

VARIOUS

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THE CONSTITUTION AND SLAVERY

There are two sections of the United States, the Free States and the Slave States, who hold views widely different upon the subject of Slavery and the true interpretation of the Constitution in relation to it. The Southern view, for the most part, is:

1. The Constitution recognizes slaves as strictly property, to her bought and sold as merchandise.
2. The Constitution recognizes all the territories as open to slavery as much as to freedom, except in those cases where it has been expressly interdicted by the Federal Government; and it secures the legal right to carry slaves into the territories, and any act of Congress, restricting this right to hold slaves in the territories, is unconstitutional and void.
3. Slavery is a natural institution, and not to be considered as local and municipal.
4. The Constitution is simply a compact or league between sovereign States, and when either party breaks, in the estimation of the other, this contract, it is no longer binding upon the whole, and the party that thinks itself wronged has a right, acting according to its own judgment, to leave the Union.
5. This contract between sovereign States has been broken to such an extent, by long and repeated aggressions upon the South by the North, that the slave States who have seceded from the Union, or who may secede, are not only right in thus doing, but are justified in taking up arms, to prevent the collection of revenue by the Federal Government.

These ideas are universally repudiated in the free States. It is not my purpose to discuss the social or moral relations of slavery, but simply to consider under what circumstances the Constitution originated, and what was the clear intent of those who adopted it as the organic or fundamental law of the country. The last assumption taken by the seceding States grows out of the first four, and therefore it becomes a question of vital interest, what did the framers of the Constitution mean? We must remember that while names remain the same, the things which they represent in time go through a radical change. Slavery is not the same that it was when the Constitution was formed, nor are the original slave States the same. If freedom at the North has made great strides, so also has slavery South. Our country now witnesses a mighty difference in free and slave institutions from what originally was seen. The stand-point of slavery and freedom has altogether changed, not from local legislation, but from natural causes, inherent in these two diverse states of society. New interests, new relations, new views of commerce, agriculture, and manufactures now characterize our country. It will not do then to infer, from the existing state of things, as originally the respective condition of the slaveholding and the free States, or what was in fact the import of that agreement, called the Constitution, which brought about the Federal Union. The framers of the Constitution did not reason so much as to what they should do for posterity as for the generation then living. As fallible men, much as they would wish to legislate wisely for the future, yet their very imperfection of knowledge precluded them from knowing fully what fifty or a hundred years hence would be the development of slavery or freedom. Their actions must have reference to present wants, and consult especially existing conditions of society. While they intended that the Constitution should be the supreme law of the land, yet they wisely put into the hands of the people the power of amending it at any such time as

circumstances might make it necessary. The question then at issue between the North and the South is not what the Constitution should read, not what it ought to be, to come up to the supposed interests of the country; but what it does read. How is the Constitution truly to be interpreted? All parties should acquiesce in seeking only to find out the literal import of the Constitution as originally framed, or subsequently amended, and abide by it, irrespective altogether of present interests or relations. The reason is, in no other way can the common welfare of the country be promoted. If the necessities of the people demand a change in the Constitution, they can, in a legal way, exercise the right, always remembering that no republic, no free institutions, no democratic state of society can exist that denies the great principle of the rule of the majority. It becomes us, then, in order that we may come to a right decision respecting the duties that grow out of our Federal Union, to consider what language the Constitution makes use of, in relation to slavery, and how was this instrument interpreted by the framers. The great question is, was slavery regarded as a political and moral evil, to be restricted and circumscribed within the States existing under the Constitution, or was it looked upon as a blessing, a social relation of society, proper to be diffused over the territories? It can be clearly shown that there was no such state of feeling, respecting slavery, as to lead the originators of Constitution to look upon it as a thing in itself of natural right, useful in its operation, and worthy of enlargement and perpetuation. Rather, the universal sentiment respecting slavery, North and South, was, that as a great moral, social, and political evil, it should be condemned, and the widely prevalent impression was, that through the peaceful operation of causes that evinced the immeasurable superiority of free institutions, slavery would itself die out, and the whole country be consecrated to free labor. Never did it enter the minds of the framers of the Constitution, that slavery was a thing in itself right and desirable, or that it should be encouraged in the territories. It was looked upon as exclusively local in its character, the creature of State law, a relation of society that was to be regulated like any other municipal institution. It is not to be presumed that the authors of our government would, in the Declaration of Independence, assert the natural rights of all men to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, and then contradict this cardinal principle of the revolution in the Constitution. They found slavery existing in the Southern States; they simply left it as it was before the Revolution, with the idea that in time the local action of the State legislature would do away with the system. But so far as the extension of slavery was concerned, the predominant feeling, North and South, was hostile to it. The security of the country demanded the union of the States under one common Constitution. The dangers of foreign war, the exhausted finances of the different States, the evils of a great public debt, contracted during the Revolution, made it advisable, as soon as the consent of the States could be got, to have a Constitution that should command security at home and credit and respect abroad. It was regarded as indispensable for union, that slavery should be left as it was found in the States. The thirteen States that first formed our Union under the Constitution, with the great evils that grew out of war and debt, agreed, for their own mutual protection, that slavery should be permitted to exist in those States where it was sanctioned by the local government, as an evil to be tolerated, not as a thing good in itself, to be fostered, perpetuated, and enlarged. Seeing that union could not be had without slavery, it was recognized as an institution not to be interfered with by the free States; but not acknowledged, in the sense that it was right, a blessing that, like free labor, should be the normal condition of the whole people. There was no such indifference to slavery as a civil institution, as has been asserted. The reason is two-fold: first, the States could not be indifferent to slavery, if they wished; and secondly, they could not repudiate, in the Constitution, the Declaration of Independence. Thus the word 'slave' is not found in the Constitution. In the rendition of slaves, they simply spoke of persons held to service, and as union was impossible, if the free States were open to their escape, without the right being recognized of being returned, this provision was accordingly made; and yet by the provision that no person should be deprived of liberty or life, without due process of law, and that the free citizens of one State, irrespective of color, should have the same rights, while resident in any other State, as the citizens of that State, the framers of our Constitution declared, in language most

explicit, the natural rights of all men. The question is not as to the consistency of their profession and practice, or how they could fight for their own independence, and yet deny freedom, for the sake of the Union, to the slaves; but the question is simply whether, in preparing the Constitution, they intended to engraft upon it the idea of the natural right of slavery, and recognize it as a blessing, to be perpetuated and enlarged. The question is simply, whether the Constitution was designed to be pro-slavery, or whether, like the instrument of the Declaration of Independence, it was intended to be the great charter of civil and religious freedom, although compelled, for the sake of union, not to interfere with slavery where it already existed? Great stress is put upon that clause enjoining the rendition of slaves escaping from their masters; but union was impossible without this provision. The necessity of union was thought indispensable for protection, revenue, and securing the dearly-bought blessings of independence. The question with them was not, ought slavery to be recognized as a natural right, and slaves a species of property like other merchandise? but simply, shall we tolerate this evil, for the sake of Union? Thus, as the indispensable condition of union, the provision was made for the rendition of persons held to labor in the slave States. Why is the language of the Constitution so guarded as not to have even the word 'slave' in it, and yet of such a character as not to interfere with local State legislation upon slavery? Simply to steer between the Charybdis of no union and the Scylla of the repudiation of the Declaration of Independence, teaching that all men are born free and equal, and that all have natural rights, such as life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. And yet, in the slave States, the interpretation of the Constitution is such, that the free States are accused of violating it, unless they acknowledge that it recognizes slavery as a natural right, and an institution to be perpetuated and enlarged, and put upon the same level with the blessing of freedom, in the territories. Slavery virtually must be nationalized, and the Constitution be interpreted so as to carry it all over the territories now existing, or to be acquired, or the free States have broken the Constitution, and the slave States may leave the Union whenever it suits their pleasure. It is easy to see how time has brought about such a revolution of feeling and idea respecting slavery. It can be shown that circumstances have changed altogether the relations of slavery, and while names have remained the same, the things which they represent have assumed a radical difference. It can be shown that the introduction of the cotton-gin, and the increased profits of slave labor, have given an impetus to the domestic institution that brings with it an entire revolution of opinion. When slavery was unprofitable to the slaveholders; when, in the early days of the republic, the number of slaves was comparatively small; when, all over the country, the veterans of the Revolution existed to testify to the hardships they endured for national independence, and eulogize even the help of the negro in securing it, then slavery was regarded a curse, an evil to be curtailed and in time obliterated; then the local character of slavery, as the creature of municipal law, not to be recognized where such law does not exist, was the opinion universally of the people. But now, with the growing profits of slavery, with the increase of the power of this institution, other and far different language is held. Disguise it as we may, there do exist great motives that have silently yet powerfully operated within the last thirty or forty years, to change the popular current of feeling and opinion. Not only have the slave States held the balance of political power, but the spread of slavery has been gigantic. The fairest regions of the South have been opened up to the domestic institution, and Texas annexed, with Louisiana, Arkansas and Florida, making an immense area of country, to be the nursery of slavery. The political ascendancy of the slave States has ever given to the South a great advantage, in the extension of their favored institution, and the result has proved that what our ancestors looked upon as an evil that time would soon do away with, has grown into a monster system that threatens to make subservient to it the free institutions of the North.

Slavery has now come to be a mighty energy of disquietude all over the country, assuming colossal proportions of mischief, and mocking all the ordinary restraints of law. The question of the present day to be decided is not whether freedom and slavery shall exist side by side, nor whether slavery shall be tolerated as a necessary evil; but in reality, whether freedom shall be crushed under the iron hoof of slavery, and this institution shall obtain the complete control of the country. It has

been said that the Constitution takes the position of complete indifference to slavery; but the history of the slave States does not lead us to infer that they were ever willing that slavery should be tested by its own merits, or stand without the most persistent efforts to secure for it the patronage of the Federal Government. Study the progress of slavery, the last forty years, and none can fail to see that it has ever aimed to secure first the supreme political control, and then to advance its own selfish interests, at the expense of free institutions. The great danger has always been, that while numerically vastly inferior to the North, slavery has always been an unit, with a single eye to its own aggrandizement; consequently, the history of the country will show that so far from the general policy of the government being adverse to slavery, that policy has been almost exclusively upon the side of slaveholders. The domestic institution has been ever the pet interest of the land.

In all that pertains to political power, the slaveholding interests have been in the ascendant. Even when Lincoln was elected, it was found that the Senate and House of Representatives, as well as the Judiciary, were numerically upon the side of slavery, so that he could not, even had it been his wish, carry out any measure inimical to the South. True, the South had not the same power as under Buchanan; they could not hope ever again to wield the resources of government to secure the ascendancy of slavery in Kansas; but for all that, Lincoln was powerless to encroach upon their supposed rights, even if thus disposed. Is it not, then, evident, that so far from the slaveholding States holding to the opinions of the framers of the Constitution, there has been within the last forty years a mighty change going on in the South, giving to slavery an essentially aggressive policy, and an extension never dreamed of by the authors of the Constitution? The ground of the Constitution respecting slavery, was simply non-interference in the States where it already existed. It left slavery to be curtailed, or done away with by the local legislature, but it used language the most guarded, to preclude the idea that slavery rested upon natural right, and that slaves, like other property, could be carried into the territories. It has been said, that the position of the Constitution is that of absolute indifference, both to freedom and slavery; that it advocated neither, but was bound to protect both. But how could the Constitution be indifferent to the very end for which it was made? Was not its great design to secure the liberty of the country, and promote its highest welfare? The Constitution simply tolerated the existence of slavery, and no more. As union was impossible without the provision for the rendition of persons held to labor, escaping from one state into another, it simply accommodated itself to an evil that was thought would be restricted, and in due process of time done away with in the slave States. To strain this provision to mean that it advocated the natural right of slavery, and recognized the slave as property, to be sold and bought like other merchandise, is simply to say that the framers of the Constitution were the greatest hypocrites in the world, originating the Declaration of Independence upon the basis of the natural right of all men to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, and yet with full knowledge and purpose giving the lie to this instrument in the Constitution. Madison thought it wrong to admit in the Constitution the idea of property in man. The word 'service' was substituted for 'servitude,' simply because this last encouraged the idea of property.

The constitutional provision for the rendition of slaves was simply a compromise between union and slavery. Of the two evils of *no union*, or *no slavery*, it was thought the former was the worse, and consequently the free States fell in with the measure. But could the patriots of the Revolution have foreseen the gigantic growth of slavery, and the use that would have been made of the provision recognizing it, no consideration would have induced them to adopt a course that has been prolific of so much misrepresentation and mischief to the country. They left the suppression of slavery to the States where it existed, but there was no intention to ingraft the idea of property in man in the Constitution, or to favor its extension beyond the original slave States in any way. John Jay, the first Chief-Justice, was preëminently qualified to judge respecting this. We have his testimony most explicitly denying the natural right of property in slaves, and declaring that the Constitution did not recognize the equity of its extension in the new States or Territories. Who was there more conversant with the genius of our country than Washington; and yet how full is his testimony to the evil of slavery; its want of

natural right to support it, and the necessity of its speedy suppression and abolition? Is it possible that he, himself a slaveholder and an emancipationist, could utter such sentiments and enforce them by his example, if he regarded the Constitution as establishing the right of property in man, and the benefit of the indefinite expansion of slavery over the country? No, indeed! If we may consider the Constitution in relation to slaves an inconsistent instrument, we can not prove it an hypocritical and dishonest one. The hard necessities of the times wrung out of reluctant patriots the admission of the rendition of slaves, but they would not by any reasonable construction of language, assert the natural right of property in slaves, and the propriety or benefit of its toleration in new States and Territories. It was bad enough to tolerate this evil in the old slave States, but it would be infamous to hand down to posterity a Constitution denying the self-evident truths of the Declaration of Independence. Toleration is not synonymous with approval, or existence with right. There is a most subtle error in the assumption of the indifference of the Constitution to freedom and slavery—that it advocated neither, but protected both. Certainly the framers of the Constitution were not automatons, or this instrument the accident of the throw of the dice-box. The great purpose of this instrument was to raise the revenue, and defend the country. Its end was to protect the liberties and command the respect of civilized nations. The old Confederation was to give way to the Federal Constitution. The independence of the United States had been achieved at a heavy cost. To say nothing of frontiers exposed, country ravaged, towns burnt, commerce nearly ruined, the derangement of finances—the pecuniary loss alone amounted to one hundred and seventy million dollars, two thirds of which had been expended by Congress, the balance by individual States. The design of the Constitution was to preserve the fruits of the Revolution, to respect State sovereignty, and yet secure a powerful and efficient Union; to have a central government, and yet not infringe upon the local rights of the States. It will, therefore, be seen that while the subject of slavery was earnestly discussed, and presented at the outset a great obstacle to the union of the States, yet it was thought, upon the whole, best to leave to the slave States the business of doing away with this great evil in such a manner as in their judgment might best conduce to their own security and the preservation of the Union.

But no truth of history is more evident than that the authors of the Constitution regarded slavery as impossible to be sustained upon the ground of the natural rights of mankind, and deserving of no encouragement in the Territories, or States hereafter to come into the Union. It was thought that the best interests of the slave States would lead them to abolish slavery, and that before many years, the Republic would cease to bear the disgrace of chattel bondage. It is certainly proper that the acts and language of the authors of the Constitution, and those who chiefly were instrumental in achieving our independence, should be made to interpret that instrument which was the creation of their own toils and love of country. Because the circumstances of the present day have brought about a mighty change in the feelings and opinions of the slave States, it does not follow that the Constitution in its original intention and spirit should be accommodated to this new aspect of things. It is easy to get up a theory of the natural right of slavery, and then say that the Constitution meant that the slave States should carry slave property just where the free States carry their property; but when this ground is taken, the Constitution is made, to all intents, a pro-slavery instrument. It ceases to be the charter of a nation's freedom, and resolves itself into the most effective agent of the propagandism of slavery. The transition is easy from such a theory to the fulfillment of the boast of Senator Toombs, 'that the roll of slaves might yet be called at the foot of Bunker Hill Monument.' But no straining of the language of the Constitution can make it mean the recognition of the natural right of slavery. The guarded manner in which the provision was made for the rendition of slaves, and all the circumstances connected with the adoption of the Constitution, show conclusively that slavery was considered only a local and municipal institution, a serious evil, to be suppressed and curtailed by the slave States, and never by the General Government a blessing to be fostered and extended where it did not exist at the time the Union of the thirteen States was perfected.

Alexander H. Stephens, Vice-President of the Confederate States, in a speech at Atlanta, Georgia, said: 'Jefferson, Madison, Washington, and many others, were tender of

the word slave, in the organic law, and all looked forward to the time when the institution of slavery should be removed from our midst as a trouble and a stumbling-block. The delusion could not be traced in any of the component parts of the Southern Constitution. In that instrument we solemnly discarded the pestilent heresy of fancy politicians, that all men of all races were equal, and we have made African inequality, and subordination, the chief corner-stone of the Southern Republic.'

Here we have the great idea of an essential difference in relation to the Constitution and slavery existing at the present day South, from that which did exist at the time of its ratification universally by the people of the thirteen States. The Vice-President of the Southern Confederacy frankly admits that slavery is its chief corner-stone; that our ancestors were deluded upon the subject of slavery; that the ideas contained in the Declaration of Independence respecting the equality of all men, and their natural right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, are only the pestilent heresy of fancy politicians; consequently that in the Southern Constitution all such trash was solemnly discarded. Can clearer proof be wanted to show that the stand-point of slavery and freedom has altogether changed since the days of Washington? Is it not true that our country at the present day presents the singular spectacle of two great divisions, one holding to the Constitution as interpreted by our ancestors North and South, the other openly repudiating such interpretation? Is it strange, with such a radical difference existing as to the import of the Constitution upon the subject of slavery, that we should have such frequent and ever persistent charges of Northern aggression? If the history of slavery be kept in mind, it will be seen that it has steadily had its eye upon one end, and that is national aggrandizement. Thus about two hundred thousand slaveholders wield all the political power of the South, and compel all non-slaveholders to acquiesce in their supremacy. But whatever the South may choose to do, the North is under obligation to give to slavery nothing more than what is guaranteed in the Constitution. If more than this is asked for, the North is bound by a just regard for its own interests and the prosperity of the country to refuse compliance. It has been seen that even admitting that a State has a just cause of complaint, or supposing as a matter of fact that the Constitution is violated, she can not set herself up to be exclusively the judge in this matter, and leave the Union at her convenience.

The history of our country reveals two memorable cases where the question was decided that not the State, but the Federal Government was to be its own judge of what was constitutional, and act accordingly. First, the case of New-York; secondly, the course taken by Massachusetts in relation to the Embargo law of 1807, which was believed to be unconstitutional generally in New-England. In the case of New-York, there was, as has been said, the surrender of any right to secede from the Union at her pleasure; while in the Embargo law of 1807, which was brought up to the Supreme Court for decision, there was the acquiescence of New-England upon the simple point, who should be the final arbiter in the dispute. Massachusetts and all New-England assented to a decision of the Judiciary, not upon the ground that it was right, but that the Supreme Court had alone the authority to say what was right.

In this case there was a perfect refutation of the whole theory of secession; that theory falls back upon the idea that the State government is to be its own judge of what constitutes a violation of the Constitution, and act accordingly; but the Embargo law of 1807, when carried up to the Supreme bench, and the way New-England assented to a decision that was not believed to be in accordance with the Constitution, is a signal rebuke of the assumption of State sovereignty when arrayed against the General Government. The all-important question was not, Was the decision of the Judiciary right, but simply, Who had the authority to say what was right? Who should submit to that authority? No person can fail to see in these two cases, under circumstances so widely different, and with an end

proposed in each directly the reverse of the other, that the point so important to establish was clearly made out, that the National Government reserves to itself alone the right to decide as to what should be the course taken in questions of dispute that arise between the States and the Federal authority.

It is mournful to see the finest country on the earth—a land peculiarly blessed with every element of material wealth, a land that has grown like a giant, and commanded the respect of the world—now in her central government made an object of contempt, and crippled in her strength by those very States who should, upon the principle of gratitude for favors granted, have been the last to leave the Union. While the Government at Washington has shown the utmost forbearance, they have manifested the greatest insolence, as well as disregard of the most sacred rights of the Union. An Absalom the most willful and impetuous of his father's family, and yet the most caressed and indulged, requites every debt of parental kindness by seeking through treachery and the prostitution of all his privileges to raise an insurrection in the household of David, and turn away through craft the hearts of the people from their rightful lord. So like Absalom, South-Carolina first unfurls the banner of treason and war among the sister States, desperately resolved to secure her selfish aggrandizement even at the price of the ruin of the country, but like Absalom, also, she is destined to experience a reverse as ignominious and as fatal.

A STORY OF MEXICAN LIFE

VIII

'My neighbor gazed at the stranger with bewilderment, and remained speechless. There was, nevertheless, nothing in his outward mien to give rise to so much emotion. He was a robust and rather handsome fellow, of about twenty-five, bold, swaggering, and free and easy in his deportment—a perfect specimen of the race of half-breeds so common in Mexico. His skin was swarthy, his features regular, and his beard luxuriant and soft as silk. His eyes were large and black as sloes, his teeth small, regular, and white as ivory, and his whole countenance, when in repose, wore an expression which won confidence rather than excited distrust. But when conversing, there was an indefinable craftiness in his smile, and a peculiar cunning in the twinkle of his eye, that often strikes the traveler in Mexico, as pervading all that class who are accustomed to making excursions into the interior. His costume, covered with dust, and torn in many places, led me to infer that he had only just returned from some long journey.

'After waiting, with great politeness, for some few seconds, to allow Arthur time to address him, and finding he waited in vain, the Mexican opened the conversation:

"I fear your excellency will scold me for delaying so long on the road; but how could I help it? I am more to be pitied than blamed—I lost three horses—at monte—and if it had not been by good luck that the ace turned up when I staked my saddle and bridle, I should not be here even now; but the ace won; I bought a fresh horse—and here I am.'

"What success?' inquired Arthur, with a look of intense anxiety; 'did you bring any?'

"Certainly,' replied Pepito, handing him very unconcernedly a small package; 'I brought more than you told me, and, in fact, I might have brought a mule-load if you had wanted so many.'

"Adèle!" cried Mr. Livermore, overcome with delight, as he rushed into my room, 'Adèle, HE HAS FOUND IT!'

Pepito followed Arthur with his sharp eye, and on beholding Adèle, asked me, in a low tone:

"Who is that lady, Caballero?'

"I can not say; I myself never saw her until to-day,' said I; and noticing his gaze riveted on her in apparent admiration, I added:

"Do you think her pretty?'

"Pretty! Holy Virgin! she is lovely enough to make a man risk his salvation to win her.'

'Feeling that my presence might be one of those superfluities with which they would gratefully dispense, I was on the point of leaving, when there was a knock at the door. Again Adèle sought refuge in my room, and again Arthur advanced to the door:

"Open, it is I,' said a voice from the outside; 'I have come to inquire after my friend Pepito.'

"Señor,' exclaimed Pepito, 'that must be my compadre, Pedro.'

'On the door being opened, they flew to one another's arms, and gave a true Mexican embrace.

'The entrance of Pedro, which evidently annoyed Mr. Livermore, awakened in my mind strange suspicions. I resolved at the earliest opportunity I had of a private interview with him, to allude to what I had overheard on the Alameda. In the mean time I would keep an eye on these two cronies.

"Stand back, Pedro, and let me have a good look at you.'

"*There!* well, how do you think I look?'

"My dear fellow, you are growing decidedly coarse and fat.'

"Bah! but how do you like my new rig?'

"I can not admire the cut; but, of course, you bought them ready-made—one could see that with half an eye.'

"Well, Pepito, now that you are once more back in the city, I lack nothing to make me perfectly happy. You will spend the rest of the day with me?"

"Of course, my dear fellow."

"Well, it is about dinner-time; let us be off."

"Wait till I have first bid adieu to his excellency," replied Pepito, turning toward Mr. Livermore. Then advancing a few steps, he whispered a few words to him, at the same time bowing very low. Arthur unlocked the drawer of his table and took out a roll of dollars, which he handed to the Mexican.

"Must you absolutely leave me so soon?" said he.

"Well, Caballero, after so long a journey, a man requires relaxation, and enjoys a social glass; so, with your permission, I will see you again to-morrow."

"This answer was any thing but pleasing to Mr. Livermore, who turned to me, and addressing me in English, said:

"My dear sir, once more I must trespass on your good-nature. It is essential to the success of my plans, that these two men should not be left together. Will you, *can* you, tack yourself on to them, and keep close to Pepito until they separate?"

"Your request is as strange as it is difficult of execution; but I will do my best."

"Gentlemen," said I, to the two Mexicans, as we all three were going down the stairs, 'you were speaking of dining—now I want to visit a real Mexican *fonda*; I am tired of these French cafés; will you favor me by taking me to a first-rate house, for I am not acquainted with this city.'

"If you will accompany us to the Fonda Genovesa, Caballero," said Pedro, 'I will warrant you will have no cause to repent it.'

"I am infinitely indebted to you, and shall gladly accept your guidance."

The Fonda Genovesa was certainly one of the vilest establishments I ever visited, and the dinner was, of course, detestably bad. However, I treated my two worthies to a couple of bottles of wine, which being to them a rare luxury, they declared they had fared sumptuously.

"But, look here, Pepito," said Pedro, 'you have not yet alluded to your journey. Where have you been all this time?'

"Where have I been? Oh! well, that is a secret."

"A secret! what, from me, from your compadre Pedro?"

"Even so, my dear Pedro, even so; I have sworn not to mention the object of my journey nor my destination."

"Oh! I dare say; but look here, what did you swear by—the holy Virgin of Guadalupe? No? Well, was it the cross?"

"No, neither by the one nor the other."

"What is there binding, then? nothing else ought to keep you silent when *I* am in question?"

"I pledged my sacred honor."

"Your sacred honor! Give me your hand, you always were a wag, but you humbugged me this time, I confess; well, that *is* a good one—the best joke I have heard for an age—excellent! well, go on, I am all attention, all ears."

"Well, you won't hear much, for I am a man of honor, and bound not to speak; besides, I received a hundred dollars to keep mum."

Pedro for a moment appeared to be in a brown study; at last, gazing hard at his friend, he said:

"Would two hundred tempt you to speak?"

"If such a proposition were to come from a stranger, I might, perchance, accept it; but seeing it comes from you—never."

"Why?"

"Because, when you offer me two hundred dollars for any thing, it must be worth far more than you offer."

"Well, now, admit, just as a supposition, that I am interested in this matter, what harm will it do you, if we both turn an honest penny?"

"That is just the point; but I don't want you to turn ten pennies to my one."

"Your scruples, my dear Pepito, display a cautious temperament, and evince deep acquaintance with human nature; you see through my little veil of mystery, and I own your sagacity; now I will be honest with you—with a man like you, lying is mere folly. It is true, I am to have four hundred dollars if I can find out where you have been. I swear to you by the holy Virgin of Guadalupe, I am making a clean breast of it. Now, will you take that amount? Say the word, and I will go and fetch it right away."

"This proposition seemed to embarrass the scrupulous Pepito extremely, and he remained some time lost in thought.

"But, if you only receive four hundred, and give me four hundred, what the deuce will you make out of such an operation?"

"Trust entirely to your generosity."

"What! leave me to do what I like! I take you up—by Jupiter! Pedro, that is a noble trait in your character—I take you up."

"Then it is a bargain. Will you wait here for me, or would you prefer to meet me at our usual Monte in the Calle de los Meradores?"

"I prefer the Monte."

"You will swear on the cross, to relate fully and truly every particular relating to your journey?"

"Of course—every thing."

"I will be there in a couple of hours."

'After his friend's departure, Pepito sat silent; his brow was knit, and yet a mocking sneer played around his lips; he seemed to be pursuing two trains of thought at once; suspicion and merriment were clearly working in his mind.

"This is a droll affair, Caballero; I can't clearly see the bottom of it"

"There is nothing very unusual in it that I see," I replied, 'for every day men sacrifice honor for gold.'

"True, nothing more common, and yet this proposition beats all I ever met with."

"In what respect?"

"Why, the interest that these folks who employ Pedro, take in this journey that I undertook for your friend, Señor Pride."

"But, if this journey has some valuable secret object in view?"

"Valuable secret!" repeated Pepito, bursting into a fit of laughter; 'Yes, a valuable secret indeed! Oh! the joke of offering four hundred dollars for what, 'twixt you and me, is not worth a cent. But who can it be that is behind Pedro, in this matter? He must be some rival doctor, or else a naturalist, on the same scent.'

"Is Señor Pride," I inquired, 'a doctor—are you sure of that?'

"Yes—he must be—but I don't know," exclaimed Pepito; 'I am at my wits' end. If he is not, I have been working in the dark, and he has deceived me with a false pretext; I am at a loss—dead beat. But one thing is plain—I can make four hundred dollars, if I like.'

"And will you betray your employer?" said I indignantly.

"Time enough—never decide rashly, Caballero; I shall deliberate—nothing like sleeping on important affairs; to-morrow—who knows what to-morrow may bring forth?"

'So saying, Pepito arose, took his traveling sword under his arm, placed his hat jauntily on his head, cast an admiring eye at the looking-glass, and then brushed off some of the dust that still clung to his left sleeve.

"The smile of Heaven abide with you, Señor," said he, with a most graceful bow. 'As for your friend's secret, do not be uneasy about it; I am not going to meet Pedro to-night. I shall take advantage of his absence to make a call on my lady-love. Pedro is a good fellow, but shockingly self-conceited;

he fancies himself far smarter than I—perhaps he is—but somehow I fancy, this time he must be early if he catches me asleep.'

'On his departure, I paid the bill, which both my friends had overlooked, then walked out and seated myself on the Alameda, which at that hour was thronged with promenaders. Isolated, buried in thought, in the midst of that teeming throng, the various episodes in the drama of which my mysterious neighbor was the principal character, passed before my mind. I again and again reviewed the strange events which, by some freak of fortune, I had been a witness to. What was the basis on which my friend, with two sets of names, founded his dream of inexhaustible wealth, this mission he had intrusted to Pepito? What the mission which the agent laughed at, and which to gain a clue to, others were tempting him with glittering bribes? And again, why the deceit practiced on Pepito, by assuming the guise of a doctor? Each of these facts was a text on which I piled a mountain of speculation.

'Vexed and annoyed at finding myself becoming entangled in this web of mystery, as well as piqued at my failure to unravel it, I determined to avoid all further connection with any of the actors; and full of this resolve, I wended my way homeward, to have a final and decisive interview with Mr. Livermore.

'The worthy Donna Teresa Lopez confronted me as I entered the inner door:

'Plenty of news, is there not?' she asked; 'I heard a good deal of squabbling, last night; that man in the cloak was noisy.'

'Yes; they had an interesting discussion.'

'You can not make me believe that was all. *Discussion*, indeed! When there is a pretty woman in the case, and two men talk as loudly as they did, it generally ends in a serious kind of discussion. 'When love stirs the fire, anger makes the blood boil.' Tell me, now, will they fight here, in the Señor Pride's room?'

'This question, which Donna Teresa put in the most matter-of-fact sort of way, staggered me considerably, and confirmed me in the resolution to avoid the whole business.

'I sincerely trust, Señora, that such an event is not probable. On what do you base your supposition?'

'There is nothing so very astounding in rivals fighting; but it is all the same to me. I only asked that I might take precautions.'

'Precautions! what, inform the police?'

'No, no! I thought it might be as well to take down the new curtains—the blood might spoil them.'

'Need I say I terminated my interview with my hostess, more impressed with admiration of her business qualities than of her sympathetic virtues? But let me do the poor woman justice; life is held so cheap, and the knife acts so large a part in Mexico, that violence and sudden death produce a mere transient effect.

IX

'Instead of going to my own apartments, I went direct to Mr. Livermore's, intending thus to show him that I wished no longer to be looked upon as the man in the next room.

'We were dying with anxiety to see you,' he said, as I entered; 'walk into the other room, you will find Adèle there.'

'Well, Mr. Rideau,' said she, with intense anxiety visible on her countenance, 'what passed between those two men?'

'Little of importance. Pedro offered Pepito four hundred dollars if he would divulge the particulars of his journey; to which offer Pepito has acceded. That is about all.'

'I was far from anticipating the effect my answer would produce on my hearers. They were overwhelmed—thunderstruck. Adèle was the first to recover.

'Fool! fool that I was,' she exclaimed, 'why did I select in such an enterprise a man worn down by sickness and disease?'

'The look she cast on Arthur, rapid as it was, was so full of menace and reproach, that it startled me.

'Well, Arthur,' she said, laying her hand on his arm; 'do you feel ill again?'

'Roused by the sound of her voice, Arthur placed his hand on his heart, and mutely plead excuse for the silence which his sufferings imposed on him.

'As for me, I spoke no word, but mentally consigned my mysterious neighbors to a distant port, whence consignments never return.

'My dear sir,' I replied at length, 'Pepito's treachery, which appears so deeply to affect you, is not yet carried into execution, it is only contemplated. I will give you word for word what transpired.'

'When I had concluded my narrative, to which they listened with breathless attention, Adèle exclaimed:

'Our hopes are not yet crushed, the case is not utterly desperate; but alas! it is evident our secret is suspected, if not known. Arthur,' she continued, 'now is the time to display all our energy. We have some enemy to dread, as I have long suspected. If we do not at once steal a march on him, then farewell forever to all our dreams of happiness, of wealth, or even of subsistence.'

'Sir,' said she, again addressing me; 'your honor alone has kept you in ignorance of our secret. You could easily have tempted and corrupted Pepito. We prefer you should learn it from us rather than from an accidental source. We merely request your word of honor that you will not use it to your own advantage, without our joint consent, nor in any way thwart our plans.'

'I am deeply sensible, madame, of the confidence you repose in me; but I must beg you will allow me to remain in ignorance.'

'You refuse, then, to give us the promise?' exclaimed Adèle, 'I see it all! you will thwart us; you would preserve your liberty of action without forfeiting your word.'

'If you had known me longer, such a suspicion would not have crossed your mind. However, as I have no other means of proving it unjust, I will give the pledge you desire, I am now ready to hear whatever you have to communicate.'

'Mr. Livermore resumed the conversation:

'The secret which Adèle imparted to me will, I dare say, appear at first very extravagant, but before you laugh at it, give me time to explain. It is the existence of a marvelous opal mine in the interior; the precise location of which is known to no one save Adèle and myself.'

'In spite of the greatest effort, I could not suppress a smile of incredulity, at this announcement. Mexico is so full of strange stories of fabulous mines, that this wondrous tale of opals looked to me like some new confidence game, and I felt sure my neighbors were duped or else trying to dupe me.

'Oh! I see you think we are deceived?'

"I admit,' I replied, 'it strikes me as possible that you have been the victims of some crafty scheme. Did you hear of this mine before or since your arrival in Mexico?'

"Before we left New-Orleans.'

"And yet it is not known to the natives?'

"It was from a Mexican we had our information.'

"Why did not this Mexican himself take advantage of it?'

"He could not, for he was banished. He is now dead. But what do you think of these specimens?'

'He took from a drawer ten or twelve opals of rare size and brilliancy. I examined them with care; they were, beyond all doubt, of very considerable value. My incredulity gradually gave way to amazement.

"Are you certain these opals really came from the mine of which you speak?'

"Nothing can be more certain; you saw Pepito hand me a package; you heard his remark that he could have brought a mule-load; these are a few of what he did bring.'

"This mine then really exists?' I said, my incredulity giving way to the most ardent curiosity.

"Really exists! yes, my friend; if you listen, I will dispel all doubt of that.'

X

"On arriving in this country, my first step was to procure a guide and the necessary equipage for reaching the opal mine. Although I felt sure of its existence, I could not dispel the fear that the story of its marvelous richness would prove false. Without loss of time, I started; for to me it was a question of life and death. I had, however, barely accomplished a third of the journey, when I was prostrated by fever. The fatigue of traveling in the interior of this magnificent but wretched country, combined with excitement and anxiety, preyed upon my mind, and brought on an illness, from which at one time I gave up all hope of recovering. I was compelled to return to Vera Cruz. The doctors were all of the opinion that several months of perfect repose would be necessary before I could undertake another such journey. Several months—oh! how those words fell on my ears; they sounded like the knell of all my hopes. A thousand expedients floated through my brain, and in adopting the course I eventually did, time alone will prove whether I followed the promptings of a good or evil genius. One evening, I explained to my attendant that I was a medical man, deeply interested in botanical and mineralogical discoveries; that my object in undertaking my recent journey was to collect certain rare herbs and a singular description of shell. I laid peculiar stress on the herbs, and added in relation to the shells, that I merely wanted a few specimens, as they were rare in my country. My attendant at once proffered his services, to go in search of them. I appeared at first to attach but little importance to his offer; but as he renewed it whenever the subject was alluded to, I at last employed him. The mine is situated on the margin of a little brook. One day's work of an active man will turn the stream into a fresh channel, and a few inches beneath its bed will be found, mixed with the damp sand and loam, the shells, which, when polished, form the opal. I gave my servant the needful information as to localities and landmarks, and promised him a gratuity of a hundred dollars over and above his wages, in case he succeeded. Having given him instructions, I retained his services until I reached this city, where I determined to await his return, it being more healthy than Vera Cruz. Having selected my lodgings and given him the pass-word by which alone a stranger could obtain admittance to me, with an anxious heart I dispatched him on the mission.

"For three months I had no tidings of him; night and day, I was the prey of doubt and fear. No words can portray the agony of suspense that I endured; the hours seemed days, the days months, and the bitterness of years was crowded into that short interval. At last, thanks be to heaven, my messenger returned.'

"Do you mean Pepito?" I exclaimed.

"The very man," replied Arthur; 'his journey was successful. You have seen the specimens he brought. I was intoxicated with delight; but Adèle did not share my joy. Nature has given woman a faculty of intuition denied to man. Alas! Adèle's presentiment has been verified; your account of the interview between Pepito and his friend proves her fears were well-grounded.'

"In what way?"

"In *this* way; it shows we have an enemy who has an inkling of our secret, and is striving to snatch the prize from us. What course to take I am at a loss to know. Adèle advises to make sure of Pepito, at any price.'

"And that strikes me as being your surest if not your only course.'

"Yes, the surest; but how to make *sure* of him?"

"By outbidding your competitors, and proving to him that in adhering to you he is best serving his own interests.'

"But he is base enough to take bribes from both sides, and betray each.'

"Oh! that I were a man!" exclaimed Adèle, 'this fellow is the only one who knows our secret. One man ought not to stand in fear of another. Only *one* man crosses your path, Arthur.'

"Unless I murder him, how can he be silenced?"

"*Murder* him! It is not murder to kill a robber. Were *I* a man, I would not hesitate how to act.'

"The anxiety of Pedro,' I said, 'indicates you have an enemy. Have you any idea who he is?'

"I believe,' said Adèle, 'that I know him.'

"Are you sure there is only one?'

"Why do you ask?' said the woman, fixing her eye upon me as though she would, in spite of every obstacle, read my inmost thoughts.

"Because I fancy there are *two*, for instance, Brown and Hunt.'

'At the mention of these names Adèle started to her feet, exclaiming:

"On all sides there is treachery. I *demand*, sir, an explanation. What leads you to associate the name of that firm with this matter? Either you are our friend or you are not. Speak plainly!"

"Madame, by the merest chance, I overheard Pedro mention those names, and since you have given me your confidence, I will give you some information which may put you on your guard, and help to guide your future plans.'

I then briefly related the conversations I had overheard between General Valiente and Pedro, both on the Alameda and in the gaming-house in the Calle del Arco.

"Now, madame,' I continued, 'let me inquire whether the Mexican from whom you derived your information, had any connection with this firm?'

"Yes, sir, he knew them,' she replied; then, after a slight pause, she added: 'We have already told you so much that it would be folly to conceal the way in which we became acquainted with the existence of this mine. Soon after my marriage, I met a veteran officer of the Mexican army, General Ramiro, then living in exile, at New-Orleans. For me he conceived a paternal affection, and many a time remonstrated with Mr. Percival, and entreated him to devote himself to his family, and abandon the course of life which was leading him to ruin. He often spoke of his desire to return to Mexico, and lived constantly in the hope of the decree being revoked, which had driven him into exile. One day he disclosed the chief cause of his desire to return, by revealing the secret we have imparted to you.'

"Pardon me, madame,' I said, 'but tell me how General Ramiro gained his information? Exploring for opal mines is hardly part of the duties of a General, even in Mexico.'

"I was about to explain that,' replied the lady. 'An Indian, convicted of murdering a monk, some three years previously, was condemned to death. On being taken, according to Mexican usage, on the eve of execution, to the confessional, he refused the slightest attention to the exhortations of the priests, affirming that he had written a letter to the Governor, which would secure his pardon.

"True enough, a party of dragoons arrived during the night, and took him away. The letter was addressed to General Ramiro, then acting as Governor, and contained promises of a revelation of the highest importance.

"When conducted to the General, the Indian proved, by a host of details, the existence of an opal mine, which he had accidentally discovered, and in return for the revelation, demanded a free pardon.'

"I understand, perfectly, madame,' I added, seeing Adèle hesitate.

"I feel,' she said, 'a certain reluctance at this portion of my narrative, for it forces me to lay bare an act which General Ramiro ever after regretted, and which—' "Madame, I will spare you the recital; the fact is, the General gained the Indian's secret, and then—unfortunately for the Indian—forgot to fulfill his promise.'

"Alas! sir, you have rightly judged. Two hours after the interview, the Indian suffered the garrote, and General Ramiro became the sole possessor of this important secret. I will not attempt to justify my venerable friend. He sincerely lamented his sin, and retribution followed him with long, sad years of exile and poverty. We often sat together for hours, he talking of his wonderful mine, and longing for his recall to his native land. His enemies, however, held a firm hold of government, and growing weary of delay, he made overtures to this firm of Brown and Hunt, through their

correspondents in New-Orleans. Being sadly in want of funds, he was even mad enough to give a hint of some kind, relative to an opal mine, which was to be worked by them on joint account.

"Before any definite arrangement was perfected, an event occurred which is indelibly impressed on my memory. The General, after spending a portion of the afternoon with us, had returned to his home; and about eleven at night, a messenger begged my immediate attendance on him. He had been taken suddenly ill; and my husband, who was cognizant of the paternal affection the General felt for me, urged me to hasten to his bedside.

"I found him at the point of death; but my presence seemed to call him back to life. 'My child,' said he, placing in my hands a very voluminous letter, 'this is all I have to give you. Farewell, dear child, I am going. Farewell, forever.' In a few moments he was no more. I returned home a prey to the most intense grief, and for several days did not think of opening the letter I had received from my dying benefactor. It contained the most precise details of the situation of the opal mine, and advice as to the best means of reaching it.

"So you see, Mr. Rideau,' she added, after a slight pause, 'the secret is known only to three persons—Arthur, Pepito, and myself. What, under the circumstances, would you do?'

"I see but one course, madame—prompt action; by this means only can you hope to succeed. You should start without a day's delay.'

"And Pepito?'

"Take him with you.'

"Your advice would be excellent were it practicable; but the state of Mr. Livermore's health will not permit him to travel.'

"Oh! never fear, Adèle; your presence and your care will keep me up. I shall gain strength by change of air and scene.'

'Adèle was, probably, about to protest against such a proof of his attachment, when she was interrupted by a knock at the door.

"It is Pepito,' said I. My conjecture proved correct. Opening the door, the Mexican appeared, dressed in a new suit, and evidently not a little proud of his external improvements. He bowed politely to Mr. Livermore and myself, and then bending before Adèle, took her hand and raised it with true Mexican grace, to his lips.

"You arrive, Pepito,' said Adèle, 'at the very moment we are talking about you.'

'Pepito again bowed to the lady.

"Señora,' said he, 'to please you I would die; to obey you I would kill myself.'

'The exaggerated tone of Mexican politeness which prompted this reply did not surprise Adèle, but it brought a smile to her lips.

"I trust my wishes will not lead to such disastrous results,' she replied. 'The fact is, Señor Pride thinks shortly of undertaking another journey; and as his health is delicate, we are anxious you should bear us company. I need not add, the zeal you have already shown, will not fail to secure our interest in your future welfare.'

"Indeed! does his excellency intend starting very soon? May I be allowed to ask where is he going?'

"To the same place,' said Arthur.

"Oh! oh! I see; the herbs and shells I brought were not enough to answer his excellency's purpose; you want more of the shells—eh, Señor?'

'Yes, a few more,' said Arthur, with a deep sigh, for he felt acutely the ironical tone which the Mexican assumed.

"Well, what would you say, Señor Pride, if, instead of the few I handed you, I had brought a sack full—you would not feel angry, would you?'

"Scoundrel! you have not dared to thus deceive me?' exclaimed Mr. Livermore, starting to his feet and advancing toward Pepito, with an air of menace.

"Unfortunately, I did not; but you have proved to me what a fool I was, not to suspect their value. You evidently attach immense importance to them."

"Control your temper, Arthur," said Adèle, in English, "or you will ruin every thing."

"After all," resumed Pepito, "it is only a chance deferred, not a chance lost. With a good horse, I can soon make up for lost time."

"His tone of defiance annihilated the self-possession even of Adèle; while as for Arthur, he looked the very picture of despair. I, therefore, resolved to smooth matters over, and if possible, to bring Pepito to terms. At first he listened to me very unwillingly, and answered sulkily and laconically; but wearied at last by my pertinacity, he suggested that it was scarcely fair play for me to assume to sit as judge in a cause wherein I was an interested party."

"You are strangely mistaken, Pepito," I said, in reply; "I can swear to you on my honor, and by the holy Virgin of Guadalupe, that I am not in any way a party to this transaction; and that its success or its failure will not affect me to the extent of a real."

"Oh! I beg your pardon, Caballero," muttered Pepito, on whom my adjuration by the holy Virgin of Guadalupe, had produced an unexpected effect. "In that case I will trust to your advice; I rely on your honor. Now tell me—I know very well these shells are valuable—how much would a mule-load be worth—two thousand dollars?"

"Yes, and perhaps more."

"You speak frankly, like a man!" he exclaimed with delight; "you don't seek to take advantage of my ignorance; you are a true gentleman. Tell me where I could sell these things."

"You could find no one to buy them in this country; they must be sent either to Europe or New-York."

"The devil! that upsets my plans. I know no one in Europe, no one in New-York; besides, I can neither read nor write; I should be cheated on all hands. Is there no way to settle this business between ourselves? Listen, now: I will agree not only to accompany Señor Pride as his guide, but to do all the work when we arrive at our destination, on condition that he pays me two thousand dollars for every trip we make. What do you say to my proposition?"

"That it is Señor Pride who must answer you, not I."

XI

'Obeying the injunction laid upon him by Adèle, Mr. Livermore affected to demur at the high price placed by Pepito on his cooperation, but finally appeared to yield to our joint solicitation.

'Well, then, the bargain is closed,' said Pepito, smiling. 'Now I can understand why Pedro was so anxious to have me betray my trust. Oh! how delighted I am to think he will find I have left him in the lurch.'

'Señor Pepito,' said Adèle, with a most winning smile, 'do you happen to know a family residing some short distance from this city, who, in consideration of a liberal compensation, would not object to take a lady to board with them?'

'I do, Señora, at Toluca.'

'How far is it from here?'

'Twelve or fourteen leagues.'

'Are you intimate enough with the family to take me there to-morrow, without previously informing them of my intention?'

'Certainly; the lady I allude to is my sister.'

'Then to-morrow morning early, at seven, say. But Señor Pepito, I had forgotten to warn you that in escorting me you will run a great danger.'

'Oh! I am not afraid of the robbers on the road; they know me well, and never molest me.'

'It is not of robbers that I stand in dread.'

'Of what, then?'

'Of a man—an enemy who hates me with a deadly hatred, and who, I fear, seeks my life.'

'A man—one man—and he seeks your life; well, well, I should like to meet him face to face,' exclaimed Pepito.

'Then, Señor, you promise to protect me at any risk?'

'Protect you! *yes*,' replied he with vehemence, 'I pledge you my honor, my body, and my soul. I will face the bravest of the brave, to defend you from injury.'

'From my heart of hearts I thank you, Pepito,' said Mr. Livermore, 'you shall find me not ungrateful, and in return for the zeal and devotion you have shown, two hundred dollars shall be yours, on your return with tidings of madame's safe arrival.'

'I will at once proceed to secure the necessary equipage, Señor. Señora, rely on my punctuality; at seven, I shall attend you.'

'Are you related to Señor Pride?' asked Pepito, as we descended the stairs.

'In no way; I have known him only a few days.'

'Well, Caballero, I own I am enchanted with his wife; I never met a woman of such matchless beauty, such fascinating manners; why, Señor, if she said to me, 'Pepito, kill your brother,' and I had a brother, which, luckily, I have not, I think I should kill him.'

'These words were uttered with so much vehemence, that I deemed it advisable to turn the conversation.

'It seems strange to me,' said I, 'that you should be so intimate with Pedro, and yet be ever on the very verge of quarreling with him.'

'Well, it is perhaps astonishing to those who do not know us; but somehow Pedro is my best, in fact, my only friend. We were brought up in the same village, and are just like brothers. He is a good sort of fellow, but is abominably vain and self-conceited; then he is deucedly overbearing. He has no delicacy for his friend's feelings, and, in fact, has a thousand failings that no one else but I could tolerate. True, we have now and then a pretty rough time of it. The two gashes on his left cheek are mementoes of my regard, and I confess I have two ugly marks, one on my shoulder, the other on my

right breast, which I owe to him. But what galls me most, he is always talking of his six dead ones, while I can claim only five; but then my five are all men, while two of his six are women.'

"Horrible!" I exclaimed.

"Yes, it is not a fair count; but then it shows his insatiable vanity. Vanity is one of the capital sins; it is hard to tell into what meanness it may not lead a man.' With this sententious denunciation, the Mexican, who had clearly misinterpreted my indignant ejaculation, raised his hat, with an air of extreme politeness, and departed.

'When I again entered Mr. Livermore's apartment, the conversation naturally turned on Pepito.

"Well, what think you of my cavalier?" said Adèle.

"As you are aware, my acquaintance with him is of but recent date; but one thing speaks greatly in his favor: he has been for several months attached to Mr. Livermore's person, both as guide and as attendant while sick, and he has not attempted, as far as I have heard, either to assassinate or poison him. This I take to be a striking proof of meritorious moderation.'

"I fear, Adèle, we are acting imprudently,' said Arthur, 'in intrusting you to the tender mercies of such an unprincipled scoundrel, a man you have seen but twice.

"Good heavens! dearest Arthur, would it be less imprudent for that man Percival to find me here? I shudder to think of ever again meeting him; and moreover, by flattering this Pepito and pretending to place entire confidence in him, I shall win him to a devoted submission to my every wish.'

'After a somewhat protracted but by no means important conversation, I retired, promising to see them in the morning, previous to Adèle's departure.

XII

'Shortly before the appointed hour, Pepito arrived, and announced that all his preparations had been made. His fair charge quickly made her appearance, dressed in complete Mexican costume. It suited her remarkably well, and I was not surprised to observe the intense admiration with which Pepito gazed upon her, for her beauty was truly fascinating. Notwithstanding my suspicions of the absence of that inner spiritual beauty which should adorn all female loveliness, I myself could scarce resist the spell she exercised on my feelings, even in spite of my judgment.

'Turning to Pepito, with a smile, she inquired gayly, 'Well, Señor, how do you like my change of costume?'

'The Mexican replied merely by putting his hand on his heart, and bowing almost reverentially.

'Having given Mr. Livermore an affectionate embrace, she exclaimed, in a firm, determined voice: 'Let us be off: time is precious.'

'It had been arranged that I should accompany them until they were out of the city. I therefore left Mr. Livermore alone, and followed the two travelers. On reaching the street, Adèle took the Mexican's arm; but as they turned the corner of one of the streets running into the Cathedral Square, I noticed that she raised her hood and lowered the veil attached to it. Surprised at this apparently uncalled-for act of caution, I inquired the reason.

'Do you not see Mr. Percival?' she exclaimed, in Spanish.

'Who is he? Is that the man you said you dreaded? that melancholy-looking man, who is walking so moodily ahead of us?' exclaimed Pepito. 'I must have a good look at him.'

'Be cautious, I beseech you; if he sees me, all is lost.'

'Fear nothing, I will be discreet; I only want to get one good look at him.' So saying, Pepito increased his speed, and was soon walking beside the unconscious Percival.

'In a few minutes, Pepito turned suddenly down a narrow street, into which we followed, and there we found a carriage awaiting us.

'Señora, I shall know your enemy among a thousand,' was Pepito's remark, on again offering Adèle his arm, to assist her in entering the vehicle.

'We were soon safely out of the city, and taking advantage of the first returning carriage we met, I returned with it, Adèle thanked me with much apparent gratitude for my past services, and begged me to devote as much of my leisure as possible to cheering and advising her dear Arthur.

'On my return, I found him pacing his chamber with intense anxiety, and evidently prostrated by the excitement he had undergone.

'Well, what news?' said he, almost gasping for breath.

'Adèle is beyond the reach of danger.'

'You met no one?'

'No one.'

'Heaven be praised; and yet I feel a presentiment I shall never see her again—never.'

'Pshaw! love is always timorous; it delights in raising phantoms.'

'This is no phantom; death is a reality, and, mark my words, on earth we shall meet no more.'

'Overcome by the violence of his emotions, he buried his face in his hands, and gave way to an outburst of intense grief. Yielding, finally, to my reiterated entreaties, he threw himself upon his bed, and, as I had some private business to settle, I left him to the care of our officious hostess, who was only too happy to find one on whom she could display her self-acquired knowledge of the healing art.

'The next day, Arthur, though still feeble, was able to walk about his apartments. Toward dusk, a letter arrived from Adèle. She announced her safe arrival at Toluca, spoke in terms of praise of Pepito's devotion and attention, and expressed herself agreeably surprised at the hospitality she had received from his sister. The receipt of this letter produced a marked improvement in my patient's

health. In a postscript, reference was made to an accident which had happened to poor Pepito, who was prevented from being the bearer of this letter, by having sprained his ankle. This would retard his return to the city for a day or two; nevertheless, she begged her 'dear Arthur' not to be uneasy, as even this delay, annoying as it was, might prove of advantage, as it would give him time to recover from the effects of the excitement of the past few days.

'After Adèle's departure, I again fastened up the door of communication, and although I saw him at least once every day, to some extent I carried out my determination of ceasing to be on such intimate terms with Mr. Livermore. I fell back into my former course of life, and yet I felt a certain envy of the colossal fortune upon which he had, as it were, stumbled. Though I sincerely wished my poor sick neighbor might succeed in his enterprise, I gradually grew restless and morose. The opal-mine became a painful and distasteful topic of conversation, and as Arthur invariably adverted to it in some way or other, I by degrees made my visits of shorter and shorter duration.

'In vain I strove to divert my mind from this one absorbing idea. I visited the theatres, attended cock-pits and bull-fights, in the hope that the excitement would afford me relief from the fascinating spell: but it was useless, I was a haunted man.

'One night, returning from the opera, at about ten o'clock, I was stopped by a large crowd at the corner of the Calle Plateros. From an officer near me, I ascertained that a foreigner, believed to be a heretic, had been stabbed, and was either dead or dying.

'The next morning, in the *Diario de Gobierno*, which Donna Teresa brought up with my chocolate, I learned that 'at about ten on the previous night, an American, named Percival, recently arrived from New-Orleans, was murdered in the Calle Plateros.' His watch and purse were missing; it was therefore inferred that robbery and not revenge had prompted the foul deed.

'I instantly summoned Donna Teresa, and requested her to take the paper, which I marked, to Mr. Livermore; and as soon as my breakfast was over, I hastened to make my usual call. I found him looking very sombre.

"God is my witness!" he exclaimed, the instant I entered the room, 'that I did not seek this poor unfortunate man's death; but it relieves Adèle from all fear. Have you heard any details of the event?'

"I have not; but assassination is not so rare here that you need be under any fear about it. No suspicion can possibly attach to you.'

"I have no fear, for I know my own innocence; but it is inexplicable to me. Poor Percival! he could have had no enemy in the city.'

"Doubtless he was murdered for his money and his watch; but have you heard from Toluca?'

"Yes, and Adèle informs me that I may expect Pepito in the course of the day. So I shall not delay my departure beyond to-morrow, perhaps to-night. But there is some one at the door; doubtless it is Pepito.'

'Mr. Livermore opened the door; but instead of Pepito it was his friend, Pedro, who entered.

"My presence surprises you, Caballero," said Pedro, drawing a long sigh; 'but alas! I have bad news.'

"What! bad news? speak, speak, quick!" exclaimed Arthur, turning dealy [sic] pale.

'Pedro, before deigning to answer, drew forth a very soiled rag, which served him as a handkerchief, and proceeded to rub his eyes with no little vigor, a pantomime which was intended no doubt to convey the idea of tears having dimmed his eyes.

"Alas! Excellency," said he at length, in a lugubrious tone; 'poor Pepito is in sad trouble.'

"Have you been fighting again? Have you killed him?" I exclaimed.

"Killed him? *I* kill him!" he repeated indignantly; 'how can you imagine such an outrage, Caballero? Kill my best friend! No, Señor; but poor Pepito has been pressed into a military company. To-morrow, they will uniform him and march him off to some frontier regiment.'

"Is there no way of buying him off?" inquired Arthur.

"Nothing more easy, Caballero. You have simply to write to the General who commands the department, and state that Pepito is attached to your person, as a personal attendant, and that will suffice to set him at liberty. They never press people in service."

'Mr. Livermore lost no time in following Pedro's advice. As soon as the letter was handed to him, the latter waved it in triumph over his head, and rushed forth to effect the deliverance of his dear compadre, Pepito.

'The impressment of Pepito surprised me, for I had not heard of their taking any body who had reached the dignity of a pair of inexpressibles, and the luxury of a pair of shoes. The Indians in the neighborhood of the capital, besotted by drink and misery, almost naked, and living or rather burrowing in caves, were usually the only victims of the recruiting sergeant. However, as the letter given by Arthur to Pedro could be of no use to the latter, I saw no reasonable ground to doubt the story.

'As it seemed probable that Mr. Livermore would shortly leave the city, I accepted his invitation, and promised to return and dine with him at five o'clock, adding that I hoped then to meet Pepito, and receive from him a full account of his adventures since we had parted.

XIII

'About three o'clock, I returned home. I had ensconced myself, book in hand, in my rocking-chair, when groans which seemed to proceed from Mr. Livermore's room, attracted my attention. I listened at the door, and my fears were realized. The groans were assuredly uttered by my neighbor. I rushed into his room, and as I crossed toward his bed, a fearful spectacle met my gaze.

Lying across the bed, his face livid, every muscle in motion, a prey to the most violent convulsions, I saw my unfortunate fellow-countryman. No sooner, however, did the noise of my entrance fall upon his ear, than he summoned strength enough to rise, and seizing a pistol that was beside him, pointed it at me.

"Ah! it is you?" said he, lowering his weapon, and falling back, 'you have arrived just in time to see me die.'

"Take courage, my friend; for heaven's sake, be of good cheer. It is only one of your usual attacks, and will pass off; there is no danger.'

"No danger!" repeated the unfortunate sufferer, biting the sheet and striving to stifle the cry which agony drew from him; 'no danger? why, I am poisoned!'

"Poisoned! you must be mad," I exclaimed: but without loss of time, I summoned Donna Lopez, and sent instantly for a doctor, who fortunately lived within a few doors of our house.

'Once more alone with Arthur, I inquired, during a momentary cessation of his sufferings:

"What reason have you for thinking you are poisoned?"

"I am *sure* of it," he replied. 'About an hour since, I received a visit from the Mexican General who is superintendent of the recruiting service. He desired me to give him certain explanations relative to Pepito, which, of course, I did. It was very warm, and he asked for a glass of iced water. I offered him some claret to mix with it, and, at his request, joined him in the drink. But a few moments elapsed after I had taken my draught, when I felt a weakness steal over me; my eyelids grew heavy, my knees gave way, and an intolerable heat burned my veins. I was compelled to sit down upon my bed. At that moment, the General changed his tone, and imperiously demanded the key of my desk. 'I do not want your money,' he said, 'but I must have the papers relative to the opal-mine.' I can not express the effect these words produced upon me. 'To deal frankly with you,' continued the General, 'you are poisoned, and the Indian poison that is now coursing through your veins has no antidote. Ten minutes, and your strength will begin to fail; two hours, and your earthly career will end. If you do not at once give me your keys, I shall force the lock.' These words, which he doubtless thought would crush me, filled me with boundless rage, and for a few moments revived my sinking energies. I started to my feet, and seized my revolver.'

"The devil! it seems the dose was not strong enough," exclaimed my assassin, taking flight; 'but I will return, be sure of that.'

The doctor soon arrived. At the first glance at the patient, he knit his brow, and his countenance became overcast.

"How long have you been ill?" he inquired.

"I was poisoned, about an hour since.'

"Ah! you know you have been poisoned?"

"Yes, doctor, and also the man who poisoned me. Tell me, I beseech you, how long I have to live? Speak! you need have no fear; I am prepared for the worst.'

The doctor hesitated, and then said: 'I fear, my dear sir, another hour is all you can hope for.'

"I thank you, doctor, for your frankness. No antidote, then, can save me?"

"None. The poison you have taken, which the Indians call '*Leche de palo*,' is deadly. Your present sufferings will soon cease, and gradually you will sink, peacefully and painlessly, into the sleep of death.'

"Send instantly, then, for a magistrate. I at least will be revenged on my murderer," said Arthur, "let me at once make my statement."

"You will only be wasting your dying moments," interposed the doctor; "day after day, I am called upon to witness the ravages of this insidious poison, but never yet has the scaffold punished the assassin. My dear friend, think not of your murderer; eternity is opening to receive you; in its solemn presence, mere human vengeance shrinks into utter nothingness."

"Doctor, you speak wisely as well as kindly. Poor Adèle," murmured Arthur, and his eyes closed, though his lips still moved.

'After the doctor's departure, I sent to the American Legation, urgently requesting some official to return with my messenger. I took a chair beside the bed, while Donna Teresa knelt in the adjoining room, and prayed and sobbed with much fervor. In a short while, Arthur rallied from the stupor into which he had fallen. His features became calm, his breathing regular though feeble, and the tranquil, almost happy, expression of his eye made me for a time half doubt the fearful prediction of the physician.

"Do you feel better?" I inquired.

"Much much; I am in no pain."

"Let us hope, then, for the best. I will send for another doctor."

"No, that would be useless. My lower extremities are swelling, and I can feel the hand of death clutching at my vitals. The doctor was right; death is not racking me with torture, it is gently embracing me. But I want your assistance; sit down."

'I resumed my seat, and Arthur continued, in a feeble tone, but perfectly calm:

"How mean a thing is life! Good God! so mean, that at this moment I can not explain to my own soul why man should cling to it. What do we meet during our short career? Deceit, hypocrisy, and treachery. Ah! death reveals the hollowness of life."

"My dear friend, you are exhausting yourself. Did you not say you wanted my assistance? Rely on my zeal, my fidelity, and my discretion."

"Rely on you! How can I tell? You are only a man; perhaps avaricious and treacherous as your fellow-mortals. No matter; though you should forswear yourself; I, at least, will do what is right. Feel beneath my pillow, there is a key; take it, open my desk. In the small drawer on the left is a package of letters. Have you them? Good. Next to that there is a sealed letter. Now, read aloud the direction on each."

"Papers to be burnt after my death," said I, obeying his injunction.

"Well, what do you intend doing with them?"

"Can you for one moment doubt?" I replied.

"What if I should tell you they contain the entire secret of my opal-mine!"

'I made no reply; but struck a match against the wall, and setting them on fire, resumed my seat.

"I could hardly have believed it; but you still have Pepito; from him you hope to learn the secret," said the dying man.

"Shall I bind myself by an oath not to seek him?"

"No; I leave you at liberty. Act as you think best. I burned those papers because they were bought with blood, for no other reason."

"Bought with blood?" I exclaimed.

"Yes; ten months ago, General Ramiro died at New-Orleans, by poison—poison administered by Adèle. Do you wonder life has lost all charm for me? Oh! life is the bitterness, not death."

'His voice momentarily grew fainter. I leaned closer, to catch his fading tones, till he ceased to speak. I gazed intently at his glassy eyes; the lids closed for a moment, then partially opened, the jaw fell, and he was no more.'

'I know not how long I had stood beside his lifeless body, pondering over the uncertainty of life, and the mystery of death, and the conflicting presentiments he had uttered: that he should live

to achieve success, yet die without again seeing her who had lured him to his wretched end, when the door of the chamber suddenly opened, and five or six dragoons entered, accompanied by an officer in undress uniform.

"What! you here, General?' I exclaimed.

"Why not?' was the cool reply, 'I am in search of a deserter named Pepito, who, I was informed, was concealed here. I see he is not here; but doubtless by searching among the papers contained in this desk, I shall find some clue to him.'

"Your search, General, will be fruitless. The unfortunate young man whose corpse lies here, instructed me, before he expired, to burn all the papers in his possession, and I have obeyed his injunctions.'

"Curses on his infernal obstinacy!' exclaimed General Valiente, 'but look you, Señor, I tell you I will search this desk.'

"By what right?'

"By the right of might.'

Taking my stand in front of the desk, I was protesting against the lawless act of violence, when the Secretary of the American Legation fortunately arrived. Finding his plans defeated, Valiente, with commendable prudence, decided on beating a retreat, and with his followers, took rather an abrupt departure.

The ordinary formalities of attaching the seals of the Legation having been performed, and having secured a faithful person to take charge of the remains of the unfortunate Livermore, I sallied forth to make arrangements to leave, as soon as possible, for Toluca.

The first person I met was Pedro. It is impossible to express the horror I felt of this villain. My hand was on my weapon before he had reached my side.

"Have you heard the news, Caballero?' said he, in a low, mysterious tone.

"No.'

"I was not fortunate enough to release Pepito; when I arrived with his master's letter, he had already escaped from the barracks.'

"Tell me frankly, Pedro, did not General Valiente send you, this morning, for that letter?'

"Why? What makes you ask?' inquired Pedro, quite disconcerted by the abruptness of my question.

"Because Señor Pride is dead, and General Valiente has twice been to his rooms.'

"Dead! Señor Pride dead!' echoed Pedro, in unfeigned astonishment. 'Caballero, I must be off.' And he instantly turned away, and was soon lost to my sight.

Before another hour had passed I was on horseback and on the way to Toluca. The road was infested by gangs of robbers, but my pockets were empty, and my brain was full, so I gave those gentry not even a passing thought. The evening was fast closing in, and as the shadows gathered round me, the tragic event which I had just witnessed gradually receded from my mind. As I journeyed on, it grew more and more distant, until at last it faded into a dim memory of the past; and through the long miles of my lonely ride there went before me the glorious vision of an opal-mine of untold wealth—an opal-mine without an owner—a countless fortune, untold riches, waiting to fall into my hands.

XIV

'It was past midnight when I reached Toluca. As it was too late to call on Adèle, I alighted at a tavern, where I passed the night, pacing my chamber, and not closing my eyes. Soon after daybreak I sought the house of Pepito's sister; and notwithstanding the earliness of the hour, found Mrs. Percival standing at one of the windows.

"You here, Mr. Rideau!" she exclaimed, with surprise, on seeing me. 'How did you find my retreat?'

"I was told of it by Mr. Livermore.'

"Ah! 'tis he who sent you.'

"Alas! not so, madame.'

"Alas!—you say, alas! What do you mean? Have you ill news?'

"I have, indeed, madame.'

"Arthur is dead!" she cried. 'I know he is dead! But, tell me, I entreat you, tell me all. How—when did this happen?'

'I gave her a detailed account of Arthur's death, to which she listened with rapt attention.

"This opal-mine, like the Golden Fleece, brings misfortune to all who seek it,' she said, when I had finished, 'Poor Arthur! I loved him fondly, devotedly; and his image will live forever in my heart. But at such a crisis it is worse than folly—it is madness to waste time by giving way to grief. Reason teaches us to bow before the inevitable. It is idle to repine at the decrees of Fate. I am alone, now—alone, without a friend or a protector. No matter; I have a stout heart, and the mercy of Providence is above all. But to business: After the death of Mr. Livermore, what became of the papers?'

"I burned them before his death, in obedience to his injunctions.'

"You burned them! I will not believe it!" she exclaimed, in a loud voice, and with a penetrating glance.

'I felt the blood rush to my face; she noticed my anger, and at once added, in milder tone:

"Pardon me! pardon me! I knew not what I said; I am well-nigh crazy; I do believe you, I do indeed; forgive me, and think of the despair to which the loss of those papers reduces me. I have no copy, and with them my secret perishes. I am ruined—ruined irretrievably. The mine is known now only to Pepito!'

"Then, madame, on him you must hereafter rely.'

"Explain to me, pray, how could Arthur, on his dying-bed, have been guilty of so cruel, so mean an act? How could he despoil the woman who had trusted him, and leave her not only forlorn, but destitute?'

'This question embarrassed me, and I was conning an answer, when Adèle resumed:

"Let no false delicacy restrain you; speak out, Mr. Rideau; adversity has taught me endurance, if not courage.'

"Since, madame, you absolutely extort it from me, I must admit that a few moments before he expired, Mr. Livermore—'

"Speak out, plainly; I beg of you, conceal nothing.'

"Well, madame, the words he used were: 'I destroy these papers because they were bought with blood. Ten months ago General Ramiro died, at New-Orleans, by poison—poison administered by Adèle!'"

"Poor Arthur! what agony he must have suffered—he must have been delirious. O Arthur! why was I not beside you? Poor Arthur!" As she uttered these words, she raised her streaming eyes to heaven; her lips moved as if in prayer, and a deadly pallor overspread her countenance.

'In a short time her fortitude returned, and turning toward me, she said, in a voice which betrayed no emotion:

"Let us turn from the past and look at the present. Difficulties surround and threaten to overwhelm me. Before I can determine how they are to be met, I have a proposition to make to you, Mr. Rideau, to which I must have an immediate answer. Will you become my partner in this business?"

"Have you enough confidence in me?"

"I have; and for this reason: you have not sought to meddle in this matter, but from the outset have striven to shun it; you have not obtruded yourself, but been drawn into it in spite of your wishes. Do you accept my proposition? Yes, or no?"

"I accept," I replied, moderating my joyful feelings as well as I possibly could.

"Such being your decision, what course do you advise?"

"Immediate action, for minutes are precious."

"I foresee we shall agree perfectly. To-day my host purposes starting for the capital; I shall accompany him. If you return without delay, the remainder of the day will suffice to prepare for the journey, and to-morrow we will start for the opal-mine."

"But where shall I meet you, madame?"

"At the Hotel de las Diligencias."

"And where shall I find Pepito?"

"At a tavern near the Barrier del Nino Perdido. But you will not, if you please, inform him of my address. For—well, it is an unpleasant matter to mention—but this Pepito seems to be—"

"Desperately in love with you."

"I hardly meant that—but his attentions are too oppressive to be quite agreeable."

"I fully understand you, madame. May I inquire if you have had any tidings of Mr. Percival?"

"Do not, I beg, Mr. Rideau, allude to that painful topic—all feelings of resentment are hushed in the grave."

"What! have you heard of his assassination?"

"Yes; the news reached me yesterday; I read it in the newspaper."

"I shortly afterward took my leave—the last words of my new copartner being:

"At five, then, at the Hotel de las Diligencias. Be sure you are punctual."

"Arrived in Mexico, my first thought was to seek for Pepito. Following the directions given me by Mrs. Percival, I soon found him; and repeating to him a portion of the interview I had with the lady, I finished by proposing to take the place of Mr. Livermore in the bargain that had been made between them.

"I ask nothing better," was the reply. "Here are my terms—two thousand dollars the very day we return to Mexico, and I to hold the shells till you hand over the money. That is fair, is it not?"

"Quite. When shall I see you again?"

"At eight to-night, on the Cathedral steps."

"Hastening home, I devoted the rest of the day to preparing for my journey, and a little before five started for the Hotel de las Diligencias. Mrs. Percival had not yet arrived. Twice again I called, but still in vain. The evening gradually wore away, and at eight I paced the Cathedral Square, and for an hour loitered around the steps; but Pepito, also, failed to keep the rendezvous.

"As the next day was Sunday, I felt assured the most likely place to find Pepito, would be the bull-ring. On reaching it, I found a crowd assembled near one of the entrances, and pushing my way through, I beheld Pepito lying on the ground weltering in his blood. I rushed to him, and kneeling down, raised him in my arms.

"Ah! it is you, Señor," said he, in a feeble tone. "This is Pedro's work, but it was his last; for I have killed the traitor."

"Pepito, tell me, for Heaven's sake, where did you find the shells?" I inquired; for avarice and cupidity reigned, I am ashamed to own, paramount within my breast.

"Those shells? In the plains of Chiapa—three days' journey from the sea—near the little river—in a brook—Ah! glory to God! here comes a priest!"

'At this moment a fat Franciscan friar pressed through the crowd.

"Absolution, padre! absolution!" cried Pepito, to whom the sight of the friar brought back new life.

"Patience, my son, patience! I am very late—very late—and I must not be detained. Wait a little—and after the sports of the day are over, I will return.'

"But, padre, I shall be dead!"

"Well, then, be quick!"

"I have only two sins on my conscience: I have not attended mass for three weeks.'

"That is sad! very sad! Well, what next?"

"Three days ago I stabbed an *Inglez*—a heretic.'

"Well, my dear son, your sins are venial sins; I absolve you.'

"Pepito, how did that dagger come into your hands?" I exclaimed, for I was astonished to see in his belt the dagger I had lost on the night when Adèle took refuge in my room.

"From my dear—Adèle.'

"And the *Inglez*—the heretic you stabbed—who was he?"

"Her husband—she wished it—promised to be mine—and I obeyed. But, stand back—I want air—air.'

'I turned away my head, sickened at the fearful revelation. When I again looked, my eyes fell on a corpse. I snatched the dagger, which was still wet with Pedro's blood, from his belt, and hurried almost frantic to the Hotel de las Diligencias. Mrs. Percival had been waiting for me about two hours.

'The violent emotions which raged within me must have been portrayed on my countenance, for on my entering the apartment, she started back in dismay.

"Mrs. Percival," said I, striving to master the repulsive feeling which the mere sight of her excited, 'Pepito has, within the past hour, been murdered.'

"Murdered!" she repeated. 'And the secret—'

"Is dead—for *you*—forever! Madame, that infernal mine has for years been driving you to the blackest crime! It is time that the bait fell from the devil's hook.'

"What do you mean by this altered tone?"

"I mean, madame, that, thanks to Heaven, your crimes have been revealed to me. Shall I enumerate the list of your victims—General Ramiro, Arthur Livermore, Edward Percival, your husband, and last of all, Pepito? Your path, since you have sought this mine, is marked at every step by treachery and crime. The boldest heart must shudder to look at the ghastly procession led on by the General you poisoned.'

"'Tis false! God help me, 'tis false!"

"False—is it false—that three days since your husband was murdered at your instigation, by Pepito? Stay—hear me! Look at this dagger! did you not steal it from my room and give it to Pepito to perpetrate the crime? Madame, pause, ere you dare to swear it is false.'

'She trembled, and falling on her knees, exclaimed:

"My God! my God! forgive me!"

"It is not, madame, for erring man to limit the infinite mercy of Heaven; but for such crimes as yours there must be a fearful retribution. Farewell; may you go and sin no more.'

'I left the room, but in a few moments heard a piercing shriek; and rushing back, found the wretched woman extended on the floor in the agonies of death. She had picked up the dagger which I had thrown away, and stabbed herself to the heart.

'And the opal-mine?"

'I meant, at first, to leave the Nibelungen Hoard alone; but time tames all things except the love of gold. I went there; it was rich, but not inexhaustible. You have all had proof that I am neither poor nor parsimonious; but neither am I extravagant. I have all that I want—a cottage at Newport,

a neat house in the Rue de la Paix, stocks, and real estate. The opal-mine started me; I have kept myself going very well ever since.

'Gentlemen, my tale is ended. I am sorry it has proved so long, and am grateful to you all for the attentive hearing you have given me. I have been constantly looking round expecting to detect some one of you falling into a gentle slumber; I therefore feel really flattered at finding you all still awake.'

'But what became of the child that Percival was seeking?' shouted one.

'Did you ever find out any thing about Adèle's previous history?' asked another.

'And look here, Rideau, what did you—?'

'Gentlemen, take pity on me; while I have been spinning this long yarn, you have been smoking and imbibing; I am very willing to join you in both; but to-night I am tired out. The next time we meet, I shall be delighted to tell you what particulars I learned on my return to New Orleans, relative to Adèle and her poor orphan child; but no more to-night.'

THE RED, WHITE, AND BLUE

Red was the lightning's flashing,
And down through the driving rain,
We saw the red eyes dashing
Of the merciless midnight train;
Soon many crowded together,
Under the lamp's red glow,
But I saw one figure only—
Ah! why did I tremble so?
The eyes that gazed in the darkness
After the midnight train,
Are red with watching and weeping,
For it brings none back again.
Clouds hang in the west like banners,
Red banners of war unfurled,
And the prairie sod is crimson
With the best blood of the world.

White faces are pressed to the window,
Watching the sun go down,
Looking out to the coming darkness,
That covers the noisy town.
White are the hands, too, and quiet,
Over the pulseless breast;
No more will the vision of parting
Disturb the white sleeper's rest.
Over sleeper, and grave, and tombstone,
Like a pitying mantle spread,
The snow comes down in the night-time,
With a shy and noiseless tread.

Blue smoke rolls away on the north-wind,
Blue skies grow dusk in the din,
Blue waters look dark with the shadow
That gathers the world within.
Rigid and blue are the fingers
That clutch at the fading sky;
Blue lips in their agony mutter:
'O God! let this cup pass by.'
Blue eyes grow weary with watching;
Strong hands with waiting to do;
While brave hearts echo the watchword:
'Hurrah! for the Red, White, and Blue.'

MACCARONI AND CANVAS

IV. THE FAIR AT GROTTO FERRATA

No matter how well and hearty you may be, if you are in Rome, in summer, when the *scirócco* blows, you will feel as if convalescent from some debilitating fever; in winter, however, this gentle-breathing south-east wind will act more mildly; it will woo you to the country, induce you to sit down in a shady place, smoke, and 'muse.' That incarnate essence of enterprise, business, industry, economy, sharpness, shrewdness, and keenness—that Prometheus whose liver was torn by the vulture of cent per cent—eternally tossing, restless DOOLITTLE, was one day seen asleep, during bank hours, on a seat in the Villa Madama. The *scirócco* blew that day: Doolittle fell.

At breakfast, one morning in the latter part of the month of March, Caper proposed to Roejean and another artist named Bagswell, to attend the fair held that day at Grotto Ferrata.

'What will you find there?' asked Roejean.

'Find?—I remember, in the *Bohemian Girl*, a song that will answer you,' replied Caper; 'the words were composed by the theatrical poet Bunn':

'Rank, in its halls, may not find
The calm of a happy mind;
So repair
To the Fair,
And they may be met with there.'

'Unsatisfactory, both the grammar and the sentiment,' said Bagswell; 'it won't work; it's all wrong. In the first place, rank, in its hauls, *may* find the calm of a happy mind: for instance, the captain of a herring-smack may find the calm of a very happy mind in his hauls of No. 1 Digbys; more joy even than the fair could afford him. Let us go!'

Bagswell was a 'funny' Englishman.

They went—taking the railroad. Dashing out of the station, the locomotive carried them, in half an hour, to the station at Frascati, whirling them across the Campagna, past long lines of ruined or half-ruined and repaired aqueducts; past Roman tombs; past *Roma Vecchia*, the name given to the ruins of an immense villa; landing them at the first slope of the mountains, covered at their base with vineyards, olive and fruit-trees, and corn-fields, while high over them gleamed glistening white snow-peaks.

The walk from Frascati to the Grotto, about three miles, was beautiful, winding over hills through a fine wood of huge old elms and plane-trees. In the warm sun-light, the butterflies were flitting, while the road-side was purple with violets, and white and blue with little flowers. From time to time, our three artists had glimpses of the Campagna, rolling away like the ocean, to dash on Rome, crowned by St. Peter's; the dome of which church towers above the surrounding country, so that it can be seen, far and wide, for thirty miles or more. The road was alive with walkers and riders; here a dashing, open carriage, filled with rosy English; there a *contadino*, donkey-back, dressed in holiday-suit, with short-clothes of blue woolen, a scarlet waistcoat, his coarse blue-cloth jacket worn on one shoulder, and in his brown, conical-shaped hat, a large carnation-pink. Then came more of the country-people, almost always called *villani*, (hence our word, villains!) These poor villains had sacks on their backs, or were carrying in their hands—if women, on their heads—loads of bacon,

sides of bacon, flitches of bacon, hams, loaves of bread, cheese, and very loud-smelling *mortadella*; which they had bought and were bringing away from the fair.

'There was one task,' said Roejean, 'that Hercules declined, and that was eating that vile *mortadella*. He was a strong man; but that was stronger. Wait a moment, till I fill a pipe with caporal, and have a smoke; for if I meet another man with that delicacy, I shall have to give up the Grotto—unless I have a pipe under my nose, as counter-irritant.'

The three artists tramped along gayly, until they approached the town, when they assumed the proud, disdainful mood, assuring spectators that they who wear it are of gentle blood, and are tired of life and weary of traveling around with pockets filled with gold. They only looked coldly at the pens filled with cattle for sale; long-horned, mouse-colored oxen were there; groups of patient donkeys, or the rough-maned, shaggy-fetlocked, bright-eyed small horses of the Campagna; countless pigs, many goats; while above all, the loud-singing jackasses were performing at the top of their lungs. Here were knots of country-people, buying provisions or clothing; there were groups of carriages from Rome, which had rolled out the wealthy *forestieri* or strangers, drawn up by the way-side, in the midst of all sorts and kinds of hucksters. The road leading to the church, shaded by trees, was crowded with country-people, in picturesque costumes, busily engaged in buying and selling hams, bacon, bacon and hams, and a few more hams. Here and there, a cheese-stand languished, for pork flourished. Now a copper-smith exposed his wares, chief among which were the graceful-shaped *conche* or water-vessels, the same you see so carefully poised on the heads of so many black-eyed Italian girls, going to or coming from so many picturesque fountains, in—paintings, and all wearing such brilliant costumes, as you find at—Gigi's costume-class. Then came an ironmonger, whose wares were all made by hand, even the smallest nails; for machinery, as yet, is in its first infancy around Rome. At this stand, Roejean stopped to purchase a pallet-knife; not one of the regular, artist-made tools, but a thin, pliable piece of steel, without handle, which experience taught him was well adapted to his work. As usual, the iron-man asked twice as much as he intended to take, and after a sharp bargain, Roejean conquered. Then they came to a stand where there were piles of coarse crockery, and some of a better kind, of classical shape.

Caper particularly admired a beautiful white jug, intended for a water-pitcher, and holding about two gallons. After asking its price, he offered a quarter of the money for it; to Bagswell's horror, the crockery-man took it, and Caper, passing his arm through the handle, was proceeding up the road, when Bagswell energetically asked him what he was going to do with it.

'Enter Rome with it, like Titus with the *spolia opima*,' replied Caper.

'Oh! I say, now,' said the former, who was an Englishman and an historical painter; 'you aren't going to trot all over the fair with that old crockery on your arm. Why, God bless me, they'll swear we are drunk. There comes the Duchess of Brodneck; what the deuce will she say?'

'Say?' said Caper, 'why, I'll go and ask her; this is not court-day.'

Without another word, with water-pitcher on arm, he walked toward the Duchess. Saluting her with marked politeness, he said:

'A countryman of yours, madame, has objected to my carrying this *objet de fantaisie*, assuring me that it would occasion remarks from the Duchess of Brodneck. May I have the good fortune to know what she says of it?'

'She says,' replied the lady, smiling and speaking slowly and quietly; 'that a young man who has independence enough to carry it, has confidence enough to—fill it.' She bowed, and passed on, Caper politely raising his hat, in acknowledgment of the well-rounded sentence. When he returned to Bagswell, he found the historical painter with eyes the size of grape-shot, at the sublime impudence of the man. He told him what she had said.

'Upon my honor, you Americans have a face of brass; to address a duchess you don't know, and ask her a question like that!'

'That's nothing,' said Caper, 'a little experience has taught me that the higher you fly, in England, the nearer you approach true politeness and courtesy. Believe me, I should never have asked that question of any Englishwoman whose social position did not assure me she was cosmopolitan.'

'Come,' said Bagswell, 'come, after such an adventure, if there is one drop of any thing fit to drink in this town, we'll all go and get lushy.'

They went. They found a door over which hung a green branch. Good wine needs no bush, therefore Italian wine-shops hang it out; for the wine there is not over good. But as luck was with our three artists, in the shop over the door of which hung the green bough, they found that the *padrone* was an old acquaintance of Roejean; he had married and moved to Grotto Ferrata. He had a barrel of Frascati wine, which was bright, sparkling, sweet, and not watered. This the *padrone* tapped in honor of his guests, and at their urgent request, sat down and helped empty a couple of bottles. Moreover, he told them that as the town was overcrowded, they would find it difficult to get a good dinner, unless they would come and dine with him, at his private table, and be his guests; which invitation Roejean accepted, to the tavern-keeper's great joy, promising to be back at the appointed time.

Our trio then sauntered forth to see the fair. Wandering among the crowded booths, they came suddenly on a collection of *Zingare*, looking like their Spanish cousins, the *Gitañas*. Wild black eyes, coarse black locks of hair, brown as Indians, small hands, small feet—the Gipsies, children of the storm—my Rommani pals, what are you doing here? Only one woman among them was noticeable. Her face was startlingly handsome, with an aquiline nose, thin nostrils, beautifully-arched eyebrows, and eyes like an eagle. She was tall, straight, with exquisitely-rounded figure, and the full drapery of white around her bosom fell from the shoulders in large hanging sleeves; over her head was thrown a crimson and green shawl, folded like the *pane* of the *ciociare*, and setting off her raven-black hair and rich red and swarthy complexion.

Roejean stood entranced, and Caper, noticing his rapt air, forbore breaking silence; while the gipsy, who knew that she was the admiration of the *forestieri*, stood immovable as a statue, looking steadily at them, without changing a feature.

'*Piu bellissima che la madonna!*' said Roejean, loud enough for her to hear. Then turning to Caper, 'Let's *andiammo*,' (travel,) said he, 'that woman's face will haunt me for a month. I've seen it before; yes, seen her shut up in the Vatican, immortal on an old Etruscan vase. Egypt, Etruria, the Saracen hordes who once overrun all this Southern Italy, I find, every hour, among live people, some trace of you all; but of the old Roman, nothing!'

'You find the old Roman cropping out in these church processions, festivals, shrines, and superstitions, don't you?' asked Caper.

'No! something of those who made the seal, nothing of the impression on the wax remains for me. Before Rome was, the great East was, and shall be. The Germans are right to call the East the Morning-Land; thence came light.... The longer you live along the wave-washed shore of the Mediterranean, the more you will see what a deep hold the East once had on the people of the coast. The Romans, after all, were only opulent tradesmen, who could buy luxuries without having the education to appreciate them. So utterly did they ignore the Etruscans, who made them what they were, that you seek in vain to find in Roman history any thing but the barest outline of the origin of a people so graceful and refined that the Roman citizen was a boot-black in comparison to one of them. The Saracens flashed light and life, in later days, once more into the Roman leaven. What a dirty, filthy page the whole Gothic middle-age is at best! It lies like a huge body struck with apoplexy, and only restored to its sensual life by the sharp lancet, bringing blood, of these same infidels, these stinging Saracens. Go into the mountains back of us, hunt up the costumes that still remain, and see where they all come from—the East. Look at the crescent earrings and graceful twisted gold-work, from—the East. All the commonest household ware, the agricultural implements, the manner of cooking their food, and all that is picturesque in life and religion—all from the East.'

'Strikes me,' quoth Caper, 'that this question of food touches my weakest point; therefore, let us go and dine, and continue the lecture at a more un-hungry period. But where is Bagswell?'

'He is seeking adventures, of course.'

'Oh! yes, I sec him down there among the billy-goats; let's go and pick him up, and then for mine host of the Green Bough.'

Having found Bagswell, our trio at once marched to the Green Bough, which they saw was filled to overflowing with country-people, eating and drinking, sitting on rough benches, and stowing away food and wine as if in expectation of being very soon shipwrecked on a desert island, where there would be nothing but hard-shell clams and lemons to eat. The landlord at once took the trio upstairs, where, at a large table, were half-a-dozen of his friends, all of the cleanly order of country-people, stout, and having a well-to-do look that deprecated any thing like famine. A young lady of twenty and two hundred, as Caper summed up her age and weight, was evidently the cynosure of all eyes; two other good-natured women, of a few more years and a very little less weight, and three men, made up the table. Any amount of compliments, as usual, passed between the first six and the last three comers, prefacing every thing with desires that they would act without ceremony; but Caper and Roejean were on a high horse, and they fairly pumped the spring of Italian compliments so dry, that Bagswell could only make a squeaking noise when he tried the handle. This verbifuge of our three artists put their host into an ecstasy of delight, and he circulated all round, rubbing his hands and telling his six friends that his three friends were *milordi*, in very audible whispers, *milordi* of the most genial, courtly, polite, complimentary, cosmopolitan, and exquisite description.

After all this, down sat our trio, and for the sake of future ages which will live on steam-bread, electrical beef, and magnetic fish, let us give them the bill of fare set before them:

ALL THE WINE THEY COULD DRINK.

Maccaroni (*fettucia*) a la Milanese—dish two feet in diameter, one foot and a half high.

Mutton-chops, with tomato-sauce, (*pomo d'oro*.)

Stewed celery, with Parmesan cheese.

Stewed chickens.

Mutton-chops, bird-fashion, (*Uccelli di Castrato*. They are made of pieces of mutton rolled into a shape like a bird, and cooked, several at a time, on a wooden spit. They are the *kibaubs* of the East.)

Baked pie of cocks' combs and giblets.

Roasted pig, a twelve-pounder.

Roast squashes, stuffed with minced veal.

Apples, oranges, figs, and *finocchio*.

Crostata di visciola, or wild-cherry pie, served on an iron plate the size of a Roman warrior's shield; the dish evidently having been one formerly.

MORE WINE!

The stout young lady rejoicing in the name of Angelucia, or large angel, was fascinated by Roejean's conversational powers and Caper's attentions; the rest of the company, perfectly at ease on finding out that the *milordi* were not French—Roejean turning American to better please them—and that they were moreover full of fun, talked and laughed as if they were brother Italians. A jollier dinner Caper acknowledged he had never known. One of the Italians was farmer-general for one of the Roman princes; he was a man of broad views, and having traveled to Paris and London, came home with ultra-liberal sentiments, and to Bagswell's astonishment, spoke his mind so clearly on the Roman rulers, that our Englishman's eyes were slightly opened at the by no means complimentary expressions used toward the wire-workers of the Papal government. One Italy, and Rome its capital, was the only platform our princely farmer would take, and he was willing to stake his fortune, a cool one hundred thousand scudi, on regenerated Italy.

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