
Since the Olympian minds it in earnest, and sends the commandment."

Thus at the station of ships had the son and the mother communion.
Iris from Zeus meanwhile had descended to Ilion holy:
"Go," said he, "Iris the swift, and make speed from the seat of Olympus
Down into Ilion, bearing my message to generous Priam.
Forth to the ships let him fare with a ransom to soften Peleides —
Priam alone; not a man from the gates of the city attending:
Save that for driving the mules be some elderly herald appointed,
Who may have charge of the wain with the treasure, and back to the city
Carefully carry the dead that was slain by the godlike Achilles.
Nor be there death in the thought of the king, nor confusion of terror;
Such is the guard I assign for his guiding, the slayer of Argus,
Who shall conduct him in peace till he reaches the ships of Achaia.
Nor when, advancing alone, he has enter'd the tent of Peleides,
Need there be fear that he kill: he would shield him if menac'd by others;
For neither reasonless he, nor yet reckless, nor wilfully

wicked:
But when a suppliant bends at his knee he will kindly entreat him."

Swift at the bidding of Zeus arose wind-footed Iris, and nearing
Soon the abode of the king, found misery there and lamenting:
Low on the ground, in the hall, sat the sons of illustrious Priam,
Watering their raiment with tears, and in midst of his sons was the old man,
Wrapt in his mantle, the visage unseen, but the head and the bosom
Cover'd in dust, wherewith, rolling in anguish, his hands had bestrewn them;
But in their chambers remote were the daughters of Priam bewailing,
Mindful of them that, so many, so goodly, in youth had been slaughter'd
Under the Argive hands. But the messenger charged by Kronion
Stood by the king and in whispers address'd him, and hearing he trembled:

"Strengthen thy spirit within thee, Dardantan Priam, and fear not:
For with no message of evil have I to thy dwelling descended,
But with a kindly intent, and I come from the throne of

Kronion,
Who, though afar be his seat, with concern and compassion beholds thee.
Thee the Olympian calls to go forth for the ransom of Hector,
Laden with gifts for Peleides, wherewith to appease and content him.
Go thou alone: not a man from the gates of the city attending;
Only for guiding the mules be some elderly herald appointed,
Who may have charge of the wain with its treasure, and back to the city
Carefully carry the dead that was slain by the godlike Achilles."

Thus having spoken to Priam, the wind-footed Iris departed;
And he commanded his sons straightway to make ready the mule-wain,
Strong-built; sturdy of wheel, and upon it to fasten the coffer.
But he himself from the hall to his odorous chamber descended,
Cedarn, lofty of roof, wherein much treasure was garner'd,
And unto Hecuba calling, outspake to her generous Priam: —

"Mourner! but now at my hand hath a messenger stood from Kronion;
Me he commands to go forth to the ships for redeeming of Hector,
Carrying gifts for Peleides, wherewith to appease and content him.
Answer me truly, my spouse, and declare what of this is thy

judgment,
For of a surety my heart and my spirit with vehement urgence
Move me to go to the ships and the wide-spread host of Achaians."

Thus did he say; but the spouse of the old man shriekt, and made answer:
"Wo to me! whither are scatter'd the wits that were famous aforetime,
Not with the Trojans alone, but afar in the lands of the stranger?
Wo to me! thou to adventure, alone, to the ships of Achaia,
Into the sight of the man by whose fierceness thy sons have been murder'd,
Many, and comely, and brave! Of a surety thy heart is of iron;
For if he holds thee but once, and his eyes have been fasten'd upon thee,
Bloody and faithless is he, hope thou neither pity nor worship.
Him that is taken away let us mourn for him here in our dwelling,
Since we can see him no more; the immoveable Destiny markt him,
And it was wove in his thread, even so, in the hour that I bare him,
To be the portion of dogs, who shall feast on him far from his parents,
Under the eyes of the foe: whose liver if I could but grapple
Fast by the midst to devour, he then should have just retribution

For what he did to my son; for in no misbehaving he slew him,
But for the men of his land and the well-girt women of Troia
Firm stood Hector in field; neither mindful of flight nor avoidance."

This was her answer from Priam, the old man godlike in presence: —
"Hold me not back when my will is to go; nor thyself in my dwelling
Be the ill-omening bird: – howbe, thou shalt not persuade me.
Had I been bidden to this by a mortal of earth's generation,
Prophet, or Augur, or Priest might he be, I had deem'd him deceitful;
Not to go forth, but to stay, had the more been the bent of my purpose:
But having heard her myself, looking face unto face on the Goddess,
Go I, nor shall the word be in vain; and, if Destiny will'd me,
Going, to meet with my death at the ships of the brass-coated Argives,
So let it be. I refuse not to die by the hand of Achilles,
Clasping my son in mine arms, the desire of my sorrow accomplish'd."

So having spoken, he open'd the coffers that shone in his chamber,
Whence he selected, anon, twelve shawls surpassingly splendid;
Delicate wool-cloaks twelve, and the like of embroidered

carpets;
Twelve fair mantles of state, and of tunics as many to match them.
Next, having measur'd his gold, did he heap ten plentiful talents;
Twain were the tripods he chose, twice twain the magnificent platters;
Lastly, a goblet of price, which the chieftains of Thracia tender'd
When he on embassy journey'd: a great gift, yet did the old man
Grudge not to pluck from his store even this, for his spirit impell'd him
Eager to ransom his son: But the people who look'd on his treasure
Them did he chase from the gate, and with bitter reproaches pursued them: —
"Graceless and worthless, begone! in your homes is there nothing to weep for,
That ye in mine will harass me – or lacks it, to fill your contentment,
That the Olympian god has assign'd to me this tribulation —
Loss of a son without peer? But yourselves shall partake my affliction;
Easier far will it be for the pitiless sword of the Argives,
Now he is dead, to make havoc of you. For myself, ere I witness
Ilion storm'd in their wrath, and the fulness of her desolation,
Oh, may the Destiny yield me to enter the dwelling of

Hades!"

Speaking, he smote with his staff, and they fled from the wrath of the old man;
But, when they all had disperst, he upbraided his sons and rebuked them;
Deiphobus and Alexander, Hippothöus, generous Dius,
Came at the call of the king, with Antiphonus, Helenus, Pammon,
Agathon, noble of port, and Polites, good at the war-shout: —
These were the nine that he urged and admonish'd with bitter reproaches: —
"Hasten ye, profitless children and vile! if ye all had been slaughter'd,
Fair were the tidings to me, were but Hector in place of ye skaithless!
O, evil-destinied me! that had sons upon sons to sustain me,
None to compare in the land, and not one that had worth is remaining!
Mentor the gallant and goodly, and Tröilus prompt with the war-team;
Hector, a god among men – he, too, who in nothing resembled
Death-doom'd man's generation, but imaged the seed of Immortals —
Battle hath reft me of these: – but the shames of my house are in safety;
Jesters and singers enow, and enow that can dance on the feast-day;

Scourges and pests of the realm; bold spoilers of kids and of lambkins!
Will ye bestir ye at length, and make ready the wain and the coffer,
Piling in all that ye see, and delay me no more from my journey?"

So did he speak; but the sons, apprehending the wrath of their father,
Speedfully dragg'd to the portal the mule-wain easily-rolling,
New-built, fair to behold; and upon it the coffer was corded.
Next from the pin they unfasten'd the mule-yoke, carv'd of the box-tree,
Shaped with a prominent boss, and with strong rings skilfully fitted.
Then with the bar was unfolded the nine ells' length of the yoke-band;
But when the yoke had been placed on the smooth-wrought pole with adroitness,
Back at the end of the shaft, and the ring had been turn'd on the holder,
Hither and thither the thongs on the boss made three overlappings,
Whence, drawn singly ahead, they were tight-knit under the collar.
Next they produced at the portal, and high on the vehicle seemly
Piled the uncountable worth of the king's Hectorean head-gifts.

Then did they harness the mules, strong-hoof'd, well-matcht in their paces,
Sent of the Mysi to Priam, and splendid the gift of the stranger:
Last, to the yoke they conducted the horses which reverend Priam
Tended and cherish'd himself, of his own hand fed at the manger;
But in the high-built court these harness'd the king and the herald,
None putting hand to the yoke but the old men prudent in counsel.

Hecuba, anxious in soul, had observ'd, and anon she approach'd them,
Goblet of gold in her hand, with the generous juice of the vine-tree,
Careful they might not go forth without worshipful rite of libation.
"Take," said she; "pour unto Zeus, and beseech him in mercy to shield thee
Home again safe from the host, since thy vehement spirit impels thee
Forth to the ships, and my warning avails not to stay thee from going:
Pour it, and call on the Lord of the Black Cloud, greatest Kronion,
Him who, on Ida enthron'd, surveys wide Troia's dominion.
Pray for his messenger fleet to be issued in air on the right

hand,
Dearest of birds in his eyes, without peer in the might of the wingéd:
Trustful in whom thou may'st go to the ships of the Danäid horsemen.
But if the Thunderer God vouchsafe not his messenger freely,
Ne'er can I will thee to go, howsoever intent on the ransom."

Thus to her answer'd the king, old Priam, the godlike of presence:
"Spouse, not in this shall mine ear be averse to the voice of thy counsel;
Good is it, lifting our hands, to implore for the grace of the Godhead."

Priam demanded amain of the handmaiden, chief of the household,
Water to lave on his hands; and the handmaiden drew from the fountain
At the command of the king, and with basin and ewer attended:
Then having sprinkled his hands, and from Hecuba taken the wine-cup,
Standing in midst of the court did he worship, and pour it before them,
Fixing his eyes upon heaven, and thus audibly made supplication:

"Father, enthron'd upon Ida, in power and in glory supremest!

Grant me, approaching Peleides, to find with him mercy and favour.
Now, let thy messenger fleet issue forth in the sky on the right hand,
Dearest of birds in thine eyes, without peer in the might of the wingéd,
Seeing and trusting in whom I may go to the ships of Achaia."

So did he make supplication, and Zeus All-Provident heard him,
And on the instant an eagle, of skyborne auguries noblest,
Dark and majestic, the hunter of Æther, was sent from his footstool.
Wide as the doorway framed for the loftiest hall of a rich man
Shows, when the bolts are undrawn and the balancing valves are expanded,
Such unto either extreme was the stretch of his wings as he darted
Clear from the right, oversweeping the city: and gazing upon him,
Comforted inly were they, every bosom with confidence gladden'd.

Now to his sumptuous car with alacrity Priam ascending,
Forth from the vestibule drove, and the echoing depth of the portal.
First was the fourwheel'd wain with the strong-hoof'd Mysian mule-team,
Guided by careful Idæus, the herald: behind him the horses,

Whom with the scourge overstanding, alone in his chariot the old man
Eagerly urged through the city. But many the friends that attended,
Trooping in sorrowful throng, as if surely to death he were driving.

These, when advancing apace he went down to the plain from the rampart,
Turn'd them to Ilion again, both the sons and the sorrowing kindred.
But as he enter'd the plain, he escap'd not the eye of Kronion.
He took cognisance then, and with merciful favour beholding,
Forthwith spake to his son, ever loving in ministry, Hermes: —
"Go!" said he, "Hermes! for ever I know it thy chiefest contentment
Friendly to succour mankind, and thy pity attends supplication;
Go, and be Priam thy charge, till he reaches the ships of Achaia,
Watching and covering so that no eye of an enemy sees him,
None of the Danäids note, till he comes to the tent of Peleides."

So Zeus; nor disobey'd him the kindly ambassador Hermes.
Under his feet straightway did he fasten the beautiful sandals,
Wingéd, Ambrosian, golden, which carry him, now over ocean,

Now over measureless earth, with the speed of the wind in its blowing.
Also he lifted the wand which, touching the eyelid of mortals,
Soothes into slumber at will, or arouses the soul of the sleeper.
Grasping it, forth did he fly in his vigour, the slayer of Argus,
And to the Hellespont glided apace, and the shore of the Trojan;
Walking whereon he appear'd as a stripling of parentage royal,
Fresh with the beard first-seen, in the comeliest blossom of manhood.

But having reach'd in their journey the mighty memorial of Ilus,
Now were the elders at pause – while the horses and mules in the river
Under the sepulchre drank, and around them was creeping the twilight:
Then was the herald aware of the Argicide over against them,
Near on the shadowy plain, and he started and whisper'd to Priam:
"Think, Dardanides! think – for a prudent decision is urgent;
Yonder a man is in view, and I deem he is minded to slay us.
Come, let us flee on the horses; or instantly, bending before him,
Supplicate, grasping his knees, if perchance he may pity the agéd."

So did he speak; but confusion and great fear fell upon Priam,
And every hair was erect on the tremulous limbs in his faintness.
Dumb and bewilder'd he stood; but beneficent Hermes, approaching,
Tenderly took by the hand, and accosted and questioned the old man:
"Whither, O father! and why art thou driving the mules and the horses
Through the ambrosial night, when the rest of mankind are in slumber?
Is there no terror for thee in the pitiless host of Achaia,
Breathing of fury and hate, and so near to thy path in their leaguer?
Say, if but one of them see thee, 'mid night's swift-vanishing blackness,
Urging so costly a freight, how then might thy courage avail thee?
Thou art not youthful in years, and thy only attendant is agéd;
How, if a spearman arise in thy way, may his arm be resisted?
But fear nothing from me, old man; were another assailing,
Thee would I help, for the father I love is recall'd when I view thee."

Then to him answered Priam, the old man godlike in presence:
"These things are of a truth, dear child, as thy speech has exprest them;
Nevertheless, some God has extended the hand of protection;

He that vouchsafes me to meet in my need a benevolent comrade,
Helpful and gracious as thou, in the blossom of vigorous manhood;
Prudent withal in thy mind – fair offspring of fortunate parents."

Him again answer'd in turn heaven's kindly ambassador, Hermes:
"True of a surety and wise, old man, are the words thou hast spoken;
But now freely resolve me, and fully discover thy purpose:
Whether the treasures thou bearest, so many, so goodly, are destined
Forth to some distant ally, with whom these may at least be in safety?
Or is it so that ye all are abandoning Ilion the holy —
Stricken with dread since the bravest and best of thy sons is removéd,
He that was ever in battle the peer of the prime of Achaia?"

Thus unto Hermes replied old Priam, the godlike of presence:
"Who, then, noblest! art thou, and from whom is thy worshipful lineage,
Who makest mention so fair of the death of unfortunate Hector?"

But to him spake yet again the ambassador mild of Kronion:
"Dost thou inquire, O king! as to mention of Hector the

godlike?
Him have I seen full oft with mine eyes in the glorious battle,
Yea, and when urging the chase he advanced to the ramparted galleys,
Trampling the Argive bands, and with sharp brass strew'd them in slaughter.
We, from the station observing, in wonderment gazed; for Achilles
Held us apart from the fight in his wrath at the wrong of Atreides.
For in his train am I named, and the same fair galley convey'd me;
Born of the Myrmidon blood, in the house of my father, Polyctor.
Noble and wealthy is he in the land, but like thee he is agéd:
Six were the sons in his hall, but myself was the seventh and the youngest,
Whom, when the lots had been cast, it behov'd to depart with Peleides.
Now from the ships to the plain have I come, for to-morrow at dawning
Close to the city again the Achaians will plant them in battle:
Ill do they bear within ramparts to sit, and the kings of Achaia
Now can restrain them no longer, so hot their desire for the onslaught."

Him thus eagerly answer'd old Priam, the godlike in presence:
"Be'st thou indeed of the train of the Peleiades Achilles?
Come then, discover the truth: be there nothing, I pray, of

concealment.
Is my son still at the galleys, or has he already been flung forth,
Piecemeal torn, for a feast to the dogs, by the hand of Achilles?"

This was in turn the reply of the kindly ambassador Hermes:
"Fear it not; neither the dogs, old man, nor the birds have devour'd him:
Still to this hour 'mid the tents, by the black-hull'd ship of Peleides,
He forsakenly lies: but though morning has dawn'd on him twelve times
Since he was reft of his breath, yet the body is free from corruption;
Nor have the worms, for whom war-slain men are a banquet, approach'd him.
Truly Peleides, as oft as the east is revived with the day-beam,
Ruthlessly drags him around by the tomb of his brotherly comrade;
But yet he mars not the dead; and with wonder thine eyes would behold him
How he in freshness lies: from about him the blood has been cleanséd,
Dust has not tarnisht the hue, and all clos'd are the lips of the gashes,
All that he had, and not few were the brass-beat lances that pierc'd him.
Guarded so well is thy son by the grace of the blessed

Immortals,
Dead though he be; of a surety in life they had favour'd him dearly."

So did he speak: but the elder was gladden'd in spirit, and answer'd: —
"Verily, child, it is good to attend on the blessed Immortals
Duly with reverent gifts; for my son (while, alas! he was living)
Never forgot in his home the Supreme who inherit Olympus:
Wherefore they think of him now, though in death's dark destiny humbled.
But come, take from my hand this magnificent cup: it is giv'n thee
Freely to keep for thyself; and conduct me, the Gods being gracious,
Over the shadowy field, till I reach the abode of Peleides."

Him thus answer'd amain the beneficent messenger Hermes: —
"Cease, old man, from the tempting of youth – for thou shalt not persuade me.
Gift will I none at thy hand without knowledge of noble Achilles.
Great is my terror of him; and in aught to defraud him of treasure,
Far from my breast be the thought, lest hereafter he visit with vengeance.
But for conducting of thee I am ready with reverent service,

Whether on foot or by sea, were it far as to glorious Argos.
None shall assail thee, be sure, in contempt of thy faithful attendant."

So did the Merciful speak: and he sprang on the chariot of Priam,
Seizing with strenuous hand both the reins and the scourge as he mounted:
And into horses and mules vivid energy pass'd from his breathing.
But when at last they arrived at the fosse and the towers of the galleys,
They that had watch at the gates were preparing the meal of the evening;
And the Olympian guide survey'd, and upon them was slumber
Pour'd at his will; and the bars were undone and the gates were expanded,
And he conducted within both the king and the ransoming mule-wain.
Swiftly advancing, anon they were near to the tent of Peleides:
Lofty the shelter and large, for the King by the Myrmidons planted;
Hewn of the pines of the mountain; and rough was the thatch of the roof-tree,
Bulrushes mown on the meadow; and spacious the girth of the bulwark
Spanning with close-set stakes; but the bar of the gate was a pine-beam.

Three of the sons of Achaia were needful to lift it and fasten:
Three to withdraw from its seat the securement huge of the closure:
Such was the toil for the rest – but Achilles lifted it singly.
This the beneficent guide made instantly open for Priam.
And for the treasure of ransom wherewith he would soothe the Peleides;
Then did the Argicide leap from the car to the ground and address'd him: —
"Old man, I from Olympus descended, a god everlasting,
Hermes, appointed the guide of thy way by my father Kronion.
Now I return to my place, nor go in to the sight of Achilles,
Since it beseems not Immortal of lineage divine to reveal him
Waiting with manifest love on the frail generation of mankind.
Enter the dwelling alone, and, embracing the knees of Peleides,
Him by his father adjure, and adjure by the grace of his mother,
And by the child of his love, that his mind may be mov'd at thy pleading."

Thus having spoken, evanish'd, to lofty Olympus ascending,
Hermes: but Priam delay'd not, and sprang from his car on the sea-beach;
And, while Idæus remain'd to have care of the mules and the horses,
On did the old man pass, and he enter'd, and found the

Peleides
Seated apart from his train: two only of Myrmidons trustful,
Hero Automedon only, and Alkimus, sapling of Ares,
Near to him minist'ring stood; he repos'd him but now from the meal-time,
Sated with food and with wine, nor remov'd from him yet was the table.
All unobserv'd of them enter'd the old man stately, and forthwith
Grasp'd with his fingers the knees and was kissing the hands of Achilles —
Terrible, murderous hands, by which son upon son had been slaughter'd.
As when a man who has fled from his home with the curse of the blood-guilt,
Kneels in a far-off land, at the hearth of some opulent stranger,
Begging to shelter his head, there is stupor on them that behold him;
So was Achilles dumb at the sight of majestical Priam —
He and his followers all, each gazing on other bewilder'd.
But he uplifted his voice in their silence, and made supplication: —
"Think of thy father at home," (he began,) "O godlike Achilles!
Him, my coëval, like me within age's calamitous threshold!
Haply this day there is trouble upon him, some insolent neighbours
Round him in arms, nor a champion at hand to avert the

disaster:
Yet even so there is comfort for him, for he hears of thee living;
Day unto day there is hope for his heart amid worst tribulation,
That yet again he shall see his belovéd from Troia returning.
Misery only is mine; for of all in the land of my fathers,
Bravest and best were the sons I begat, and not one is remaining.
Fifty were mine in the hour that the host of Achaia descended:
Nineteen granted to me out of one womb, royally mother'd,
Stood by my side; but the rest were of handmaids born in my dwelling.
Soon were the limbs of the many unstrung in the fury of Arēs:
But one peerless was left, sole prop of the realm and the people:
And now at last he too, the protector of Ilion, Hector,
Dies by thy hand. For his sake have I come to the ships of Achaia,
Eager to ransom the body with bountiful gifts of redemption.
Thou have respect for the Gods, and on me, O Peleides! have pity,
Calling thy father to mind; but more piteous is my desolation,
Mine, who alone of mankind have been humbled to this of endurance —
Pressing my mouth to the hand that is red with the blood of my children."

Hereon Achilles, awak'd to a yearning remembrance of Peleus,
Rose up, took by the hand, and remov'd from him gently the old man.
Sadness possessing the twain – one, mindful of valorous Hector,
Wept with o'erflowing tears, lowlaid at the feet of Achilles;
He, sometime for his father, anon at the thought of Patroclus,
Wept, and aloft in the dwelling their long lamentation ascended.
But when the bursting of grief had contented the godlike Peleides,
And from his heart and his limbs irresistible yearning departed,
Then from his seat rose he, and with tenderness lifted the old man,
Viewing the hoary head and the hoary beard with compassion:
And he address'd him, and these were the air-wing'd words that he utter'd: —
"Ah unhappy! thy spirit in truth has been burden'd with evils.
How could the daring be thine to come forth to the ships of Achaia
Singly, to stand in the eyes of the man by whose weapon thy children,
Many and gallant, have died? full surely thy heart is of iron.
But now seat thee in peace, old man, and let mourning entirely
Pause for a space in our minds, although heavy on both be

affliction;
For without profit and vain is the fulness of sad lamentation,
Since it was destined so of the Gods for unfortunate mortals
Ever in trouble to live, but they only partake not of sorrow;
For by the threshold of Zeus two urns have their station of old time,
Whereof the one holds dolings of good, but the other of evil;
And to whom mixt are the doles of the thunder-delighting Kronion,
He sometime is of blessing partaker, of misery sometime;
But if he gives of the ill, he has fixt him the mark of disaster,
And over bountiful earth the devouring Necessity drives him,
Wandering ever forlorn, unregarded of gods and of mortals.
Thus of a truth did the Gods grant glorious gifts unto Peleus,
Even from the hour of his birth, for above compare was he favour'd,
Whether in wealth or in power, in the land of the Myrmidons reigning;
And albeit a mortal, his spouse was a goddess appointed.
Yet even to him of the God was there evil apportion'd – that never
Lineage of sons should be born in his home, to inherit dominion.
One son alone he begat, to untimely calamity foredoom'd;
Nor do I cherish his age, since afar from the land of my fathers
Here in the Troad I sit, to the torment of thee and thy children.
And we have heard, old man, of thine ancient prosperity also,

Lord of whatever is held between Lesbos the seat of the Macar,
Up to the Phrygian bound and the measureless Hellespontos;
Ruling and blest above all, nor in wealth nor in progeny equall'd;
Yet from the hour that the Gods brought this visitation upon thee,
Day unto day is thy city surrounded with battles and bloodshed.
How so, bear what is sent, nor be griev'd in thy soul without ceasing.
Nothing avails it, O king! to lament for the son that has fallen;
Him thou canst raise up no more, but thyself may have new tribulation."

So having said, he was answer'd by Priam the aged and godlike:
"Seat not me on the chair, O belov'd of Olympus! while Hector
Lies in the tent uninterr'd; but I pray thee deliver him swiftly,
That I may see with mine eyes: and, accepting the gifts of redemption,
Therein have joy to thy heart; and return thou homeward in safety,
Since of thy mercy I live and shall look on the light of the morning."

Darkly regarding the King, thus answer'd the rapid Achilles:
"Stir me to anger no more, old man; of myself I am minded

To the release of the dead, for a messenger came from Kronion
Hither, the mother that bore me, the child of the Ancient of Ocean.
Thee, too, I know in my mind, nor has aught of thy passage escap'd me;
How that some God was the guide of thy steps to the ships of Achaia.
For never mortal had dared to advance, were he blooming in manhood,
Here to the host by himself; nor could sentinels all be avoided;
Nor by an imbecile push might the bar be dislodg'd at my bulwark.
Therefore excite me no more, old man, when my soul is in sorrow,
Lest to thyself peradventure forbearance continue not alway,
Suppliant all that thou art – but I break the behest of the Godhead."

So did he speak; but the old man fear'd, and obey'd his commandment.
Forth of the door of his dwelling then leapt like a lion Peleides;
But not alone: of his household were twain that attended his going,
Hero Automedon first, and young Alkimus, he that was honour'd
Chief of the comrades around since the death of belovéd Patroclus.

These from the yoke straightway unharness'd the mules and the horses,
And they conducted within the coëval attendant of Priam,
Bidding him sit in the tent: then swiftly their hands from the mule-wain
Raise the uncountable wealth of the King's Hectorean head-gifts.
But two mantles they leave and a tunic of beautiful texture,
Seemly for wrapping the dead as the ransomer carries him homeward.
Then were the handmaidens call'd, and commanded to wash and anoint him,
Privately lifted aside, lest the son should be seen of the father,
Lest in the grief of his soul he restrain not his anger within him,
Seeing the corse of his son, but enkindle the heart of Achilles,
And he smite him to death, and transgress the command of Kronion.
But when the dead had been wash'd and anointed with oil by the maidens,
And in the tunic array'd and enwrapt in the beautiful mantle,
Then by Peleides himself was he rais'd and compos'd on the hand-bier;
Which when the comrades had lifted and borne to its place in the mule-wain,
Then groan'd he; and he call'd on the name of his friend, the belovéd: —
"Be not wroth with me now, O Patroclus, if haply thou hearest,

Though within Hades obscure, that I yield the illustrious Hector
Back to his father dear. Not unworthy the gifts of redemption;
And unto thee will I render thereof whatsoever is seemly."

So said the noble Peleides, and ent'ring again the pavilion,
Sat on the fair-carv'd chair from whence he had risen aforetime,
Hard by the opposite wall, and accosted the reverend Priam: —
"Now has thy son, old man, been restor'd to thee as thou requiredst.
He on his bier has been laid, and thyself shall behold and remove him
Soon as the dawning appears: but of food meanwhile be we mindful.
For not unmindful of food in her sorrow was Niobe, fair-hair'd,
Albeit she in her dwelling lamented for twelve of her offspring.
Six were the daughters, and six were the sons in the flower of their manhood.
These unto death went down by the silvern bow of Apollo,
Wrathful to Niobe – those smote Artemis arrow-delighting;
For that she vaunted her equal in honour to Leto the rosy,
Saying her births were but twain, and herself was abundant in offspring:
Wherefore, twain as they were, they confounded them all in destruction.

Nine days, then, did they lie in their blood as they fell, and approach'd them
None to inter, for mankind had been turn'd into stones of Kronion;
But they had sepulture due on the tenth from the gods everlasting;
And then, mindful of food, rose Niobe, weary of weeping.
Yet still, far among rocks, in some wilderness lone of the mountains —
Sipylus holds there, they say, where the nymphs in the desert repose them.
They that in beauty divine lead dances beside Achelöus; —
There still, stone though she be, doth she brood on her harm from the god-heads.
But, O reverend king, let us also of needful refreshment
Think now. Time will hereafter be thine to bewail thy belovéd;
Home into Ilion borne – many tears may of right be his portion!"

So did he speak; and upspringing anon, swift-footed Achilles
Slaughter'd a white-wool'd sheep, and his followers skinn'd it expertly.
Skilfully then they divided, and skewer'd, and carefully roasting,
Drew from the spits; and Automedon came, bringing bread to the table,
Piled upon baskets fair; but for all of them carv'd the Peleides;
And each, stretching his hand, partook of the food that was

offer'd.
But when of meat and of wine from them all the desire was departed,
Then did Dardanian Priam in wonderment gaze on Achilles,
Stately and strong to behold, for in aspect the Gods he resembled;
While on Dardanian Priam gazed also with wonder Achilles,
Seeing the countenance goodly, and hearing the words of the old man.
Till, when contemplating either the other they both were contented,
Him thus first bespake old Priam, the godlike in presence:
"Speedfully now let the couch be prepar'd for me, lov'd of Kronion!
And let us taste once more of the sweetness of slumber, reclining:
For never yet have mine eyes been clos'd for me under my eyelids,
Never since under thy hands was out-breathéd the spirit of Hector;
Groaning since then has been mine, and the brooding of sorrows unnumber'd,
In the recess of my hall, low-rolling in dust and in ashes.
But now of bread and of meat have I tasted again, and the black wine
Pour'd in my throat once more – whereof, since he was slain, I partook not."

So did he speak; and Achilles commanded the comrades and

handmaids
Under the porch of the dwelling to place fair couches, and spread them
Duly with cushions on cushions of purple, and delicate carpets,
Also with mantles of wool, to be wrapt over all on the sleepers.
But they speedily past, bearing torches in hand, from the dwelling,
And two couches anon were with diligence order'd and garnish'd.

Then to the king, in a sport, thus spoke swift-footed Achilles:
"Rest thee without, old guest, lest some vigilant chief of Achaia
Chance to arrive, one of those who frequent me when counsel is needful;
Who, if he see thee belike amid night's fast-vanishing darkness,
Straightway warns in his tent Agamemnon, the Shepherd of peoples,
And the completion of ransom meets yet peradventure with hindrance.
But come, answer me this, and discover the whole of thy purpose, —
How many days thou design'st for entombing illustrious Hector;
That I may rest from the battle till then, and restrain the Achaians."

So he; and he was answer'd by Priam, the aged and godlike:
"If 'tis thy will that I bury illustrious Hector in honour,
Deal with me thus, O Peleides, and crown the desire of my spirit.
Well dost thou know how the town is begirt, and the wood at a distance,
Down from the hills to be brought, and the people are humbled in terror.
Nine days' space we would yield in our dwelling to due lamentation,
Bury the dead on the tenth, and thereafter the people be feasted;
On the eleventh let us toil till the funeral mound be completed,
But on the twelfth to the battle once more, if the battle be needful."

Instantly this was the answer of swift-footed noble Achilles:
"Reverend king, be it also in these things as thou requirest;
I for the space thou hast meted will hold the Achaians from warring."

Thus said the noble Peleides, and, grasping the wrist of the right hand,
Strengthen'd the mind of the king, that his fear might not linger within him.
They then sank to repose forthwith in the porch of the dwelling,

Priam the king and the herald coëval and prudent in counsel;
But in the inmost recess of the well-built lordly pavilion
Slept the Peleides, and by him down laid her the rosy Briséis.

All then of Gods upon high, ever-living, and warrior horsemen,
Slept through the livelong night in the gentle dominion of slumber;
But never slumber approach'd to the eyes of beneficent Hermes,
As in his mind he revolv'd how best to retire from the galleys
Priam the king, unobserv'd of the sentinels sworn for the night-watch.
Over his head, as he slept, stood the Argicide now, and address'd him:
"Old man, bodings of evil disturb not thy spirit, who slumber'st
Here among numberless foes, because noble Peleides has spared thee.
True that thy son has been ransom'd, and costly the worth of the head-gifts;
Yet would the sons that are left thee have three times more to surrender,
Wert thou but seen by the host, and the warning convey'd to Atreides."

Thus did he speak, but the king was in terror, and waken'd the herald.
Then, when beneficent Hermes had harness'd the mules and

the horses,
Swiftly he drove through the camp, nor did any observe the departure.
So did they pass to the ford of the river of beautiful waters,
Xanthus the gulfy, begotten of thunder-delighting Kronion;
Then from the chariot he rose and ascended to lofty Olympus.

But now wide over earth spread morning mantled in saffron,
As amid groaning and weeping they drew to the city; the mule-wain
Bearing behind them the dead: Nor did any in Ilion see them,
Either of men, as they came, or the well-girt women of Troia:
Only Cassandra, that imaged in grace Aphrodité the golden,
Had to the Pergamus clomb, and from thence she discover'd her father
Standing afoot on the car, and beside him the summoning herald;
And in the waggon behind them the wrapt corse laid on the death-bier.
Then did she shriek, and her cry to the ends of the city resounded:

"Come forth, woman and man, and behold the returning of Hector!
Come, if ye e'er in his life, at his home-coming safe from the battle joyfully troop'd; and with joy might it fill both the town and the people."

So did she cry; nor anon was there one soul left in the city,

Woman or man, for at hand and afar was the yearning awaken'd.
Near to the gate was the king when they met him conducting the death-wain.
First rush'd, rending their hair, to behold him the wife and the mother,
And as they handled the head, all weeping the multitude stood near: —
And they had all day long till the sun went down into darkness
There on the field by the rampart lamented with tears over Hector,
But that the father arose in the car and entreated the people:
"Yield me to pass, good friends, make way for the mules – and hereafter
All shall have weeping enow when the dead has been borne to the dwelling."
So did he speak, and they, parting asunder, made way for the mule-wain.
But when they brought him at last to the famous abode of the princes,
He on a fair-carv'd bed was compos'd, and the singers around him
Rang'd, who begin the lament; and they, lifting their sorrowful voices,
Chanted the wail for the dead, and the women bemoan'd at its pausings.
But in the burst of her woe was the beauteous Andromache foremost,
Holding the head in her hands as she mourn'd for the slayer

of heroes: —

"Husband! in youth hast thou parted from life, and a desolate widow
Here am I left in our home; and the child is a stammering infant
Whom thou and I unhappy begat, nor will he, to my thinking,
Reach to the blossom of youth; ere then, from the roof to the basement
Down shall the city be hurl'd – since her only protector has perish'd,
And without succour are now chaste mother and stammering infant.
Soon shall their destiny be to depart in the ships of the stranger,
I in the midst of them bound; and, my child, thou go with them also,
Doom'd for the far-off shore and the tarnishing toil of the bondman,
Slaving for lord unkind. Or perchance some remorseless Achaian
Hurl from the gripe of his hand, from the battlement down to perdition,
Raging revenge for some brother perchance that was slaughter'd of Hector,
Father, it may be, or son; for not few of the race of Achaia
Seiz'd broad earth with their teeth, when they sank from the handling of Hector;
For not mild was thy father, O babe, in the blackness of battle

—
Wherefore, now he is gone, through the city the people bewail him.
But the unspeakable anguish of misery bides with thy parents,
Hector! with me above all the distress that has no consolation:
For never, dying, to me didst thou stretch forth hand from the pillow,
Nor didst thou whisper, departing, one secret word to be hoarded
Ever by day and by night in the tears of eternal remembrance."

Weeping Andromache ceased, and the women bemoan'd at her pausing;
Then in her measureless grief spake Hecuba, next of the mourners:
"Hector! of all that I bore ever dearest by far to my heart-strings!
Dear above all wert thou also in life to the gods everlasting;
Wherefore they care for thee now, though in death's dark destiny humbled!
Others enow of my sons did the terrible runner Achilles
Sell, whomsoever he took, far over the waste of the waters,
Either to Samos or Imber, or rock-bound harbourless Lemnos;
But with the long-headed spear did he rifle the life from thy bosom,
And in the dust did he drag thee, oft times, by the tomb of his comrade,

Him thou hadst slain; though not so out of death could he rescue Patroclus.
Yet now, ransom'd at last, and restored to the home of thy parents,
Dewy and fresh liest thou, like one that has easily parted,
Under a pangless shaft from the silvern bow of Apollo."

So did the mother lament, and a measureless moaning received her;
Till, at their pausing anew, spake Helena, third of the mourners: —
"Hector! dearest to me above all in the house of my husband!
Husband, alas! that I call him; oh! better that death had befallen!
Summer and winter have flown, and the twentieth year is accomplish'd
Since the calamity came, and I fled from the land of my fathers;
Yet never a word of complaint have I heard from thee, never of hardness;
But if another reproach'd, were it brother or sister of Paris,
Yea, or his mother, (for mild evermore as a father was Priam,)
Them didst thou check in their scorn, and the bitterness yielded before thee,
Touch'd by thy kindness of soul and the words of thy gentle persuasion.
Therefore I weep, both for thee and myself to all misery destined,
For there remains to me now in the war-swept wideness of

Troia,
None either courteous or kind – but in all that behold me is horror."

So did she cease amid tears, and the women bemoan'd at her pausing;
But King Priam arose, and he spake in the gate to the people: —
"Hasten ye, Trojans, arise, and bring speedily wood to the city:
Nor be there fear in your minds of some ambush of lurking Achaians,
For when I came from the galleys the promise was pledged of Peleides,
Not to disturb us with harm till the twelfth reappearance of morning."

So did he speak: and the men to their wains put the mules and the oxen,
And they assembled with speed on the field by the gates of the city.
Nine days' space did they labour, and great was the heap from the forest:
But on the tenth resurrection for mortals of luminous morning,
Forth did they carry, with weeping, the corse of the warrior Hector,
Laid him on high on the pyre, and enkindled the branches beneath him.

Now, with the rose-finger'd dawn once more in the orient shining,
All reassembled again at the pyre of illustrious Hector.
First was the black wine pour'd on the wide-spread heap of the embers,
Quenching wherever had linger'd the strength of the glow: and thereafter,
Brethren and comrades belov'd from the ashes collected the white bones,
Bending with reverent tears, every cheek in the company flowing.
But when they all had been found, and the casket of gold that receiv'd them,
Carefully folded around amid fair soft veilings of purple,
Deep in the grave they were laid, and the huge stones piled to the margin.

Swiftly the earth-mound rose: but on all sides watchers were planted,
Fearful of rush unawares from the well-greaved bands of Achaia.
Last, when the mound was complete, and the men had return'd to the city,
All in the halls of the King were with splendid solemnity feasted.

Thus was the sepulture order'd of Hector the Tamer of Horses.

THE STUDENT OF SALAMANCA

PART V

Va vienon chapelchurris
Con corneta y clarin,
Para entrar en Bilbao
A beber chacolin.

Mal chacolin tuvieron
Y dia tan fatal,
Que con la borrachera
Se murió el general.

Christino Song.

"Ten – fifteen – thirty – all plump full-weighted coins of Fernando Septimo and Carlos Quarto. Truly, Jaime, the trade thou drivest is a pleasant and profitable one. Little to do, and good pay for it."

It was a June day, a little past the middle of the month. Just within the forest that extended nearly up to the western wall of the Dominican convent, upon a plot of smooth turf, under the shadow of tall bushes and venerable trees, Jaime, the gipsy, had seated himself, and was engaged in an occupation

which, to judge from the unusually well-pleased expression of his countenance, was highly congenial to his tastes. The resting-place he had chosen had the double advantage of coolness and seclusion. Whilst in the court of the convent, and in the hollow square in the interior of the building, where the nuns cultivated a few flowers, and which was sprinkled by the waters of a fountain, the heat was so great as to drive the sisters to their cells and shady cloisters, in the forest a delicious freshness prevailed. A light air played between the moss-clad tree-trunks, and the soft turf, protected by the foliage from the scorching rays of the sun, felt cool to the foot that pressed it. Nay, in some places, where the shade was thickest, and where a current of air flowed up through the long vistas of trees, might still be seen, although the sun was in the zenith, tiny drops of the morning dew, spangling the grass-blades. Into those innermost recesses of the greenwood, however, the esquilador had not thought it necessary to penetrate: habituated to the African temperature of Southern Spain, he was satisfied with the moderate degree of shelter obtained in the little glade he occupied; into which, although the sunbeams did not enter, a certain degree of heat was reflected from the convent walls, of whose grey surface he obtained a glimpse through the branches. The sheep-skin jacket which was his constant wear – its looseness rendering it a more endurable summer garment than might have been inferred from its warm material – lay upon the grass beside him, exposing to view a woollen shirt, composed of broad alternate stripes of red and white; the latter colour

having assumed, from length of wear and lack of washing, a tint bordering upon the orange. He had untwisted the long red sash which he wore coiled round his waist, and withdrawn from its folds, at one of its extremities, forming a sort of purse, a goodly handful of gold coin, the result of the more or less honest enterprises in which he had recently been engaged. This he was counting out, and arranging according to its kind, in glittering piles of four, eight, and sixteen-dollar pieces. A grim contortion of feature, his nearest approach to a smile, testified the pleasure he experienced in thus handling and reckoning his treasure; and, in unusual contradiction to his taciturn habits, he indulged, as he gloated over his gold, in a muttered and disjointed soliloquy.

"Hurra for the war!" so ran his monologue; "may it last till Jaime bids it cease. 'Tis meat and drink to him – ay, and better still." Here he glanced complacently at his wealth. "Surely 'tis rare fun to see the foolish Busné cutting each other's throats, and the poor Zincalo reaping the benefit. I've had fine chances certainly, and have not thrown them away. Zumalacarregui does not pay badly; then that affair of the Christino officer was worth a good forty ounces, between him and the fool Paco; and now Don Baltasar – but he is the worst pay of all. Promises in plenty; he rattles them off his tongue as glib as the old nuns do their *paters*; but if he opens his mouth he takes good care to keep his purse shut. A pitiful two score dollars are all I have had from him for a month's service – I should have made more by spying for Zumalacarregui; with more risk, perhaps – though I am not sure

of that. Both the noble colonel and myself would stretch a rope if the general heard of our doings. And hear of them he will, sooner or later unless Don Baltasar marries the girl by force, and cuts Paco's throat. Curse him! why doesn't he pay me the fifty ounces he promised me? If he did that, I would get out of the way till I heard how the thing turned. I must have the money next time I see him, or" —

What alternative the esquilador was about to propound must remain unknown; for, at that moment, the sound of his name, uttered near at hand, and in a cautious tone, caused him to start violently and interrupt his soliloquy. Hastily sweeping up his money, and thrusting it into the end of his sash, he seized his jacket, and was about to seek concealment in the neighbouring bushes. Before doing so, however, he cast a glance in the direction whence the sound had proceeded, and for the first time became aware that the spot selected for the telling of his ill-gotten gains was not so secure from observation as he had imagined. In the outer wall of the western wing of the convent, and at some distance from the ground, two windows broke the uniformity of the stone surface. Hitherto, whenever the gipsy had noticed them, they had appeared hermetically blocked up by closely-fitting shutters, painted to match the colour of the wall, of which they almost seemed to form a part. On taking up his position just within the skirt of the forest, the possibility of these casements being opened, and his proceedings observed, had not occurred to him; and it so happened that from one of them,

through an opening in the branches, the retreat he had chosen was completely commanded. The shutter of this window had now been pushed open, and the lovely, but pallid and emaciated countenance of Rita, was seen gazing through the strong bars which traversed the aperture.

"Jaime!" she repeated; "Jaime, I would speak with you."

Upon seeing whom it was who thus addressed him, the gipsy's alarm ceased. He deliberately put on and knotted his sash; and casting his jacket over his shoulder, turned to leave the spot.

"Jaime!" cried Rita for the third time, "come hither, I implore you."

The gipsy shook his head, and was walking slowly away, his face, however, still turned towards the fair prisoner, when she suddenly exclaimed —

"Behold! For one minute's conversation it is yours."

And in the shadow cast by the embrasure of the casement, Jaime saw a sparkle, the cause of which his covetous eye at once detected. Three bounds, and he stood under the window. Rita passed her arm through the bars, and a jewelled ring dropped into his extended palm.

"*Hermoso!*" exclaimed the esquilador, his eyes sparkling almost as vividly as the stones that excited his admiration. "Beautiful! Diamonds of the finest water!"

The shock of her father's death, coupled with previous fatigue and excitement, had thrown Rita into a delirious fever, which for more than three weeks confined her to her bed. Within a

few hours of her arrival at the convent, Don Baltasar had been compelled to leave it to resume his military duties; and he had not again returned, although, twice during her illness, he sent the gipsy to obtain intelligence of her health. On learning her convalescence, he dispatched him thither for a third time, with a letter to Rita, urging her acceptance of his hand – their union having been, as he assured her, her father's latest wish. As her nearest surviving relative, he had assumed the office of her guardian, and allotted to her the convent as a residence; until such time as other arrangements could be made, or until she should be willing to give him a nearer right to protect her. Jaime had now been two days at the convent awaiting a reply to this letter, without which Don Baltasar had forbidden him to return. This reply, however, Rita, indignant at the restraint imposed upon her, had as yet, in spite of the arguments of the abbess, shown no disposition to pen.

With her forehead pressed against the bars of the window, Rita noted the delight manifested by the gipsy at the present she had made him. She had already observed him feasting his eyes with the sight of his money; and although she knew him to be an agent of Don Baltasar, his evident avarice gave her hopes, that by promise of large reward she might induce him to betray his employer and serve her. Producing a second ring, of greater value than the one she had already bestowed upon him, she showed it to the wondering esquilador. He held up his hands instinctively to catch it.

"You may earn it," said Rita; "and twenty such."

And whilst with one hand she continued to expose the ring to the greedy gaze of the gipsy, with the other she held up a letter.

"For Don Baltasar?" asked the Gitano.

"No," said she. "For Zumalacarregui."

Jaime made a step backwards, and again shook his head. Rita feared that he was about to leave her.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, "I entreat, I beseech you, assist me in this strait. Whatever sum your vile employer has promised you, I will give tenfold. Take my letter, and name your reward."

"That's what the other said," muttered Jaime; "'name your reward,' but he is in no hurry to pay it. If I thought her promises better than his" —

And again he looked up at the window, and seemed to hesitate.

"Listen," cried Rita, who saw him waver; "I am rich – you are poor. I have farms, estates, vineyards – you shall choose amongst them wherewith to live happily for the rest of your days. Convey this letter safely, and exchange your comfortless and disreputable wanderings for a settled home and opulence."

Jaime made a gesture of refusal.

"Your lands and your vineyards, your fields and farms, are no temptation to the Zincalo, señora. What would they avail him? Your countrymen would say, 'Out upon the gipsy! See the thief!' and they would defraud him of his lands, and spit on him if he complained. No, señorita, give me a roving life, and the wealth that I can carry in my girdle, and defend with my knife."

"It shall be as you will," cried Rita, eagerly. "Gold, jewels, whatever you prefer. This letter will procure my freedom; and, once free, you shall find me both able and disposed to reward you beyond your wildest dreams."

"Yes, if the general does not hang me when he learns my share in the business."

"I have not named you to him, nor will I. The letter is unsealed; you can read before delivering it. Your name shall never be breathed by me, save as that of my preserver."

There was an accent of sincerity in Rita's promises that rendered it impossible to mistrust them. The gipsy, sorely tempted, was evidently about to yield. He gazed wistfully at the ring, which Rita still held up to his view; his eyes twinkled with covetousness, and he half extended his hand. Rita slipped the ring into the fold of the letter, and threw both down to him. Dexterously catching, and thrusting them into his breast, he glanced furtively around, to see that he was unobserved. He stood near the wall, just under the window, and the iron bars preventing Rita from putting out her head, only the upper half of his figure was visible to her. At that moment, to her infinite surprise and alarm, she saw an extraordinary change come over his features. Their expression of greedy cunning was replaced, with a suddenness that appeared almost magical, by one of pain and terror; and scarcely had Rita had time to observe the transformation, when he lay upon the ground, struggling violently, but in vain, against some unseen power, that drew

him towards the wall. He caught at the grass and weeds, which grew in profusion on the rarely-trodden path; he writhed, and endeavoured to turn himself upon his face, but without success. With pale and terrified visage, but in dogged silence, he strove against an agency invisible to Rita, and which he was totally unable to resist. His body speedily vanished from her sight, then his head, and finally his outstretched arms; the rustling noise, occasioned by his passage through the herbage, ceased; and Rita, aghast at this extraordinary and mysterious occurrence, again found herself alone. We will leave her to her astonishment and conjecture, whilst we follow the gipsy to the place whither he had been so involuntarily and unceremoniously conveyed, a description of which will furnish a key to his seemingly unaccountable disappearance.

It was a vault of considerable extent, surrounded by casks of various sizes, most of which would, on being touched, have given, by their ringing sound, assurance of their emptiness. In bins, at one extremity of the cellar, were a number of bottles, whose thick mantle of dust and cobwebs spoke volumes for the ripe and racy nature of their contents. A large chest of cedar-wood stood in the innermost nook of the cellar, with raised lid, disclosing a quantity of cigars, worm-eaten and musty from extreme age. In the massive wall, forming one end of the vault, and which was in fact the foundation of the outer wall of the convent, was a large doorway; but the door had been removed, and the aperture filled with stones and plaster, forming a barrier more solid in

appearance than reality. This barrier had recently been knocked down; its materials lay scattered on the ground, and through the opening thus made, came the only light that was allowed to enter the vault. It proceeded from the cell in which Paco, the muleteer, had for more than a month been imprisoned.

Long, very long and wearisome, had that month of captivity appeared to Paco. Accustomed to a life of constant activity and change, it would have been difficult to devise for him a severer punishment than inaction and confinement. The first day he passed in tolerable tranquillity of mind, occupied by vain endeavours to conjecture the motives of the violence offered to him, and momentarily anticipating his release; and although evening came without its taking place, he went to sleep, fully convinced that the next morning would be the term of his durance. Conscious of no crime, ignorant of Count Villabuena's death, and of Don Baltasar's designs, he was totally unable to assign a reason for his imprisonment. The next morning came, the bolts of his dungeon-door were withdrawn; he started from his pallet. The door opened, and a man entered, bringing a supply of fresh water and a meagre gaspacho. This he laid down; and was leaving the cell without replying to Paco's indignant and loudly-uttered interrogatories; when the muleteer followed, and attempted to force his way out. He was met by a stern "Back!" and the muzzle of a cocked blunderbuss touched his breast. A sturdy convent servitor barred the passage, and compelled him to retreat into his prison.

Paco now gave free course to his impatience. During the whole of that day he paced his cell with the wild restlessness of a newly-caged panther; the gaspacho remained untasted, but the water-jug was quickly drained, for his throat was dry with cursing. The next morning another visit, another gaspacho and supply of water, and another attempt to leave the prison, repulsed like the previous one. On the third day, however, his hopes of a prompt liberation having melted away before the dogged silence and methodical regularity of his jailers, Paco began to cast about in his mind for means of liberating himself. First he shook and examined the door, but he might as well have attempted to shake the Pyrenees; its thick hard wood and solid fastenings mocked his efforts, and moreover he had no instruments, not so much as a rusty nail, to aid him in his attempt. The two side-walls next received his attention; but they were of great blocks of stone, joined by a cement of nearly equal hardness, and on which, although he worked till his nails were torn to shreds, and his fingers ran blood, he could not make the slightest impression. As to the wall opposite to the door, he did not even examine it; for it was easy to judge, from the grass and bushes growing against the window in its top, that it was the outer wall of the convent. On this, since he could make nothing of the partition-walls, all labour would of course be thrown away; and even if he could bore through it, he must find the solid earth on the other side, and be discovered before he could possibly burrow his way out. As to the window, or rather the iron-barred opening through which

came light and air, for any purposes of escape it might as well not have been there, for its lower edge was nearly fourteen feet from the ground; and although Paco, who was a first-rate leaper, did, in his desperation, and in the early days of his captivity, make several violent attempts to jump up and catch hold of the grating, they were all, as may be supposed, entirely without result.

It was the thirty-fifth day of his imprisonment, an hour after daybreak. His provisions for the next twenty-four hours had been brought to him, and, as usual, he had made an unsuccessful effort to induce his sullen jailer to inform him why he was confined, and when he should be released. Gloomy and disconsolate, he seated himself on the ground, and leaned his back against the end wall of his dreary dungeon. The light from the window above his head fell upon the opposite door, and illuminated the spot where he had scratched, with the shank of a button, a line for each day of his imprisonment. The melancholy calendar already reached one quarter across the door, and Paco was speculating and wondering how far it might be prolonged, when he thought he felt a stream of cold wind against his ear. He placed his hand where his ear had been, and plainly distinguished a current of air issuing from a small crevice in the wall, which otherwise was smooth and covered with plaster. Without being much of a natural philosopher, it was evident to Paco, that if wind came through, there must be a vault on the other side of the wall, and not the solid earth, as he had hitherto believed; and it also became probable that the wall was deficient either in thickness or solidity.

After some scratching at the plaster, he succeeded in uncovering the side of a small stone of irregular shape. A vigorous push entirely dislodged it, and it fell from him, leaving an opening through which he could pass his arm. This he did, and found that although on one side of the aperture the wall was upwards of two feet thick, on the other it was not more than six or eight inches, and of loose construction. By a very little labour he knocked out half-a-dozen stones, and then, weary of thus making an opening piecemeal, he receded as far as he could, took a short run, and threw himself against the wall with all his force. After a few repetitions of this vigorous but not very prudent proceeding, the frail bulwark gave way, and amidst a shower of dust and mortar, Paco entered the vault into which he had conquered his passage.

The vault had apparently served, during some former occupation of the convent by monks, as the wine-cellar of the holy fathers; and had been walled up, not improbably, to protect it from the depredations of the French soldiery during Napoleon's occupation of Spain. As already mentioned, it was well stocked with casks of all sorts and sizes, most of them empty and with bottles, for the most part full. Several of the latter Paco lost no time in decapitating; and a trial of their contents satisfied him that the proprietors of the cellar, whatever else they might have been, were decidedly good judges of wine. Cheered and invigorated by the pleasant liquor of which he had now so long been deprived, he commenced, as soon as his eyes had got a little accustomed to the exceedingly dim twilight that reigned in the

vault, a thorough investigation of the place, in hopes of finding either an outlet, or the means of making one. In the former part of his hopes he was disappointed; but after a patient search, his pains were rewarded by the discovery of several pieces of old rope, and of a wooden bar or lever, which had probably served to raise and shift the wine-casks. The rope did not seem likely to be of any use, but the lever was an invaluable acquisition; and by its aid Paco entertained strong hopes of accomplishing his escape. He at once set to work to knock down the remainder of the stones blocking up the doorway, and when they were cleared he began to roll and drag empty casks into his cell. Of a number of these, and with some labour, he formed a scaffolding, by means of which he was enabled to reach the window, taking his crowbar with him. His hand trembled as it grasped the grating, on the possibility of whose removal every thing depended. Viewed from the floor of his prison, the bars appeared of a formidable thickness, and he dreaded lest the time that would elapse till the next visit of his jailer, should be insufficient for him to overcome the obstacle. To his unspeakable delight, however, his first effort caused the grating to shake and rattle. The stone into which the extremities of the bars were riveted was of no very hard description; the iron was corroded by the rust of centuries, and Paco at once saw, that what he had looked forward to as a task of severe difficulty, would be accomplished with the utmost ease. He set to work with good courage, and after a couple of hours' toil, the grating was removed, and the passage free.

Paco's first impulse was to spring through the opening into the bright sunshine without; but a moment's reflection checked him. He remembered that he was unarmed and unacquainted with the neighbourhood; and his appearance outside the convent in broad daylight, might lead to his instant recapture by some of those, whoever they were, who found an interest or a gratification in keeping him prisoner. He resolved, therefore, unwillingly enough it is true, to curb his impatience, and defer his departure till nightfall. Of a visit from his jailers he felt no apprehension, for they had never yet shown themselves to him more than once a-day, and that, invariably, at an early hour of the morning. Partly, however, to be prepared for instant flight, should he hear his dungeon door open, and still more for the sake of inhaling the warm and aromatic breeze, which blew over to him from the neighbouring woods and fields, he seated himself upon the top of his casks, his head just on a level with the window, and, cautiously making a small opening in the matted vegetable screen that grew before it, gazed out upon the face of nature with a feeling of enjoyment, only to be appreciated by those who, like him, have passed five weeks in a cold, gloomy, subterranean dungeon. The little he was able to distinguish of the locality was highly satisfactory. Within thirty paces of the convent wall was the commencement of a thick wood, wherein he doubted not that he should find shelter and security if observed in his flight. He would greatly have preferred waiting the approach of night in the forest, instead of in his cell; but with a prudence

hardly to be expected from him, and which the horror he had of a prolongation of his captivity, perhaps alone induced him to exercise, he would not risk crossing the strip of open land intervening between him and the wood; judging, not without reason, that it might be overlooked by the convent windows.

For some time Paco remained seated upon his pile of casks, feasting his eyes with the sunshine, to which they had so long been strangers; his ear on the watch, his fingers mechanically plucking and twisting the blades of grass that grew in through the window. He was arranging in his mind what route he should take, and considering where he was most likely to find Count Villabuena, when he was surprised by the sound of words, proceeding apparently from a considerable distance above his head, but some of which nevertheless reached his quick and practised ear. Of these the one most distinctly spoken was the name of Jaime, and in the voice that spoke it, Paco was convinced that he recognised that of Count Villabuena's daughter. A few moments elapsed, something else was said, what, he was unable to make out, and then, to his no small alarm, his old acquaintance and recent betrayer, Jaime the esquilador, stood within arm's length of his window. He instinctively drew back; the gipsy was so near, that only the growth of weeds before mentioned interposed between him and the muleteer. But Paco soon saw that his proximity was unsuspected by Jaime, who had commenced the dialogue with Rita already recorded. Paco at once comprehended the situation; and emboldened by the

knowledge that he, and even the aperture of the window, was concealed from sight by the grass and bushes, he again put his head as far forward as was prudent, and attentively listened. Not a word spoken by the esquilador escaped him, but he could scarcely hear any thing of what Rita said; for the distance between her and Jaime being diminished, she spoke in a very low tone. He made out, however, that she was endeavouring to bribe the gipsy to take a letter – to whom, he did not hear – and a scheme occurred to him, the execution of which he only deferred till he should see the missive in the possession of Jaime, on whose every gesture and movement he kept a vigilant watch. At the same instant that the letter was deposited in the gipsy's pocket, Paco thrust both his hands through the grass, seized the naked ankles of the esquilador in a vicelike grip, and by a sudden jerk throwing him upon his back, proceeded to drag him through the aperture, behind which he himself was stationed. His strength and adroitness, and the suddenness of the attack, ensured its success; and in spite of the gipsy's struggles, Paco speedily pulled him completely into the dungeon, upon the ground of which he cast him down with a force that might well have broken the bones, but, as it happened, merely took away the senses, of the terrified esquilador.

The strange and mysterious manner of the assault, the stunning violence of his fall, and his position on regaining the consciousness of which he had for a brief space been deprived, combined to bewilder the gipsy, and temporarily to quell the

courage, or, as it should perhaps rather be termed, the passive stoicism, usually exhibited by him in circumstances of danger. He had been dragged into the wine-cellar, and seated with his back against a cask; his wrists and ankles were bound with ropes, and beside him knelt a man busily engaged in searching, his pockets. The light was so faint that at first he could not distinguish the features of this person; but when at last he recognized those of Paco, he conjectured to a certain extent the nature of the snare into which he had fallen, and, as he did so, his usual coolness and confidence in some degree returned. His first words were an attempt to intimidate the muleteer.

"Untie my hands," said he, "or I shout for help. I have only to call out, to be released immediately."

"If that were true, you would have done it, and not told me of it," retorted Paco, with his usual acuteness. "The walls are thick; and the vault deep, and I believe you might shout a long while before any one heard you. But I advise you not to try. The first word you speak in a louder tone than pleases me, I cut your throat like a pig; with your own knife, too."

And, by way of confirming this agreeable assurance, he drew the cold blade across Jaime's throat, with such a fierce determined movement, that the startled gipsy involuntarily shrunk back. Paco marked the effect of his menace.

"You see," said he, sticking the knife in the ground beside him, and continuing his in investigation of the esquilador's pockets; "you had better be quiet, and answer my questions civilly. For

whom is this letter?" continued he, holding up Rita's missive, which he had extracted from the gipsy's jacket.

But although the esquilador (partly on account of Paco's threats, and partly because he knew that his cries were unlikely to bring assistance) made no attempt to call out, he did not, on the other hand, show any disposition to communicativeness. Instead of replying to the questions put to him, he maintained a surly, dogged silence. Paco repeated the interrogatory without obtaining a better result, and then, as if weary of questioning a man who would not answer, he continued his search without further waste of words. The two rings and Rita's letter he had already found; they were succeeded by a number of miscellaneous objects which he threw carelessly aside; and having rummaged the esquilador's various pockets, he proceeded to unfasten his sash. The first demonstration of a design upon this receptacle of his wealth, produced, on the part of the gipsy, a violent but fruitless effort to liberate his wrists from the cords that confined them.

"Oho!" said Paco, "is that the sore place? Faith! there is reason for your wincing," he added, as the gold contained in the girdle fell jingling on the floor. "This was not all got by clipping mules."

"It was received from you, the greater part of it," exclaimed the gipsy, forced out of his taciturnity by his agony at seeing Paco, after replacing the money in the sash, deliberately bind it round his own waist.

"I worked hard and ran risk for it, and you paid it me willingly.

Surely you will not rob me!"

Without attending to this expostulation, Paco secured the gold, and then rising to his feet, again repeated the question he had already twice put to his prisoner.

"To whom is this letter?" said he.

"You may read it yourself," returned Jaime, who, notwithstanding the intelligible hint to be tractable which he had already received, found it a hard matter to restrain his sulkiness. "It is addressed, and open."

Read it, was exactly what Paco would have done, had he been able; but it so happened that the muleteer was a self-educated man, and that, whilst teaching himself many things which he had on various occasions found of much utility, he had given but a moderate share of his attention to the acquirement of letters. When on the road with his mules, he could distinguish the large printed capitals painted on the packages entrusted to his care; he was also able, from long habit, fluently to read the usual announcement of "*Vinos y licores finos*," inscribed above tavern doors; and, when required, he could even perpetrate a hieroglyphic intended for the signature of his name; but these were the extent of his acquirements. As to deciphering the contents or superscription of the letter now in his possession, he knew that it would be mere lost labour to attempt it. He was far too wary, however, to display his ignorance to the gipsy, and thus to strengthen him in his refusal to say for whom it was intended.

"Of course I may read it," he replied "but here it is too dark,

and I have no mind to leave you alone. Answer me, or it will be worse for you."

Either suspecting how the case really stood, or through mere sullenness at the loss of his money, the gipsy remained, with lowering brow and compressed lips, obstinately silent. For a few moments Paco awaited a reply, and then walking to a short distance, he picked up something that lay in a dark corner of the vault, returned to the gipsy, and placing his hands upon the edge of the tall cask against which the latter was seated, sprang actively upon the top of it. Soon he again descended, and, upsetting the cask, gave it a shove with his foot that sent it rolling into the middle of the cellar. The gipsy, although motionless, and to all appearance inattentive to what passed, lost not one of the muleteer's movements. His head stirred not but his sunken beadlike eyes shifted their glances with extraordinary keenness and rapidity. At the moment when, surprised by the sudden removal of the cask, he screwed his head round to see what was going on behind him, a rope was passed swiftly over his face, and the next instant he felt his neck encircled by a halter. A number of strong hooks and wooden brackets, used to support shelves and suspend wine-skins, were firmly fixed in the cellar wall, at various distances from the ground. Over one of the highest of these, Paco had cast a rope, one end of which he held, whilst the other, as already mentioned, was fixed round the neck of the gipsy. Retiring a couple of paces, the muleteer hauled on the rope; it tightened round the neck of the unlucky Jaime, and even

lifted him a little from the ground. He strove to rise to his feet from the sitting posture in which he was, but his bonds prevented him. Stumbling and helpless, he fell over on one side, and would inevitably have been strangled, had not Paco given him more line. The fear of death came over him. He trembled violently, and his face, which was smeared with blood from the scratches he had received in his passage through the bushes, became of an ash-like paleness. He cast a piteous look at Paco, who surveyed him with unrelenting aspect.

"Not the first time I've had you at a rope's end," said he; "although the knot wasn't always in the same place. Come, I've no time to lose! Will you answer, or hang?"

"What do you want to know?"

"I have already asked you three times," returned Paco, impatiently, "who this letter is for, and what about."

"For Zumalacarregui," replied Jaime; "and now you know as much as I do."

"Why have I been kept in prison?" demanded Paco.

"Why did you come with the lady?" replied the esquilador. "Had you stopped at Segura, no one would have meddled with you."

"I came because I was ordered. Where is Doña Rita?"

The gipsy hesitated, and then answered surlily. "I do not know."

Paco gave the rope a twitch which brought the esquilador's tongue out of his mouth.

"Liar!" he exclaimed; "I heard you speaking to her just now. What does she here?"

"A prisoner," muttered the half-strangled gipsy.

"Whose?"

"Colonel Villabuena's."

"And the Señor Conde. Where is he?"

"Dead."

"Dead!" repeated Paco, letting the rope go, grasping the esquilador by the collar, and furiously shaking him. "The noble count dead! When did he die? Or is it a lie of your invention?"

"He was dead before I fetched the young lady from Segura," said Jaime. "The story of his being wounded, and wishing to see her, was merely a stratagem to bring her here."

Relinquishing his hold, Paco took a step backwards, in grief and great astonishment. The answers he had forced from Jaime, and his own natural quickness of apprehension, were sufficient to enlighten him as to the main outline of what he had hitherto found a mystery. He at once conjectured Don Baltasar's designs, and the motives of Doña Rita's imprisonment and his own. That the count was really dead he could not doubt; for otherwise Baltasar would hardly have ventured upon his daughter's abduction. Aware that the count's duties and usual occupations did not lead him into actual collision with the enemy, and that they could scarcely, except by a casualty, endanger his life, it occurred to Paco, as highly probable, that he had met his death by unfair means, at the hands of Don Baltasar and

the gipsy. The colonel he suspected, and Jaime he knew, to be capable of any iniquity. Such were some of the reflections that passed rapidly through his mind during the few moments that he stood beside Jaime, mute and motionless, meditating on what had passed, and on what he should now do. Naturally prompt and decided, and accustomed to perilous emergencies, he was not long in making up his mind. Suddenly starting from his immobility, he seized the end of the halter, and, to the horror of the gipsy, whose eyes were fixed upon him, began pulling furiously at it, hand over hand, like a sailor tugging at a hawser.

"*Misericordia!*" screamed the horror-stricken esquilador, as he found himself lifted from the ground by the neck. "Mercy! mercy!"

But mercy there was none for him. His cries were stifled by the pressure of the rope, and then he made a desperate effort to gain his feet. In this he succeeded, and stood upright causing the noose for a moment to slacken. He profited by the temporary relief to attempt another ineffectual prayer for pity. A gasping, inarticulate noise in his throat was the sole result; for the muleteer continued his vigorous pulls at the cord, and in an instant the unhappy gipsy felt himself lifted completely off the ground. He made one more violent strain to touch the earth with the point of his foot; but no – all was in vain – higher and higher he went, till the crown of his head struck against the long iron hook through the loop of which the halter ran. When this was the case, Paco caught his end of the rope round another hook at a less height

from the ground, twisted and knotted it securely; then stooping, he picked up the esquilador's knife, re-entered the dungeon, and ascended the pile of casks erected below the window. On the top of these he sat himself down for a moment and listened. There proceeded from the wine-cellar a sort of noise, as of a scraping and thumping against the wall. It was the wretched gipsy kicking and struggling in his last agony.

"He dies hard," muttered Paco, a slight expression of compunction coming over his features, "and I strung him up without priest or prayer. But, what then! those gitanos are worse than Jews, they believe neither in God nor devil. As for his death, he deserves it, the dog, ten times over. And if he didn't, Doña Rita's fate depends on my escape, and I could not leave him there to alarm the convent and have me pursued."

His scruples quieted by these arguments, the muleteer again listened. All was silent in the vault. Paco cautiously put his head out at the hole through which he had dragged the gipsy. The coast was clear, the forest within thirty yards. Winding his body noiselessly through the aperture, he sprang to his feet, and with the speed of a greyhound sought the cover of the wood. Upon reaching the shelter of its foremost trees he paused, and turning round, looked back at the convent, hoping to see Rita at a window. But she had disappeared, and the shutters were closed. It would have been folly, under the circumstances, to wait the chance of her return; and once more turning his back upon the place of his captivity, the muleteer, exulting in his newly

recovered freedom, plunged, with quick and elastic step, into the innermost recesses of the forest.

Rightly conjecturing that Rita, informed of her father's death, and having no influential friend to whom to address herself for aid, had written to Zumalacarregui with a view to obtain her release, Paco determined to convey the letter to its destination as speedily as possible. To do this it was necessary, first, to ascertain the whereabout of the Carlist general, and secondly, to avoid falling in with Colonel Villabuena, a meeting with whom might not only prevent him from delivering the letter, but also again endanger his liberty, perhaps his life. Shaping his course through the forest in, as nearly as he could judge, a westerly direction, he reached the mountains at sunset, and continued his march along their base – avoiding the more frequented path by which he had approached the convent – until he reached an outlet of the valley. Through this he passed; and still keeping straight forward, without any other immediate object than that of increasing the distance between himself and his late prison, he found himself, some time after midnight, clear of the lofty range of mountains, a limb of the Spanish Pyrenees, in one of whose recesses the convent stood. The country in front, and on both sides of him, was still mountainous, but the elevations were less; and Paco, who had a good general knowledge of the geography of his native province, through most parts of which his avocations as muleteer had often caused him to travel, conjectured that he was on the extreme verge of Navarre and about to enter the

province of Guipuzcoa. He had deemed it prudent to avoid all human habitations whilst still in the vicinity of the convent; but having now left it half a dozen leagues in his rear, the necessity for such caution no longer existed, and he began to look about for a convenient place to take a few hours' repose. At the distance of a mile he perceived the white walls of houses shimmering in the moonlight, and he bent his steps in that direction. It was two in the morning and the hamlet was buried in sleep; the sharp, sudden bark of a watch-dog was the only sound that greeted the muleteer as he passed under the irregular avenue of trees preceding its solitary street. Entering a barn, whose door stood invitingly open, he threw himself upon a pile of newly-made hay, and was instantly plunged in a sleep far sounder and more refreshing than any he had enjoyed during the whole period of his captivity.

It was still early morning when he was roused from his slumbers by the entrance of the proprietor of the barn, a sturdy, good-humoured peasant, more surprised, than pleased, to find upon his premises a stranger of Paco's equivocal appearance. The muleteer's exterior was certainly not calculated to give a high opinion of his respectability. His uniform jacket of dark green cloth was soiled and torn; his boina, which had served him for a nightcap during his imprisonment, was in equally bad plight; he was uncombed and unwashed, and a beard of nearly six weeks' growth adorned his face. It was in a tone of some suspicion that the peasant enquired his business, but Paco had his

answer ready. Taken prisoner by the Christinos, he said, he had escaped from Pampeluna after a confinement of some duration, and ignorant of the country, had wandered about for two nights, lying concealed during the day, and afraid to approach villages lest he should again fall into the hands of the enemy. The haggard look he had acquired during his imprisonment, his beard and general appearance, and the circumstance of his being unarmed, although in uniform, seemed to confirm the truth of his tale; and the peasant, who, like all of his class at that time and in that province, was an enthusiastic Carlist, willingly supplied him with the razor and refreshment of which he stood in pressing need. His appearance somewhat improved, and his appetite satisfied, Paco in his turn became the interrogator, and the first answers he received caused him extreme surprise. The most triumphant success had waited on the Carlist arms during the period of his captivity. The Christino generals had been on all hands discomfited by the men at whose discipline and courage, even more than at their poverty and imperfect resources, they affected to sneer, and numerous towns and fortified places had fallen into the hands of Zumalacarregui and his victorious lieutenants. The mere name of the Carlist chief had become a tower of strength to his followers, and a terror to his foes; and several ably managed surprises had greatly increased the panic dread with which the news of his approach now inspired the Christino troops. On the heights of Descarga a strong column of the Queen's army had been attacked in the night, and routed with prodigious loss, by

the Carlist general Eraso; in the valley of the Baztan General Oraa had been beaten by Sagastibelza, leaving ninety officers and seven hundred men in the hands of the victors; Estella, Vergara, Tolosa, Villafranca, and numerous other considerable towns, were held by the soldiers of the Pretender; and, to crown all, Paco learned, to his astonishment, that Zumalacarregui and his army were then in front of Bilboa, vigorously besieging that rich and important city.

Towards Bilboa, then, did Paco bend his steps. The remote position of the village where he had obtained the above information, caused it to be but irregularly supplied with intelligence from the army; and it was not till the evening of his first day's march, that the muleteer heard a piece of news which redoubled his eagerness to reach the Carlist headquarters. Zumalacarregui, he was informed, had received, whilst directing the operations of the siege, a severe and dangerous wound. Fearing he might die before he reached him, Paco endeavoured to hire or purchase a horse, but all that could be spared had been taken for the Carlist army; and he rightly judged that through so mountainous a country he should make better progress on foot than on any Rosinante offered to him. He pushed forward, therefore, with all possible haste; but his feet had grown tender during his imprisonment, and he was but indifferently satisfied with his rate of marching. On the following day, however, his anxiety was considerably dissipated by learning that Zumalacarregui's wound was slight, and that the surgeons

had predicted a rapid cure. He nevertheless continued his journey without abatement of speed, and on the afternoon of the fourth day arrived on the summit of the hills that overlook Bilboa. The suburbs were occupied by the Carlists, whose slender battering train kept up a fire that was vigorously replied to by the forty or fifty cannon bristling the fortifications. Entering the faubourg known as the Barrio de Bolueta, he approached a group of soldiers lounging in front of their quarters, and enquired where the general was lodged. The men looked at him in some surprise, and asked which general he meant.

"The general-in-chief, Zumalacarregui, to be sure," replied Paco impatiently.

"Where come you from, amigo?" said one of the soldiers, "not to know that Zumalacarregui left the lines the day after he was wounded, and is now getting cured at Cegama?"

Great was Paco's vexation at finding that the person he had come so far to seek, had been all the while at a village within a day's march of the Dominican convent. His annoyance was so legibly written upon his countenance, that one of the soldiers took upon himself to offer a word of consolation.

"Never mind, comrade," said he, "if you want to see Tio Tomas, you can't do better than remain here. You won't have long to wait. He has only got a scratch on the leg, and we expect every day to see him ride into the lines. He's not the man to be laid up long by such a trifle."

"Is Colonel Villabuena here?" said Paco, somewhat reassured

by this last information.

"What, Black Baltasar, as they call him? Ay, that he is, and be hanged to him. It's only two days since he ordered me an extra turn of picket for forgetting to salute him as he passed my beat. Curse him for a soldier's plague!"

Paco left the soldiers and walked on till he came to a small house, which the juniper bush suspended above the door proclaimed to be a tavern. Entering the smoky low-roofed room upon the ground-floor, which just then chanced to be unoccupied, he sat down by the open window and called for a quartillo of wine. A measure of the vinegar-flavoured liquid known by the name of chacolin, and drunk for wine in the province of Biscay, was brought to him, and after washing the dust out of his throat, he began to think what was best to do in his present dilemma. He was desirous to get out of Don Baltasar's neighbourhood, and, moreover, if he did not rejoin his regiment or report himself to the military authorities, he was liable to be arrested as a deserter. In that case, he could hardly hope that the strange story he would have to tell of his imprisonment at the convent would find credit, and, even if it did, delay would inevitably ensue. He finally made up his mind to remain where he was for the night, and to start early next morning for Cegama. A better and more speedy plan would perhaps have been to seek out one of Zumalacarregui's aides-de-camp, relate to him his recent adventures, produce Rita's letter in corroboration of his veracity, and request him to forward it, or provide him with a horse to take

it himself. But although this plan occurred to him, the gain in time appeared insufficient to compensate for the risk of meeting Don Baltasar whilst searching for the aide-de-camp, and of being by him thrown into prison and deprived of the letter.

The day had been most sultry, and Paco had walked, with but a ten minutes' halt, from sunrise till afternoon. Overcome by fatigue and drowsiness, he had no sooner decided on his future proceedings, and emptied his quartillo, events which were about coincident, than his head began to nod and droop, and after a few faint struggles against the sleepy impulse, it fell forward upon the table, and he slept as men sleep after a twelve hours' march under a Spanish sun in the month of June. During his slumbers various persons, soldiers and others, passed in and out of the room; but there was nothing unusual in seeing a soldier dozing off his wine or fatigue on a tavern table, and no one disturbed or took especial notice of him. Paco slept on.

It was evening when he awoke, and rose from his bench with a hearty stretch of his stiffened limbs. As he did so, he heard the sound of footsteps in the street. They ceased near the window, and a dialogue commenced, a portion of which reached his ears.

"Have you heard the news?" said one of the speakers.

"No," was the reply, in a voice that made Paco start. "I am now going to Eraso's quarters to get them. I am told that a courier arrived from Durango half an hour since, covered with foam, and spurring as on a life or death errand."

Whilst this was saying, Paco noiselessly approached the

window, which was large and square, about four feet above the street, and closed only by a clumsy shutter, at that moment wide open. Crouching down, he cautiously raised his head so as to obtain a view of the street, without exposing more than the upper part of his face to the possible observation of the persons outside. What he saw, confirmed the testimony of his ears: two officers in staff uniforms stood within twenty paces of the window, and in the one who had last spoken, Paco recognised Don Baltasar. His face was towards the tavern, but his eyes were fixed upon his interlocutor, who replied to his last observation —

"On an errand of death, indeed!" said he, in tones which, although suppressed, were distinctly audible to the muleteer. "Zumalacarregui is no more."

In his consternation at the intelligence thus unwittingly conveyed to him, Paco forgot for a second the caution rendered imperative by his position. A half-smothered exclamation escaped him, and by an involuntary start he raised his head completely above the window-sill. As he did so, he fancied he saw Don Baltasar glance at the window, and in his turn slightly start; but the sun had already passed the horizon, the light was waning fast, and Colonel Villabuena took no further notice, but remained talking with his companion, Paco made sure that he had either not seen him, or, what was still more probable, not remembered his face. Nevertheless the muleteer retreated from the window that no part of him might be seen, and strained his hearing to catch what passed.

He missed a sentence or two, and then again heard Colonel Villabuena's voice.

"Most disastrous intelligence, indeed!" he said, "and as unexpected as disastrous. I will proceed to the general's quarters and get the particulars."

The officers separated; Don Baltasar walking rapidly away, as Paco, who now ventured to look out, was able to ascertain. Satisfied that he had escaped the peril with which for a moment he had thought himself menaced, he left the window and returned to his bench. But Don Baltasar had sharper eyes and a better memory than the muleteer gave him credit for. He had fully recognized Paco, whom he had several times seen in attendance on the count, and, without troubling himself to reflect how he could have made his escape, he at once decided what measures to take to neutralize its evil consequences. Had Paco remained an instant longer at his post of observation, he would have seen the Colonel stop at a house near at hand, in which a number of soldiers were billeted, summon a corporal and three men, and retrace his steps to the tavern. Leaving two of the soldiers outside the house, with the others he burst into the room occupied by the muleteer.

At the moment of their entrance, Paco, who, although he had heard their footsteps in the passage, did not suspect the new-comers to be other than some of the usual customers to the tavern, had taken up the heavy earthen jug in which his wine had been brought, and was decanting from it into his glass a

last mouthful that still remained at the bottom. No sooner did he behold Don Baltasar, closely followed by two soldiers with fixed bayonets, than with his usual bold decision, and with his utmost strength, he dashed the jug full at him. The missile struck the officer on the chest with such force that he staggered back, and, for a moment, impeded the advance of his followers. That moment saved Paco's liberty – probably his life. Springing to the window, he leaped out, and alighting upon one of the soldiers who had remained outside, knocked him over. The other man, taken by surprise, made a feeble thrust at the fugitive. Paco parried it with his arm, grappled the man, gave him a kick on the shin that knocked his leg from under him, rolled him on the ground by the side of his companion, and scudded down the street like a hunted fox, just as Baltasar and his men jumped out of the window.

"Fire!" shouted the Colonel.

Two bullets, and then two more, struck the walls of the narrow sloping street through which the muleteer ran, or buried themselves with a *thud* in the earth a short distance in front of him. Paco ran all the faster, cleared the houses, and turning to his right, scampered down in the direction of the town. The shouts and firing had spread an alarm in the Carlist camp, the soldiers were turning out on all sides, and the outposts on the alert. Paco approached the latter, and saw a sentinel in a straight line between him and the town.

"*Quien vive?*" challenged the soldier, when the muleteer was

still at a considerable distance from him.

"*Carlos Quinto*," replied Paco.

"Halt!" thundered the sentry, bringing his musket to his shoulder with a sharp quick rattle.

This command, although enforced by a menace, Paco was not disposed to obey. For the one musket before him, there were hundreds behind him, and he continued his onward course, merely inclining to his left, so as to present a less easy mark than when bearing straight down upon the sentry. Another "halt!" immediately followed by the report of the piece, was echoed by a laugh of derision from Paco. "Stop him! bayonet him!" shouted a score of voices in his rear. The sentinel rushed forward to obey the command; but Paco, unarmed and unencumbered, was too quick for him. Dashing past within a yard of the bayonet's point, he tore along to the town, amidst a rain of bullets, encouraged by the cheers of the Christinos, who had assembled in groups to watch the race; and, replying to their shouts and applause by a yell of "*Viva la Reyna!*" he in another minute stood safe and sheltered within the exterior fortifications of Bilboa.

Three weeks had elapsed since the death of Zumalacarregui, and that important event, which the partisans of the Spanish pretender had, as long as possible, kept secret from their opponents, was now universally known. Already did the operations of the Carlists begin to show symptoms of the great loss they had sustained in the person of a man who, during his brief but brilliant command, had nailed victory to

his standard. Even during his last illness, he kept up, from his couch of suffering, a constant correspondence with General Eraso, his second in command, and in some degree directed his proceedings; but when he died, the system of warfare he had uniformly, and with such happy results, followed up, was exchanged by those who came after him, for another and a less judicious one. This, added to the immense moral weight of his loss, which filled the Christinos with the most buoyant anticipations, whilst it was a grievous discouragement to the Carlists, caused the tide of fortune to turn against the latter. Dejected and disheartened, they were beaten from before Bilboa, the town which, but for Zumalacarregui's over-strained deference to the wishes of Don Carlos, they would never have attacked. On the other hand, the Christinos were sanguine of victory, and of a speedy termination to the war. The baton of command, after passing through the hands of Rodil, Sarsfield, Mina, and other veterans whose experience had struggled in vain against the skill and prestige of the Carlist chief, had just been bestowed by the Queen's government on a young general in whose zeal and abilities great reliance was placed. On various occasions, since the death of Ferdinand, had this officer, at the head of his brigade or division, given proof not only of that intrepidity which, although the soldier's first virtue, should be the general's least merit, but, as was generally believed, of military talents of a high order.

Luis Fernandez de Cordova, the son of a poor but noble family

of one of the southern provinces of Spain, was educated at a military school, whence he passed with an officer's commission into a regiment of the royal guard. Endowed with considerable natural ability and tact, he managed to win the favour of Ferdinand VII., and by that weak and fickle monarch was speedily raised to the rank of colonel. His then bias, however, was for diplomacy, for which, indeed, his subsequent life, and his turn for intrigue, showed him to be well qualified; and at his repeated instance he was sent to various courts in high diplomatic capacities. "We are sorry to have to say," remarks a Spanish military writer who fought in the opposite ranks, "that Cordova in part owed his elevation to the goodness of the very prince against whom he subsequently drew his sword." Be that as it may, at the death of Ferdinand, Cordova, although little more than thirty years of age, was already a general, and ambassador at Copenhagen. Ever keenly alive to his own interest, he no sooner learned the outbreak of the civil war, than he saw in it an opportunity of further advancement; and, without losing a moment, he posted to Madrid, threw himself at the feet of Christina, and implored her to give him a command, that he might have an opportunity of proving with his sword his devotion to her and to the daughter of his lamented sovereign. A command was given him; his talents were by no means contemptible; his self-confidence unbounded; intrigue and interest were not wanting to back such qualities, and at the period now referred to, Cordova, to the infinite vexation of many a greyhaired general

who had earned his epaulets on the battle-fields of America and the Peninsula, was appointed commander-in-chief of the army of the north.

Upon assuming the supreme command, Cordova marched his army, which had just compelled the Carlists to raise the siege of Bilboa, in the direction of the Ebro. Meanwhile the Carlists, foiled in Biscay, were concentrating their forces in central Navarre. As if to make up for their recent disappointment, they had resolved upon the attack of a town, less wealthy and important, it is true, than Bilboa, but which would still have been a most advantageous acquisition, giving them, so long as they could hold it, command of the communications between Pampeluna and the Upper Ebro. Against Puente de la Reyna, a fortified place upon the Arga, were their operations now directed, and there, upon the 13th of July, the bulk of the Carlist army arrived. Don Carlos himself accompanied it, but the command devolved upon Eraso, the military capabilities of Charles the Fifth being limited to praying, amidst a circle of friars and shavelings, for the success of those who were shedding their heart's blood in his service. The neighbouring peasants were set to work to cut trenches; and preparations were making to carry on the siege in due form, when, on the 14th, the garrison, in a vigorous sortie, killed the commandant of the Carlist artillery, and captured a mortar that had been placed in position. The same day Cordova and his army started from Lerin, which they had reached upon the 13th, and arrived at nightfall at Larraga, a town

also upon the Arga, and within a few miles of Pueute de la Reyna.

The next day was passed by the two considerable armies, which, it was easy to foresee, would soon come into hostile collision, in various movements and manœuvres, which diminished the distance between them, already not great. The Carlists, already discouraged by the successful sortie of the 14th, retired from before Puente de la Reyna, and, moving southwards, occupied the town and bridge of Mendigorria. On the other hand, two-thirds of the Christino forces crossed the Arga, and quartered themselves in and near the town of Artajona. The plain on the left bank of the river was evidently to be the scene of the approaching conflict. On few occasions during the war, had actions taken place upon such level ground as this, the superiority of the Christinos in cavalry and artillery having induced Zumalacarregui rather to seek battle in the mountains, where those arms were less available. But since the commencement of 1835, the Carlist horse had improved in numbers and discipline; several cavalry officers of rank and skill had joined it, and assisted in its organization; and although deprived of its gallant leader, Don Carlos O'Donnel, who had fallen victim to his own imprudent daring in an insignificant skirmish beneath the walls of Pampeluna, Eraso, and the other Carlist generals, had now sufficient confidence in its efficiency to risk a battle in a comparatively level country. Numerically, the Carlists were superior to their opponents, but in artillery, and especially in cavalry, the Christinos had the advantage.

From various garrison towns, through which he had passed in his circuitous route from Bilboa to Larraga, the Christino commander had collected reinforcements, and an imposing number of squadrons, including several of lancers and dragoons of the royal guard, formed part of the force now assembled at Larraga and Artajona.

It was late on the evening of the 15th of July, and on a number of gently sloping fields, interspersed with vineyards and dotted with trees, a Christino brigade, including a regiment of cavalry, had established its bivouac. In such weather as it then was, it became a luxury to pass a night in the open air, with turf for a mattrass, a cloak for a pillow, and the branches for bed-curtains, instead of being cramped and crowded into smoky, vermin-haunted cottages; and the troops assembled seemed to feel this, and to enjoy the light and balmy breeze and refreshing coolness which had succeeded to the extreme heat of the day. Few troops, if any, are so picturesque in a bivouac as Spaniards; none, certainly, are greater adepts in rendering an out-door encampment not only endurable but agreeable, and nothing had been neglected by the Christinos that could contribute to the comfort of their *al-fresco* lodging. Large fires had been lighted, composed in great part of odoriferous shrubs and bushes abounding in the neighbourhood, which scented the air as they burned; and around these the soldiers were assembled cooking and eating their rations, smoking, jesting, discussing some previous fight, or anticipating the result of the

one expected for the morrow, and which according to their sanguine calculations, could only be favourable to them. Here was a seemingly interminable row of muskets piled in sheaves, a perfect *chevaux-de-frise*, some hundred yards of burnished barrels and bayonets glancing in the fire-light. Further on, the horses of the cavalry were picketed, whilst their riders, who had finished grooming and feeding them, looked to their arms and saddlery, and saw that all was ready and as it should be if called on for sudden service. On one side, at a short distance from the bivouac, a party of men cut, with their sabres and foraging hatchet, brushwood to renew the fires; in another direction, a train of carts laden with straw, driven by unwilling peasants and escorted by a surly commissary and a few dusty dragoons, made their appearance, the patient oxen pushing and straining forwards in obedience to the goad that tormented their flanks, the clumsy wheels, solid circles of wood, creaking round their ungreased axles. In the distance were the enemy's watch-fires; nearer were those of the advanced posts; and, at more than one point of the surrounding country, a cottage or farmhouse, set on fire by careless or mischievous marauders, fiercely flamed without any attempt being made to extinguish the conflagration.

If the sights that met the eye were varied and numerous, the sounds which fell upon the ear were scarcely less so. The neighing of the picketed horses, the songs of the soldiery, the bugle-calls and signals of the outposts, occasionally a few dropping shots exchanged between patroles, and from time to time some

favourite national melody, clanged forth by a regimental band – all combined to render the scene one of the most inspiriting and lively that could be imagined.

Beside a watch-fire whose smoke, curling and wavering upwards, seemed to cling about the foliage of the large old tree near which it was lighted, Luis Herrera had spread his cloak, and now reclined, his head supported on his arm, gazing into the flaming pile. Several officers belonging to the squadron he commanded were also grouped round the fire, and some of them, less watchful or more fatigued than their leader, had rolled themselves in their mantles, turned their feet to the flame, and with their heads supported on saddles and valises, were already asleep. Two or three subalterns came and went, as the exigencies of the service required, inspecting the arrangements of the men, ascertaining that the horses were properly cared for, giving orders to sergeants, or bringing reports to the captains of their troops. Herrera as yet felt no disposition to sleep. The stir and excitement of the scene around him had not failed of their effect on his martial nature, and he felt cheered and exhilarated by the prospect of action. It was only in moments like these, during the fight itself, or the hours immediately preceding it, that his character seemed to lose the gloomy tinge imparted to it by the misfortunes which, so early in life, had darkened his path, and to recover something of the buoyancy natural to his age.

Whilst busied with anticipations of the next day's battle, Herrera's attention was suddenly attracted by hearing his name

pronounced at a neighbouring fire, round which a number of his troopers had established themselves.

"Captain Herrera?" said a soldier, apparently replying to a question; "he is not far off – what do you want?"

"To see him instantly," answered a voice not unfamiliar to the ear of Luis. "I bring important intelligence."

"Come this way," was the reply; and then a non-commissioned officer approached Herrera, and respectfully saluting, informed him that a *paisano*, or civilian, wished to speak with him. Before Luis could order the person in question to be conducted to him, a man mounted on a rough but active mountain horse, rode out of the gloom into the fire-light, threw himself from his saddle, and stood within three paces of the Christino officer. By the blaze, Herrera recognized, with some surprise, one whom he believed to be then in the Carlist ranks.

"Paco!" he exclaimed; "you here? Whence do you come, and what are your tidings?"

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.