

BIRD ROBERT MONTGOMERY

THE INFIDEL; OR, THE
FALL OF MEXICO. VOL. II.

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The Infidel; or, the
Fall of Mexico. Vol. II.

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The Infidel; or, the Fall of Mexico. Vol. II

– Un esforcado soldado, que se dezia *Lerma*– Se fue entre los Indios como aburrado de temor del mismo Cortes, a quien avia ayudado a salvar la vida, por ciertas cosas de enojo que Cortes contra èl tuvo, que aqui no declaro por su honor: nunca mas supimos del vivo, ni muerto, mala sospecha tuvimos.

Bernal Diaz Del Castillo —Hist. Verd de la Conquista.

No hay mal que por bien no venga,

Dicen adagios vulgares.

Calperon —La Dama Duende.

CHAPTER I

Before sunrise on the following morning, many a feathered band of allies from distant tribes was pouring into Tezcucu; for this was the day on which the Captain-General had appointed to review his whole force, assign the several divisions to the command of his favourite officers, and expound the system of warfare, by which he expected to reduce the doomed Tenochtitlan. The multitudes that were collected by midday would be beyond our belief, did we not know that the royal valley, and every neighbouring nook of Anahuac capable of cultivation, were covered by a population almost as dense as that which makes an ant-heap of the 'Celestial Empire,' at this day.

While they were thus congregating together, marshalled under their native chiefs, emulously expressing their attachment to the Spaniard, and their enthusiasm in his cause, by the horrible clamour of drums and conches, Cortes was receiving, in the great Hall of Audience, the compliments and reverence of those cavaliers, distinguished soldiers, and valiant infidel princes, whom he had invited to the feast, with which he marked the close of his mighty preparations and the beginning of his not less arduous campaign.

A table crossed the room immediately in front of the platform, on which the noblest and most honoured guests had already taken their stations. Two others, running from pillar to pillar, extended

the whole length of the apartment, leaving in the intermediate space, as well as betwixt them and the walls, sufficient room for the passage of revellers and attendants, of which latter there were many present, bustling to and fro, in the persons of Indian boys and girls, all branded with the scarry badge of servitude. The walls, pillars, and ceiling, were ornamented with green branches of trees and viny festoons, among which breathed and glittered a multitude of the gayest and most odoriferous flowers; and besides these, there were deposited and suspended, in many places, Indian banners and standards as well as spears, bucklers, and battle-axes, the trophies of many a field of victory. The tables were covered with brilliant cotton-cloths, and loaded not only with all the dainties of Mexico, but with some of the luxuries of Europe, among which were conspicuous divers flagons of wine, on which many a veteran gazed with looks of anxious and affectionate expectation.

The peculiarity of the scene, animated as it was by a densely moving throng of guests in their most gallant attire, was greatly heightened by a circumstance, for which but few were able to account. Although full noon-day, the light of heaven was carefully excluded, and the apartment illuminated only by torches and lamps. This, though it gave picturesqueness to every object in view, was, to say the least, remarkable; and those who were most interested to watch the workings of the commander's mind, beheld in it a subject for many disturbing reflections. But, to such persons, there was another phenomenon still more unsatisfactory,

in the spectacle of a line of veteran soldiers, original followers of Cortes, extending round the whole apartment, who stood against the walls, each with a spear in his hand and a *machete*, – a heavy, straight sword, – on his thigh, surveying the revellers more with the air of sentinels than companions in festivity.

While the inferior guests stood or lounged about, speculating on these curious particulars, and expecting the signal to begin the feast, which seemed to be delayed by the absence of some important guest, Cortes occupied himself conversing with Alvarado, De Olid, Guzman, De Ircio, and other hidalgos, who stood with him on the platform, occasionally extending his notice to the young king of Tezcuco, his brother Suchel, the Tlascalan chief Chichimecatl, and other noble barbarians, who made part of the distinguished group. Many curious, and not a few anxious, eyes were turned upon them from different parts of the hall; and it was soon observed, and remarked with whispers, that Sandoval, the valiant and beloved, and Xicotencal, the gloomy, were absent from the party.

By and by, however, conjectures were put to rest by the sudden appearance of the cavalier in question, who entered with his garments in some disorder, his countenance heated and troubled, and his whole appearance that of a man just released from some exciting and laborious duty.

As soon as Cortes perceived him approaching, he commanded room to be made for him on the platform, welcomed him with a smiling face and a cordial grasp of hand, and then signed to the

guests to take their places at the tables.

In the bustle of festivity that followed the command, the revellers forgot to wonder at the torchlight around them and the presence of the armed guards. If a few still bent their eyes uneasily on the commander-in-chief, striving to catch the low accents with which he conversed with his immediate friends, and particularly with Sandoval, their efforts were unnoticed by the others; and, in a short time, the hum of whispers waxed into murmurs of joyous hilarity, so that the conversation on the platform could only be guessed at by the expressive visages and gestures of the cavaliers.

By and by, the feast became still more unrestrained and noisy. Wine was poured and drunk, jests were uttered, songs almost sung, and care banished from all but a few, who still turned their looks to the platform, exchanged glances occasionally with each other, and at every bustle attending the entrance of any one at the great door, cast their eyes in that direction with much meaning anxiety.

Still, however, the feast went on, and enjoyment was becoming revelry, when the voice of Cortes was suddenly heard. The murmurs of all were instantly hushed, and all turning their eyes to the platform, they beheld the Captain-General standing erect, and eyeing them with extreme gravity of countenance, holding, at the same time, in his hand, a golden bowl of wine.

"My brothers and fellow-soldiers," he said, as soon as all were composed, "it becomes us, as true and loyal Castilians, to

remember our duty to the king our master, whom God preserve for a thousand years! We are here afar from his sight, but not beyond the reach of his authority, nor the constraint of our true allegiance. Let it not be thought that the cavaliers of Madrid will drink his health with more zeal and humility at the palace-door, than we, his true subjects, in the deserts of Mexico. A bowl, then, to his majesty our master, Don Carlos of Spain, Austria, and this New World!"

As he spoke, he knelt upon one knee, and all present, even the barbaric king at his side, doing the same thing, allegiance was pledged in the cup, – which is undoubtedly the best way to make it agreeable.

From this exhibition of humility, all rose up, shouting lusty *vivas*.

"It gratifies me," said Cortes, when this customary ebullition of loyalty was over, "to perceive that I have about me men so truly faithful to my very noble and loyal master. For in this, I perceive I shall be no more afflicted with the painful necessity of exerting those powers with which his majesty has so bountifully endowed me, even to the shedding of blood and the taking of life."

A sudden damper fell upon the spirits of many present, and all who were not apprized of the secret of Villafana's fate, looked upon Cortes with surprise.

"Know, my truly faithful and loyal friends," he went on, speaking with an appearance of solemn indignation, "that we have had among us a TRAITOR, – a Christian man and a

Spaniard, yet a traitor to the king our master! Yet, in the band of the holy apostles, there was one Judas; and it does not become us to believe that we, sinful creatures as we are, and much more numerous, should be without *our* Iscariot, who would have sold our lives for silver, and sunk into perdition the interest of his majesty in this opulent kingdom. It rejoices me to know that we have had but *one*. The pain with which I have been filled to discover there were other knaves for his accomplices, is assuaged by the knowledge that they were not Castilians, but infidel Indians; to whom perfidy is so natural, that it is wholly superfluous to lament its occurrence. Know therefore, my friends, and grieve not to know it, for the evil is past, that Xicotencal, General-in-chief of the Tlascalan forces, besides secretly treating with our foes, his own enemies, the men of Tenochtitlan, did, last night, traitorously abandon our standard, and set out, to throw himself, as I doubt not, into the arms of the Mexicans."

"A villain! a very vile traitor! death to the dog of an unbeliever!" were the expressions with which the revellers protested their indignation.

"Think not," said the Captain-General, in continuation, "that the villain who doth seriously pursue a scheme of disloyalty, shall escape a just retribution. The toils and sufferings which we have endured in this land, in his majesty's service, are such that I can readily excuse the murmurs with which some have occasionally indulged a peevish discontent. I will never account

it much against a brave soldier that he has sometimes grumbled a little; but he who meditates, or practises, a treason, shall die. I have said, that among us all there was but *one* villain. Perhaps there were two; but of that we will inquire hereafter. He of whom I speak, was one to whom I had forgiven much semblance of discontent, and whom I had raised into no little favour. Yet did he conceive a foul conspiracy, having for its object no less a thing than the destruction of this enterprise against a rich pagan kingdom, and the murder of all those who would not become the enemies of Spain. The man of whom I speak you know. It was – "

"Villafana!" muttered many, with eager, yet fearful voices; while those who had hitherto betrayed anxiety at the ominous lights and guards, turned pale in secret.

"It was indeed the Alguazil, Villafana," said Cortes, sternly; "and you shall know his villany. First, the Mexican ambassadors, last night committed to his charge, he permitted to escape, that they might be no hinderance to the ambushed infidels, then lying on the lake, ready to burn my brigantines. Secondly, being the captain of the prison, he permitted the same to be approached and sacked by other infidels, whereby a prisoner, convicted of a heavy crime and condemned to die, was snatched out of our hands, and given into those of the enemy, whom he will doubtless aid and abet in all the sanguinary resistance which they are inclined to make. Thirdly, by his persuasions, Xicotencal was induced to throw off his allegiance, at the very moment when the fleet and the prison were beset, and desert from the post.

And fourthly, the consummation of the whole villany was to be effected at this very hour, and on this very floor, in the blood of myself, my officers, and as I may say of yourselves also; since none were to be spared who were not his sworn colleagues; and, certainly, there are none here so base and criminal?"

The answer to this address mingled a thousand protestations of loyalty with as many fierce calls for punishment on the traitor. In the midst of the tumult, Cortes gave a sign to two Indian slaves, who stood behind the platform; and the heavy curtain being rapidly pulled aside, the lustre of the noontide sun streamed through the pellucid wall, until lamp and torch seemed to smoulder into darkness, under the diviner ray; and the revellers looking up, beheld the ghastly spectacle of Villafana's body, hanging motionless and stiff in the midst of the light.

At this unexpected sight, the guests, inflamed as they were with wine, anger, and enthusiasm, were struck with horror; and if traitors were among them, as none but Cortes and themselves could say, it was not possible to detect them by their countenances, all being equally pale and affrighted.

"Thus perish all who plot treason against the king and the king's officers!" cried the Captain-General, with a loud voice. "The rebel Xicotencal swings upon an oak-tree, on the wayside as you go to Chalco; the mutineer Lerma hath fled to the pagans, to become a renegade and perhaps apostate; and Villafana, the traitor, hangs as you see, upon the window of our banqueting-room, to teach all who may have meditated a like villany, the

fate that shall most certainly await them. – Hide the carrion!" he exclaimed to the slaves, and in an instant the frightful spectacle was excluded, along with the cheerful light of day. The return to that of the torches was like a lapse into darkness, and for a few moments, it was scarce possible for the guests to distinguish the features of those nearest to them. In the gloom, however, the voice of the Captain-General was heard, concluding his oration:

"Let no one of this true and loyal company be in fear," he said, with his accustomed craft. "The paper, on which the villain had recorded the names of such madmen as would have joined him in his crime, he was artful enough to destroy. But let the disaffected tremble. There has been one dog among us, and there may others prove so, hereafter. But I am now awake; and the treason that may be planted, shall be discovered, and nipped before it come to the budding. – God save his majesty! Another bowl to his greatness! And let all fall to feasting again; for, by and by, the signal gun will be fired for the review, and this is the last feast ye must think of sharing together, till ye can spread it again in the halls of Montezuma."

Whatever relief might have been carried by these words to the bosoms of the guilty, the spectacle of their murdered associate had sunk too deeply in their spirits, to allow any festive exertions. The innocent were equally shocked, and gloom and uneasiness oppressed the hearts of all.

It was felt therefore as a relief, when the signal for breaking up the feast was given by the sound of a gun from the temple-top;

and all rushed out, to forget in the bustle of parade, the sickening event which had marred their enjoyment.

On this day, the whole army of Cortes, of which the thousand Christians made scarcely the three-hundredth part, was marched out upon the meadows of Tezcuco, and there, with ceremonies of great state and ostentation, was reviewed, divided, and each division appointed to its respective duties.

The first division was assigned to the command of Sandoval, and was ordered to march southward to the city of Iztapalapan, which commanded the principal causeway, or approach to Mexico. The second was given to the ferocious De Olid, whose destination was to Cojohuacan, a city southwest of Mexico, the dike from which led to that betwixt the metropolis and Iztapalapan. The third was appointed to the Capitan del Salto, or Alvarado, who was to take possession of Tacuba, which commanded the shortest of the causeways. The two last divisions were ordered to proceed in company, around the northern borders of the lake, destroying the towns on the route, and separating at Tacuba.

The fleet Cortes reserved in his own hands, intending, besides commanding the whole lake, so to act with it, as to give assistance to each division, as it might be needed. The royal city of Tezcuco was to be entrusted to the government of the young king Ixtlilxochitl, the cavalier Don Francisco de Guzman remaining, though somewhat reluctantly, to guide and control his actions, under the appearance of adding to his state and security.

These preliminaries arranged, the remainder of the day was devoted to festivities. The great work of conquest was to begin on the morrow.

CHAPTER II

The extraordinary and exciting events which took place in the prison, that night which Juan Lerma esteemed the last he should spend upon earth, had reduced to exhaustion a body already enfeebled by inaction, and a mind almost consumed by care. Hence, when, having struggled for a time with the restlessness and delirium which, in such cases, usher in sleep with a thousand phantasms – apparitions both of sight and sound, – he at last fell asleep, his slumbers were profound and dreamless. The loud alarms, which drove the executioners of Villafana from the Hall of Audience, made no impression on his ear; and even the yells, that accompanied the attack on his dreary abode, were equally unheard. The guards were routed, the doors were forced, and he was lifted to his feet by unknown hands, almost before he had opened his eyes; and even voices, that, at another time, would have attracted his attention, and words that would have inspired him with the joy of deliverance, were all lost upon him. Nay, such was the stupor which oppressed his mind, that he was dragged from the dungeon, and hurried rapidly along through a host of infidels to the water-side, before he was convinced that all was not really a dream. Then, indeed, the bustle, the din of shrieks and Indian drums, mingled with the sounds of trumpets and fire-arms, the howl of winds and the plash of waves, though they recalled him to his wits, yet left him confounded, and, for a while,

incapable of understanding and appreciating his situation. In this condition, he was deposited in a canoe of some magnitude, which instantly putting off from the shore, under the impulse of thirty paddles, he soon found himself darting over the lake at a speed which promised soon to remove from his eyes, and perhaps forever, the scene of his late humiliation and suffering.

The darkness of the night was almost palpable, and, save the few torches that could be seen hurrying through the alarmed city, no other light illuminated the scene, until the moment when the four brigantines, fired by the assailants, burst up in a ruddy blaze. At this sight, a shout of triumph burst from his capturers, and altering the course of the canoe, it seemed as if they were about to rush into the thick of the conflict.

As they approached the burning ships, Juan was able in the increasing glare, to examine the figures of his companions, and beheld the dark visages and half-naked bodies of thirty or more barbarians, each, besides his paddle, having a weighty battle-axe dangling from his wrist, and a broad buckler of some unknown material hung over his back. Two men sat by him, one on each side, and he soon discovered that these, whom he had thought mere guards for his safe-keeping, were no other than the Ottomi Techeechee and the young prince of Mexico, the latter now freed from his disguise.

"Guatimozin," said he, no longer doubting the purpose for which he had been snatched from the prison, and resolved at once to express his disapprobation, "dost thou think to make me

a renegade to my countrymen? I swear to thee – "

"Peace, and fear not," replied the royal chief. "Thou shalt have very sweet vengeance."

"I ask it not, I seek it not; and surely I will not accept it, when it makes me the traitor I have been so falsely called. Am I thy prisoner?"

"My friend," replied Guatimozin, quickly, starting up, seizing a paddle from the hands of the nearest rower, and himself urging the canoe towards the nearest vessel, which was, by this time, so close at hand, that Juan could clearly perceive the figures, and almost the faces, of the Spaniards on board, contending, and, as it seemed, not unsuccessfully, both with the flames and the assailants. A great herd of Mexicans was seen fighting hand to hand with the Christians; but it was manifest, from the cheery cries, with which the latter responded to the yells of the former, and from the frequent plunges in the water, as of men leaping or cast overboard, that, in this brigantine at least, the battle went not with the pagans. This Guatimozin remarked as clearly as Juan, and as he struck the water more impetuously with his paddle, he shouted aloud, "Be strong, men of Mexico, be strong!"

All this passed in the space of an instant. A loud cry, the rush of other canoes against the ship, and the frantic exertions of the combatants already on board to maintain their places, made it apparent that the voice of the prince was not unknown or unregarded. Still, the Spaniards fought well and fiercely, and their cries of "God and St. James! Honour and Spain!"

kindled its natural enthusiasm in the breast of the young islander. Forgetting his late wrongs and oppressions, and the mournful truth, that, at this moment, the Christians were more his enemies than the Mexicans, he determined, if possible, to make his escape. Watching his opportunity, and perceiving that many ropes, sundered by the flames, were hanging over the sides of the vessel in the water, he chose a moment, when the canoe was within but ten or twelve fathoms of her, and but few of those savages who had leaped overboard were swimming near, he rose to his feet, and shouting aloud, "Help for an escaping captive! and good courage to all!" he plunged boldly into the lake.

To one, who, like Juan, had rolled in his childhood among the breakers on the northern coast of Cuba, and to whom it was as easy a diversion to dive for conches in such depths as would have tried the wind of a pearl-diver, as to gather limpets and periwinkles from the beach, it was no great exploit to leap among the puny billows of Tezcuco, and swim to an anchored vessel, even when the path was obstructed by enemies, themselves not unfamiliar with the water. His escape was so sudden and unexpected, and the prince, Techeechee, and the rowers, were so occupied with the scene of combat into which they were hurrying, that it is possible it would not have been noticed, had it not been for his exclamation. Then, perceiving him in the water, all were seized with confusion and fury, some striking at him with their paddles, some leaping over in pursuit, and all so confounded and divided in action, that the canoe was on the very point of

being overset. In this period of confusion, they soon lost sight of him; for it was not possible to distinguish him among the mass of infidels that were swimming about in all directions.

The cry of Juan was perhaps not heard by his fellow-Christians in the brigantine; but there was one friend aboard, and that a brute one, whose ears were far quicker to detect his call, and whose heart was much prompter to obey. This was the dog Befe, who, having been taken from the prison on the day of the trial, and afterwards been refused admission, he so annoyed the guards by his whining and howling, and indeed all in the palace, likewise, that they were glad to send him aboard a vessel, to have him out of the way, until after the time of execution, when, it was apprehended, from his remarkable affection for the prisoner, he might give additional trouble. His services were turned to good account by the sailors, during the attack; for, being instantly loosed, he sprang upon barbarian after barbarian, tumbling them into the water, or among the Spaniards, who despatched them. His appearance, fiercer than that of the largest beasts of prey in Mexico, and his savage bark, not less frightful than the yell of the jaguar or the puma, were perhaps still more effectual than his fangs; for at the sight and sound, the Mexicans, climbing over the bulwarks, recoiled, and with screams of dismay, jumped into the water, and swam again to the nearest canoes.

In the midst of the conflict, Befe heard the cry of his master, and loosing a barbarian whom he had caught by the throat, he sprang to the side of the vessel, thrust his paws and nose over

the gunwale, and looked eagerly into the lake, whining all the time, and barking, as if to attract Juan's notice. He then ran to the after-deck, where were several sailors busily engaged in knotting a rope that seemed to pass to the shore, or to another brigantine nearer to the lake-side; and flinging himself over the railing here as before, he looked out and whined loudly again. As he peered thus into the darkness, a faint groan, as of one strangling in the water, came to his ears; and the next moment, he sprang, with a wild howl, into the flood.

That groan came from Juan Lerma, who, that instant, was struck a violent blow, he knew not by whom or with what, which, for a time, deprived him of all sensation, and left him drowning in the lake.

CHAPTER III

When Juan recovered his senses, he found himself lying in the bottom of a little canoe, urged by a single boatman, and already far from the conflict. The blow, inflicted by some blunt weapon, perhaps a club or paddle, had stunned him, yet had not wounded; and he became soon aware that he was not seriously injured. As he raised himself a little on his arm, his companion, pausing an instant from his toil, exclaimed, in the well remembered tones of the Ottomi,

"Izquauhtzin knows his friend: there are none to do him harm."

"Techeechee!" cried the youth: "What is this? where are we going? Have they killed Guatimozin, the king? If thou art the friend thou hast so often proved, row me to the shore. Methinks we are in the middle of the lake!"

"Guatimozin is the Great Eagle's friend," said Techeechee, again plying his paddle; "he says the Great Eagle is his brother; and because of his fear of the armed people, he says, 'Let the Great Eagle sail alone with Techeechee, the old man, who has no weapons, and loves the Great Eagle very much.'"

"I am then again a prisoner?" said Juan, sadly. "Perhaps it is better, – certainly I cannot control my destiny, and very surely I perceive that Guatimozin is friendly to me. But how is this, Techeechee? I sprang from the prince's boat, – I was knocked on

the head – How comes it that I am in this canoe?"

"The king picked his brother from the water," replied the Indian; "saying, 'Why should my brother drown, when he has escaped Malintzin, him who eats blood?' 'Therefore,' said the king, 'take him to my house, for did he not carry me to his? Put upon him the robe of a king's son, with the red crown of a Teuctli, as one who is great among the nobles and fighting men; and the people shall call him the king's brother.'"

To this revelation of a fortune so magnificent, Juan answered only by a deep sigh, muttering within the recesses of his breast, 'The noble's gown or the victim's shirt, – but I will live and die both a Christian and Spaniard.'

Then, contenting himself with this resolve, for he no longer perceived any hope of escape, unless by killing the old man, and perhaps began to be aware how useless would be freedom, he cast his eyes about him, and endeavoured to learn his situation. The sounds of battle came but faintly to his ears, and the burning ships, which were still visible, seemed to be left far behind. Yet in the estimate he was thus enabled to make of his distance from the fleet, there was no little deception; for the flames were expiring, and the wind, blowing from the west, conspired with the plashing of the water to deaden the sounds of combat. In every other quarter, all was silence and gloom. An impenetrable darkness lay upon the lake. The sky was concealed by a dense canopy of clouds, and he began to wonder at the precision and understanding with which Techeechee impelled the canoe

towards a point indicated by no beacon on earth or in heaven, until he perceived, immediately over the prow, what seemed a little star, as red as blood, glimmering on the very edge of the horizon. But this, he became soon convinced, was no heavenly luminary. Faint as it was, it shone steadily, and, once seen, there was no difficulty in preserving it always in the eye. He even began to be sensible, after a little time, that it increased in magnitude as he approached it; and, by and by, he was at no loss to believe it was a beacon-light, kindled upon some eminence in the pagan city, to guide the fleet of canoes on its return from the battle.

While he was arriving at this just conclusion, the sounds of contention dying further away in the background, he was struck by a wailing note behind, like the cry of some animal, swimming in the lake. He listened, distinguished it a second time, and commanded the Ottomi to cease paddling.

"If I know the voice of a friend, that is the whine of Befo!" he exclaimed, looking eagerly, but vainly back. "I remember me now, that I heard him bark on board the ship. Put back, Techeechee, put back! The dog is following me, and to his destruction, if we take him not up. Put back, put back!"

"'Tis the big tiger," said the Indian, very seriously. "We found him eating you in the water – he had you by the head; and now he is following, like a wolf, who never leaves the deer, after having once tasted of his blood."

"Good heavens, eating me!" said Juan. "It was he, then, that held me up, when I was strangling? I remember to have felt some

one pull me by the hair, before I was utterly senseless. Faithful Befo! faithful Befo! there is no friend like him! And I leave him drowning, who saved me from the same death, and now follows me with affection? Put back, put back! – Nay, thou art sluggish, – old and sluggish: – I will paddle myself. What, Befo! Befo!"

Thus exclaiming, and using the paddle, which he had snatched from Techeechee, with no little skill, it was soon clear that he was drawing nigh to the animal, which, hearing his voice, replied with loud whinings, that were both piteous and joyful.

"Alas, poor dog, thou art weary enough. Hast thou not another paddle, Techeechee? the dog is drowning."

"Techeechee fears not the ocelotl," replied the savage, with a voice somewhat quavering; "he killed one with his spear, and the great king Montezuma said, 'The Ottomi is brave: he is Ocelotzin.' The Spanish tiger eats poor Ottomies. Techeechee has only his arrows and a macana."

"Use them not, and fear not," said Juan, already catching a sight of the struggling beast. "What, Befo! Befo! true Befo! courage, Befo!"

The dog was evidently wholly exhausted; yet at the cheery cry of the youth, and especially at the sight of him, he yelped loudly, and raised himself half out of the water, while Juan, making one more sweep of the paddle to his side, caught him by the leathern collar, and strove to drag him into the boat. But Befo's great weight and his own feebleness rendered that impossible; and it was some time before he could prevail upon Techeechee to give

him assistance, and actually lay his hand on the dreaded monster.

"Dost thou not see that he loves me?" cried Juan by way of argument; "He loves me because I have done him good deeds, and treated him kindly. He is like a man, not a tiger: he remembers a benefit as long as an injury. Give him this help, and he will love thee also."

Thus persuaded, the Ottomi timorously extended his hand, and greatly emboldened to find it was not immediately snapped off, plied his strength, which, notwithstanding his age, was yet considerable, until Befo was safely lodged in the boat. The poor dog had scarce strength left to raise his head to his master's knee, but devoured his hand with caresses, while he sank trembling, panting, and powerless, into the bottom of the skiff.

"Thus it is with the dog, whom you call a tiger," said Juan, in a moralizing mood, as he surveyed his faithful friend: "Black or white, red or olive-hued, whom he once loves, he loves well. Happy or wretched, proud or lowly, it is all one: he asks not if his master be a villain. A tiger in courage, in strength, and vindictiveness, he is yet a lamb, – the fawn of a doe, – in the hands of his master. Feed him, he loves you – starve him, he loves you – beat him, still does he love you. Once gain his affection, and you cannot cast it off: the rich man cannot bribe his love with gold, and bread will not seduce him away; – nay, he will sometimes pine away on your grave. His name has been made a by-word for all that is base and villanous – I know not why, unless it is because, being the fondest and most confiding of living creatures,

he is therefore the worst used: but the word is a satire upon our own injustice. Look at him, Techeechee, and at me: I have been ever poor and well nigh friendless – I gave him to one who is as a prince among men: yet when he – his then master, – struck at me with his sword, this dog seized the weapon with his teeth; he came to me when I lay in prison, he sprang to me when I was dying in the lake, and he perilled his life, as thou hast seen, that he might have the poor privilege to follow me. I am a beggar and an outcast, a man degraded and, it may be, soon outlawed: – yet does this poor creature love me none the less. Ay, Befo! it is all one to thee, what I am, and whither I go!"

To this eulogium, which the desolate youth pronounced with much feeling, Techeechee answered not a word; for though the expressions were Mexican, their purport was beyond his comprehension.

He merely stared with much admiration upon the good understanding which seemed to exist between his companion and a creature that was in his eyes so terrific. But the endearments mutually shared by two creatures of a race so different, and yet in heart so much alike, had the good effect to deprive him of many of his fears, so that he plied his paddle with good-will, and, the wind abating, rapidly shortened the distance that still divided them from the island city.

He had already put a wide sheet of water between him and the battle, and when the Indian fleet, beaten off, or satisfied with the mischief done, began to retreat, followed by such of the

brigantines as were in plight to pursue, it was easy to preserve so much of the distance gained as to be beyond the reach of danger. The flash of a falconet occasionally burst dimly behind, its heavy roar startling back the breeze; and sometimes a cannon ball came skipping over the surges close by. But, the wind being against the Spaniards, it was soon seen that there were left no Indians upon whom to exercise their arms, unless such as had, in their consternation, lost sight of the dim beacon, and remained paddling about the lake at random.

CHAPTER IV

When morning broke over the lake, the voyagers were still at a league's distance from the city. The wind had died away, the clouds parted in the heaven, and long before the sunlight trembled on the snows of Iztaccihuatl, the morning-star was seen peeping over its summit. It bade fair for a goodly day, and Juan, despite his situation, which, rightly considered, was in every point of view, wretched enough, began to feel a sensation of pleasure, as he breathed the fresh air at liberty, and looked around him on the fair prospects, disengaging themselves each moment from the rolling mists. Though the tops of the higher mountains of the east were visible, the lower borders of the lake in that quarter, as well as to the north and south, were yet concealed under vapours. In the west, however, the view was but little obstructed, and he could behold, distinctly enough, the dense masses of edifices, which covered the whole island of Mexico and many a broad acre of water around it. The huge pyramids, with their tower-like sanctuaries, rose proudly, as of yore, high above the surrounding buildings; the turrets and pinnacles, that crowned the royal palaces and the houses of nobles, still gleamed in the morning air; and, as he drew nigh, he could see the gardens of shrubs and flowers on the terraces, which gave to the whole city a look of verdure strange and beautiful to behold.

As soon as objects became distinct, Techeechee, observing

that Juan's garments were yet dripping with wet, took from the prow of the canoe a little bundle, from which he drew a broad, richly ornamented tilmaltli, or cloak, a *maxtlatl*, or cloth to wrap round the loins, sandals for the feet, fillets for the hair, and a fan of feathers to protect the eyes from sunshine. These he proffered to Juan, giving him to understand that he should forthwith doff his Christian weeds, and appear in the guise of a Mexican noble; telling him, at the same time, that they had been provided by Guatimozin, in anticipation of his deliverance. Yet neither remonstrance nor entreaty could prevail upon him to do more than throw off his reeking surcoat, and supply its place by the Indian cloak, which was of sufficient capacity, when folded about his person, almost to conceal his under attire, now in a great measure dried by the warmth of his body. This being accomplished to his satisfaction, Techeechee resumed his paddle, and fixing his eyes upon the imperial city, began to mumble, in an under voice, certain snatches of native airs, which, both in quality and pitch, bore no little resemblance to the suppressed growlings, or rather the groaning of an imprisoned lion, and which, had Juan required any such testimony, would have proved how little his commerce with the Conquerors and his personal affection for himself, had withdrawn his heart from the people and the faith of Montezuma. As he advanced still nearer to the city, his air grew more confident, his tones more resolute and animated; and, by and by, without seeming to regard the presence of the young Spaniard, he launched boldly into a sort

of national anthem, in which the military pride of the Mexicans was mingled with the gloom of their ferocious superstitions. The melody was rude and savage, – or rather it was no melody at all, but a chant or recitative, which was relieved from monotony only by the variations of emphasis, which became stronger and stronger, as the distance waxed less and less to the city. To express the words employed in any of the metrical modes of civilized song, would be to rob the roundelay of its identity; for rhythm and melody were equally set at defiance; – at least, so it would have seemed to an ear accustomed only to the natural music of iambics and dactyls. We will therefore express them in unambitious prose, only premising that before the barbarian had proceeded far in the chant, the song was caught up and continued by the warriors in the fleet of canoes, now paddling out of the mists behind, and by many infidels who watched its approach from the shore, and from an island crag, strongly fortified, that lay a little to the east of the city.

"Mexitli Tetzauhteotl,¹ o-ah! o-ah!" thus sang the pagan, – "the son of the woman² of Tula. 'Mother, I will protect you.'³ The green plume is on his head, the wing of the eagle is on his leg, his forehead is blue like the firmament; he carries a spear

¹ Mexitli, the Terrible God.

² Coatlicue, or Coatliquay, a religieuse, and sort of lady-abbess, of a mythic era. She was deified as the Goddess of Flowers. – A strange mother for such a son. But the Mexicans carried a sword in one hand, and a flower in the other.

³ The words of the god, yet unborn, when the life of Coatlicue was threatened by her *human* children.

and buckler, and with the fir-tree of Colhuacan,⁴ he crushes the mountains. 'Mother, I will protect you.' Am not I the son of Mexico? and is not Mexico the daughter of Mexitli? O-ah, o-ah! Mexitli Tetzauhteotl!

"My father ate the heart of Xochimilco! Where was Painalton, the god of the swift foot, when the Miztecas ran to the mountains? 'Fast, warrior, fast!' said Painalton, brother of Mexitli. His footprint is on the snows of Iztaccihuatl, and on the roof of Orizaba.⁵ Tochtepec and Chinantla, Matlatzinco and Oaxaca, they shook under his feet, as the hills shake, when Mictlanteuctli, king of hell, groans in the caverns. So my father killed the men of the south, the men of the east and west, and Mexitli shook the fir-tree with joy, and Painalton danced by night among the stars.

"Where is the end of Mexico? It begins in Huehuetapallan in the north, and who knows the place of Huehuetapallan?⁶ In the south, it sees the lands of crocodiles and vultures, – the bog and the rock, where man cannot live. The sea washes it on the east, the sea washes it on the west, and that is the end – Who has

⁴ The Hunchbacked Mountain, on the sides of which the Mexicans won their first recorded victory.

⁵ *Pojautecatl*, in Mexican.

⁶ Huehuetapallan, was the name of the unknown land, from which came all the hordes of Toltecs and Aztecs. One remarkable circumstance connected with the famous ruined city near to Palenque in Guatemala, seems to have escaped the theorists. It is said that the Indians call this city by the name of Huehuetapallan. It is far to the *south* of Mexico.

looked to the end of the waters? It is the land of blossoms, – the land of the tiger-flower, and the cactus-bud that opens at night like a star, – of the flower-of-the-dead,⁷ that ghosts come to snuff at, and of the hand-flower,⁸ which our gods planted among the hills. It is a land dear to Mexitli.

"Who were the enemies of Mexico? Their heads are in the walls of the House of Skulls, and the little child strikes them, as he goes by, with a twig. Once, Mexico was a bog of reeds, and Mexitli slept on a couch of bulrushes: our god sits now on a world of gold, and the world is Mexico. Will any one fight me? I am a Mexican. – Mexitli is the god of the brave. Our city is fair on the island, and Mexitli sleeps with us. When he calls me in the morning, I grasp the quiver, – the quiver and the axe; and I am not afraid. When he winds his horn from the temple, I know that he is my father, and that he looks at me, while I fight. Sound the horn of battle, for I see the spear of a foe! Mexitli Tetzauteotl, we are the men of Mexico!"

With such roundelays as these, echoed at a distance by the rowers in the fleet and by many barbarians from the buildings that projected into the lake, Techeechee urged the light canoe through a sluice in the northern dike, and approached that long neck or peninsula, once the island of Tlatelolco, but long since

⁷ The Dahlia.

⁸ *Arbol de las Manitas*– the marvellous tree, of which, besides that in the present Botanic Garden, there are supposed to be but two more specimens in the land, unless known only to the Indians.

united to that of Tenochtitlan, which gave its name to the fifth quarter of the city, and, as it afterwards appeared, was the site of the noblest of the many palaces, built at different periods, by the kings of Mexico. A large portion of the peninsula, midway between its extremity and the ancient bank of the island of Tenochtitlan, was occupied by a garden, divided from the lake by a wall lofty enough to secure it against the assault of a foe, and yet sufficiently low to expose to the eye of a spectator on the lake, the rich luxuriance of groves, among whose waving boughs could be traced the outlines of a spacious edifice, profusely decorated with turrets and observatories, some of which were of great height and singular structure.

Against this wall, through a fleet of fishing canoes, now paddling out into the lake, Techeechee seemed to direct the little skiff, much to Juan's surprise, until, having drawn nigher, he perceived that it was perforated by several gateways or sally-ports, very low, and evidently designed to give entrance only to the humble vessels which composed the Mexican navy. The largest was wide enough to admit two or three of the largest piraguas abreast, and the smaller ones seemed intended only for the private gondolas of the royal family. All were defended by stout wickets, which, as Juan soon perceived, were raised and let fall from within, somewhat in the manner of a portcullis.

The tranquillity that seemed to reign within this sanctified recess, betrayed at once its royal character. In every other quarter of the city, as he passed it, Juan could hear a roaring hum,

as if proceeding from a vast multitude pent within the narrow island, – as was indeed the case, the whole military strength of the empire being concentrated within the limits of the island and the shore-cities that commanded the causeways. But here all was a profound calm, broken only by the songs of birds, and, occasionally, by what seemed the cry of some tamed and domesticated beast of prey.

As Techeechee urged the canoe towards one of the smaller gateways, Juan beheld the wicket ascend from the water, but without seeing by whom or in what manner, it was raised. An instant after, he was on the very point of entering the narrow chasm, perhaps never more to repass it. He turned his eye back again to the lake, and strove to discover the dim lines and masses of shore and city, palace and pyramid, among which he had so lately dwelt in sorrow and confinement. The mists were nearly dispersed, and the sky was clear; but the fiery track of the rising sun over the lake, dazzled his eyes, and, with a veil of radiance, hid the towers of Tezcuco. He caught an indistinct view of two or three brigantines, becalmed at a distance from the shore, which they were endeavouring to regain by the force of oars; but the city of the Acolhuacanese was no longer visible; and by and by, the whole prospect of the lake was shut out by the garden wall, under which he had passed. He had scarce turned away his eyes, when the wicket sunk, with a plunge, into the water. He looked back: but those who had loosed it, were already hidden among the shrubbery. It seemed as if the falling of that portal had shut him

out for ever from the society of his countrymen. His companions were now to be found among the uncivilized and the godless.

A narrow canal, bordered with banks of flowers, conducted the canoe from the gateway to a little stone basin, planted round with trees, at the roots of which were placed carved blocks of stone, as if designed for seats. Here Techeechee sprang ashore, followed by Juan and Befo, the latter now completely refreshed, and, though evidently somewhat surprised, and even daunted, by the novelty of his situation, without showing any symptoms of having repented his change of masters.

"The Great Eagle is in the house of the king, his brother," said the Ottomi, "and his enemies cannot reach him, – no, not even if they were the Tlatoani of the great city. Sit down then, and be at peace; for presently the king will come from the lake, and speak to his brother. Techeechee will go to the wall and look out. The big tiger, – the dog, – Pepo." – He had already acquired the dog's name, or as near an approach to it as his organs could overmaster, and was not a little pleased, when the animal, raising his head at the sound, stalked amicably towards him, rubbing his nose against him in token of good-will. "Pepo! amigo, friend, good rascal!" he said, affectionately, but not without some nervousness – "very pretty Pepo, Techeechee's brother. Guatimozin is the Young Eagle's brother; Techeechee will be Pepo's!" Then, Befo having returned to Juan, he continued, "Let not Pepo roam through the garden; the watchmen on the walls would think him a tiger escaped from his cage, and shoot him with arrows. This

is the Pool of the Full Moon: here the king will come to his brother."

So saying, Techeechee glided away through the shrubbery, and was presently seen ascending the wall, by certain steep steps constructed for the purpose, up to a ledge, undoubtedly prepared to give footing to defenders, from which he could overlook the outer parapet, and enjoy an extensive view of the lake.

And now the outcast Juan, after giving way, for a few moments, to a grief that was the stronger perhaps, from the opportunity thus offered of indulging it in secret, began gradually to be moved by other feelings, in which curiosity soon became predominant; and looking about him, he beheld with his own eyes an example of the strange and barbaric magnificence which characterized the royal gardens of Anahuac.

The sun was already high in the east, and the last rain-drop was exhaling from the leaf. The sky was cloudless, the waters were at rest. It was such a day as lent beauty to objects not in themselves fair; and to the green brilliance of foliage and the harmonious hues of flowers it imparted a loveliness as dear to the imagination as the senses. It was the spring time, too, – the season of Nature's triumph and rejoicing.

The Pool of the Full Moon, as Techeechee had called it, doubtless, from its circular shape, and its diminutive size, was surrounded by a wall of trees as dense as that which enclosed the memorable pond in the garden of Tezcuco. But besides the addition of the stone seats and basin, it was ornamented with

banks of the richest flowers, behind which rose a thick setting of shrubbery; and from the branches of the trees hung rich tufts and festoons of that gray moss – the Barba de España, which gives an air of such indescribable solemnity to the forests of the lower Mississippi. A few little birds warbled among the boughs, and the field-cricket chirped in the bushes. In other respects the place was silent and wholly solitary; and as its green walls shut out almost altogether the spectacles disclosed from other places, Juan left it, after seeing that Techeechee maintained his stand on the wall, as if the fleet were still at a distance.

He now perceived that the garden, though very beautiful, was a labyrinth, or rather, as it seemed, a wilderness of groves, glades, and fountains, some of which last burst from mounds of stone, that were the pedestals of rude and fantastic statues, perhaps idols, and some spouted up into the air, from the mouths of porphyry serpents and dragons, as if the science of hydraulics had already begun to dawn upon the minds of the Mexican artisans. The noblest cypresses rose over the humblest vine, and many a convolvulus rolled its cataract of flowers over the tops of lesser trees, and many an aloe, from a vast pyramid of leaves, reared up its lofty pillar, crowned with a yellow canopy of blossoms. All the splendour of the vegetable world known to Anahuac, found its place in this magnificent retreat: and the plants of the lower zones, and even the palms of the coast, had been made to thrive side by side with those productions which were natural to the elevated valley.

Besides these ornaments and a thousand similar, the animal kingdom was made to add a charm, and, as it soon appeared, a horror to the royal garden; for Juan had no sooner left the pool, than he beheld, besides a thousand birds of every dye among the trees, some half dozen deer frisking over the glades, and heard at but a little distance, the roar of fiercer animals, such as came to his ears, while he was yet on the lake.

At a sound so hostile, Befo bristled and uttered a low bark, as if to apprise his master of the presence of danger; but Juan knew enough of the habits of the Mexican kings to understand that their gardens, besides enclosing all that was beautiful among plants, contained also aviaries and menageries, in which were collected the birds and beasts of their empire; – in other words, they were Zoological Gardens, such as the advance of science is now establishing in the countries of Europe. A little fawn, feeding hard by, started with more terror at this unusual cry of Befo, than at any of the howls to which it had been long accustomed, and ran timidly away. As it fled, Juan remarked that its neck was encircled by a chaplet of flowers, as if lately put on by some caressing hand.

At this sight a new impulse seemed to seize the youth. He faltered, hesitated, cast his eye to the wall, on which Techeechee was yet standing, and then marking the quarter whither the little animal had fled, he beckoned to Befo to take post at his heels, and immediately followed.

He soon found himself among a maze of copses, among which

were scattered divers cages or baskets, of great strength, secured to the trunks of trees, and little paddocks equally strong, each containing some ferocious or untameable beast, many of them brought from the most distant provinces. Thus he beheld, – besides an abundant display of pumas or mitzlis, (the maneless lion,) jaguars, wolves, ounces, and wild dogs, – the bison of Chihuahua staggering in his pen, the antelope or prong-horn of the north, and even the great bear from the ridges of the Oregon or Rocky Mountains. The tapir of Guatemala rolled by his fenny pool, and the peccary herded hard by. Here were apes, ant-eaters, porcupines, and a thousand other animals; and among them, imprisoned with the same jealous care, in suitable cages, were the reptiles of the country, – lizards and adders, and all the family of the *Crotalus*, from the common rattlesnake of America to that frightful one of Mexico and South America, which has been distinguished as especially the Horrid. Here was the phosphorescent *cencoatl*, whose path through the bushes and grass by night is said to be indicated by the gleaming light of his body; the *tlilcoa*, or great black serpent of the mountains, and the still more formidable and gigantic *canauhcoatl*, or Boa-Constrictor, which, like his neighbour, the cayman or crocodile, from the same boiling fens of the coast, made his prey upon the largest stags, and even human beings. With these were many smaller snakes, distinguished for their beauty, and sometimes their docility, some of which latter, entirely harmless, were allowed to crawl about at liberty.

It would require a book by itself, to particularize and describe all the members of this fearful convocation of monsters; of which it was afterwards written by Bernal Diaz, that when the beasts and reptiles were provoked and irritated, so as to howl and hiss together, 'the palace seemed like hell itself.' It is very certain that Befo lost much of his dignity of carriage at the mere sight of such assembled terrors, creeping along reluctantly and with dragging tail; and Juan himself was not without some sensations of alarm, as he found himself now startled by the growl of an angry mitzli, now perturbed by the sudden rustling of a boa among the dried reeds of his couch. The rattlesnakes shook their castanets at his approach, the cayman tumbled, with a sudden plunge, into his muddy pool, the wolf showed his sharp teeth, and the ape darted towards him from the tree, with a wild, chattering, and half hostile scream. But he had remarked that the little fawn directed its course immediately through the thickest of the assemblage; and if that circumstance did not convince him of the safety of the path, he was certainly ashamed to show less courage than the young of a doe. He therefore trudged onwards, and, in a few moments, exchanged the scene for one less frightful, though not less striking.

He was now among the birds of Mexico. A grove, – it might have seemed a forest, – of lofty trees, was covered over with a curious contrivance of nets, some of which were confined to their tops, while others were made to surround the shrubbery at their roots, in all which were confined the noisy prisoners.

Other nets were flung over little pools, whose banks and surface were enlivened by the presence of water-fowl. In some places cages were hung upon the trees, containing the more precious or unmanageable captives. Through this grove one might penetrate in all conceivable directions, and seem to be confined along with its feathered inhabitants, and yet be really separated from them by the nets.

The outer portion or border of the grove, was devoted to the endless tribe of parrots, whose magnificent colours gave a beauty to the treetops, not to be lessened even by the horrid clamour of their voices. The singing birds were confined within the silent recesses of its centre.

If curiosity and a mere love of barbarous display, without other motive, had collected together in the gardens of Mexico her beasts and reptiles, utility had some little influence in the selection of her birds. Their feathers were devoted to a thousand purposes of ornament, and among others, to the construction of those very singular Mosaic works, or pictures, which have won the admiration even of European painters and virtuosos. But while thus providing for the supply of one of the most elegant of wants, the Mexican kings secured to themselves the means of adding the loveliest and most natural feature to their gardens. It would be impossible to convey any just idea of the splendid creatures that went wandering and leaping, like sunbeams, among the leaves and over the grass. Eagles and kites sat on the trees, and storks, herons, and flamingos stalked through the pools. Here the

macaw flashed, screaming, through the boughs; there the wood-pigeon sat cooing by his mate. The little *madrugador*, or early-riser, the happiest of his species, who chirps up his companions, when the morning-star peeps from the horizon, repeated his jovial note; the white-sparrow, the calandra, the cardinal, the sable-and-golden orible, and the little spotted tiger-bird, added their charming voices; and the Centzontli, or mocking-bird, as it is trivially called, for it is worthy of a name much more poetical and dignified, whistled and sang with such a power and variety of melody, as left all other songsters in the background. The little *chupa-rosas*, – rose-pickers, or humming-birds, – darted about from blossom to blossom, needing and acknowledging no bonds save those of attachment to their favourite flowers.

Through this delightful grove Juan stepped, enchanted with its music; and following a pleasant path, over which there echoed no notes louder than those of the little wood-pigeon, such as the traveller yet hears cooing in the copse that surmounts the mouldered pyramid of Cholula, he was soon introduced to a spectacle more striking, more lovely, and to him far more captivating, than any he had yet beheld.

CHAPTER V

In a green nook, exceedingly sequestered, and peculiarly beautified by banks of the richest flowers, were five Indian maidens, three of whom danced under the trees on the smooth grass, to the sound of a little pipe or flute, that was played by a fourth. The other, half kneeling, reclined hard by, fastening a chaplet of flowers round the neck of a fawn, younger and tamer than that which had fled from Befo, and which was now seen frisking uneasily, or perhaps jealously, about its companion.

Young, pretty, and robed with such simplicity as might have become the Hamadryads of Thessaly, revelling around the green oaks with which their fate was so inseparably connected, the dancers might indeed have been esteemed nymphs of the wood, as they moved gracefully and a-tiptoe over the velvet grass, all unconscious of the presence of any person or anything to make them afraid. Their naked feet and arms glistened with ornaments of gold and native rubies; and the white *cueitl*, or cymar, with a peculiar vest or jacket of brilliant colours, while allowing unrestrained motion to their limbs, gave almost a classic and statuary beauty to their figures. The youthful musician leaned against a tree, pleasantly absorbed in the melody she was drawing from the pipe; while the fifth maiden, for whose amusement the diversion was obviously continued, was too much occupied with the pet animal, whose ambition seemed rather to

be to browse upon the chaplet than to wear it, – to give much attention to either the dance or the roundelay.

The whole scene was one of enchanting innocence and repose; and even Befo, who was wont to indicate the presence of a stranger with a growl, betrayed no token of dissatisfaction, so that Juan stood for a little time gazing on, entirely unseen. His looks were fastened upon her to whom the musician and the dancers were but attendants, and who, from other circumstances, had a stronger claim on his regard.

In her he beheld the young infidel, whose influence over his mind, operating upon it only for good, had altered the whole current of his fortunes, and changed what had once seemed a destiny of aggrandisement and renown, into a career of suffering and contumely. He was now in the presence of one, for whom he had incurred the hatred of a vindictive rival, (for all his miseries were dated from the period of his quarrel with Guzman;) for whose sake he had refused the intercession, and spurned the affection, of the still more unhappy Magdalena; and for whom he now thought that even the last and greatest of his griefs, his exile from Christian companionship, was a happiness, since it promised her the inestimable gift of a faith, which he would have gladly purchased her with his life. How far a barbarian and the daughter of a barbarian was worthy of, and capable of inspiring, an affection so romantic and so noble, we must inquire of our hearts, rather than our reason.

She was of that age, which, in our northern climes would have

constituted her a girl, but which, in a tropical region, entitled her to the name of woman. Her figure was neither mean nor low, but of such exquisite proportions as, in these days of voluntary degeneration, are seldom found except among the children of nature. Her skin was, for her race, wonderfully fair; and yet there were, even among the men of Mexico, skins much lighter than those of some of the Spaniards, of which Guatimozin was a famous example. Her dress was similar in fashion to that of the other damsels, but consisted of many more garments, according to the mode of the very wealthy and noble maidens, who were accustomed to wear one cueitl over another, each successive one being shorter than the preceding, so that the borders of each could be distinguished. Thus, when they were of different colours, as was often the case, the whole figure, from the ankles to the waist, seemed enveloped in one voluminous garment, distinguished by broad horizontal stripes, exceedingly gay and brilliant. The colours upon the garments of this maiden were of a more modest character, and richness was given to them rather by borders singularly embroidered in gold and gems, than by any splendour of tints. A little vest or bodice of very peculiar fancy was worn over the shoulders and bosom, secured by a girdle that might have been called a chain, since it was composed of links of gold. Her arms were bare like the others', and her feet, not entirely naked, as was the case with the rest, were protected by a sort of pretty shoes, too complete to be called sandals, and yet too low to be moccasins. With this graceful figure, was a

face, singularly sweet and even beautiful, with eyes so broad, so large, so dark, so lustrously mild and saintlike in expression, that they rivalled those of the young fawn she was caressing, and perhaps, more than the trivial circumstance presently to be mentioned, had contributed to obtain for her a name, by which her countrymen seemed to compare her to the lights of heaven. Among the gold ornaments and gems of emerald and ruby, with which her hair was interwoven in braids, was a large jewel of pearls, the rarest, and therefore the most precious, of trinkets in Tenochtitlan. It was in the form of a star, to which it bore as much resemblance among the sable midnight of her hair, as does the snowy blossom of the great Magnolia amid the dusky obscurity of its evergreen boughs.

Upon this vision Juan could have gazed for hours; but the fawn which he had followed to the retreat, perceiving the formidable Befo so close at hand, bleated out a hasty alarm, and thus directed upon him the eyes of the whole party. The dance and the music ceased; the maidens screamed, and would have fled, but for the sense of duty which constrained them to await the bidding of their mistress. She, though much alarmed at the sight of neighbours so unexpected, yet mingled with her terror feelings which kept her chained to the spot, while the attendants clustered around her, confused, and anxious to fly.

As soon as Juan perceived the alarm of the party, and saw the eyes of the princess directed upon him, he bent a knee half to the earth, as if in the presence of a princess of Christendom,

saying gently,

"I am Juan Lerma, a Castilian – an exile from the Spanish camp, entreating welcome from my enemies, and yet am no enemy. Fear me not, daughter of Montezuma; and fear not this animal, who shall be to thee as harmless as the young fawns."

At these words, pronounced in their own tongue, and with a voice so mild and conciliating, the maidens recovered somewhat from their fright, and assuming at once an air characteristically sedate, cast their eyes upon the earth, while the young princess stood regarding Juan, with a countenance indicative of many changing emotions. Seeing, when he had finished, that he preserved an attitude of submissive respect and expectation, she stepped timidly forward, and presenting him the garland which she had failed to secure around the neck of the favourite, said artlessly, and yet with both dignity and decision,

"The king is the Great Eagle's friend; the daughter of Montezuma is his bondmaid – he is welcome to Mexico. I remember the friend of Montezuma my father, – I remember the good acts of the Christian. – He is welcome."

Then putting the chaplet into his hand, and taking this into her own, with a confidence that was perhaps as much the result of unsophisticated feelings as of peculiar customs, she touched it with her forehead, – indicating by her words, her gift, and her act of ceremonious salutation, that, with her welcome, she confessed the obligation of friendship and gratitude for acts of past kindness.

"I will wear the garland upon my breast," said Juan, with a look of purer satisfaction than he had shown for many long days; "and if heaven grant me fulfilment of the hope that is nearest to my heart, I will wear it there for ever. Noble and lovely maiden, I am here by the will of Guatimozin, – I know not well for what purpose, nor how long I shall be suffered to remain in your presence. This, at least, is certain: the dark day of war has arisen, and this happy garden may soon become a theatre of fierce contention, in which the fairest and the best may perish at the same hour with the worst. Let not that day find Zelahualla without the Christian's cross on her bosom."

"Guatimozin will drive the wicked from the land," said Zelahualla, mildly. "Has my lord the Great Eagle forsaken his wicked people, and will he yet cling to their gods? After a time, Centeotl, the mother of heaven and the earth, will prevail over Mexitli, and redeem men from sorrow: then will men bleed no more on the pyramids, but flowers and fruits will be the only sacrifices demanded by heaven. How is it with the gods of Spain? do they not call for victims for ever? The gods of our land are more just and merciful."

"Alas," said Juan, "this is a delusion brought upon you by our sinful acts, not by any defects of our holy religion. Know, Zelahualla, that there are no gods but ONE, and He is both just and merciful, – the god alike of the heathen and the Christian. But of this I will not speak to you now; though perhaps I may never have opportunity to speak again. If death should come upon

you suddenly, call then, in that grievous hour, upon the name of the Christian's God, and he will not refuse to hear you, who are in ignorance, and therefore sinless. And wear upon your neck this cross, given to me by one who was a beloved friend." (It was the gift of Magdalena.) "Look upon it with reverence, and heaven may vouchsafe a miracle in your favour. Let it not be forgotten, when danger comes to you."

The spirit of the Propaganda had infected the minds of all the Spaniards in America. The ambition of conversion was inseparably linked with that of conquest; and on all occasions, except those of actual battle, the rage of making proselytes was uppermost in the minds of many. This was undoubtedly fanaticism, and, in the case of the fierce and avaricious, it developed itself with all the odious features of superstition. With a few of more gentle and kindly natures, it was a nobler and more benignant passion. While others sought proselytes for the glory of the church, these thought only of doing good to man. The best, the most enthusiastic and successful missionaries, were those whose efforts were prompted by affection. The first impulse, therefore, of Juan, who had long since felt and cherished, even among distant deserts, a strong interest in the fate of this young princess, was to secure to her the blessings of salvation, which his religious instruction could not lead him to hope for any one dying in unbelief. It was a consequence and evidence of affection; but a still stronger proof was given, when he drew from his breast a little silver cross, which, up to this moment, he had treasured

with the most jealous regard, and proffered it to Zelahualla. It was, as has been mentioned, the gift of Magdalena, presented before the evil acts of Hilario and Villafana had interrupted the affection fast ripening in Juan's heart, and accepted because it possessed little value beyond that imputed by consecration and superstition. It was, indeed, as Magdalena had told him, the gift of her deceased mother, and she had always been taught to believe it possessed some of the extraordinary virtues of a talisman. In these virtues Juan was sufficiently benighted to believe; and it was perhaps for this reason, rather than from any grateful memory of the giver, that he had from that day worn it in secret upon his bosom, so that it had even escaped the hands of his jailers in Mechoacan, and from the eyes of his Spanish companions. It was a proof of the pure and disinterested nature of his regard for the Indian princess, as well as of his reliance upon its heavenly protection, that he could rob himself of a relic so prized, in order that its presence might secure to her the benefits of a belief she neither understood nor professed.

If such were his own superstition, it could not be supposed that Zelahualla's was less in degree. On the contrary, she received the humble trinket with a look of respect as well as gratitude, saying with the greatest simplicity,

"What the Great Eagle loves must be good, and Zelahualla will listen when his god speaks to her."

"Is it possible," thought Juan, while flinging the chain of silver beads by which it was secured round his neck, "that a creature

so beautiful and so good – so pure, so innocent, so lovely to the eye and the thought – should be really a pagan and barbarian?"

The question was indeed natural enough. A sweeter impersonation of beauty both mental and corporeal, could scarcely be imagined; and the light of her eyes was so mild and seraphic, that one might wonder whence it came, if not from the operation of that divine belief, which chases from the heart the impurer traits of nature.

What further thoughts might have crowded into Juan's breast, and what might have been the conclusion of an interview so interesting, it is not necessary to imagine. While he was yet securing the chain around the bended neck of the princess, a step, previously heralded by the growl of Befo, rang upon the walk, and the Lord of Death, followed at a little distance by Techeechee, stalked into the covert, arrayed in all the Mexican panoply of war and knighthood. Instead of a tunic of cotton cloth or other woven material, he wore, doubtless over some stronger protection, a sort of hauberk of dressed tiger's skin, fitting tight to his massive chest, and bordered by a skirt of long feathers, reaching nearly to his knees. On his head was a helmet or cap which had once adorned the skull of the same ferocious animal, the teeth and ears flapping about his temples, and the skin of the legs, with the talons remaining, hanging at the sides over his shoulders and breast, waving about in connexion with his long black locks and the scarlet tufts among them. His shield of stout cane-work, painted, and ornamented with a long waving penacho

of feathers, hung at his back, and a macana of gigantic size swung from his wrist. His legs were swathed, merry-andrew-wise, with ribands of scarlet and gilded leather, that seemed to begin at his sandals; and his arms, otherwise naked, were ornamented up to the elbow in a similar way. On the whole, his appearance was highly formidable and impressive, and not the less so that many marks of blood, crusted about his person, as well as divers rents in his spotted hauberk, told how recently and how valiantly he had borne his part in the terrors of conflict.

As he entered the covert, his step was bold, springy, and majestic, such as belongs to the native American warrior, when he treads the prairie and the mountain, beyond the ken of the white man. It happened that his ear being struck by the growl of Befo, his attention was not immediately directed to the princess and her companion; but, seeing the dog, and conceiving at once, though not without surprise, the cause of his presence, he turned round in search of his master, and beheld him engaged securing the relic around the neck of the daughter of Montezuma.

At this sight, his countenance changed from the haughty joy of a soldier, and darkened with gloom and displeasure. He even grasped his macana, and took a stride towards the pair, who were unconscious of his intrusion, until Befo made it evident by a louder growl, and by taking a stand, ready to dispute the warrior's right of approach.

The person of the Lord of Death was at first unknown to Juan; but he beheld enough in his visage to convince him it

was not that of a friend. Still, he knew too much of the almost slavish reverence with which even the highest nobles regarded their king and the child of a king, to apprehend any danger from the warrior's wrath. In this belief he was justified by the act of the barbarian, who, perceiving Zelahualla look towards him with surprise, released the weapon from his grasp, and sinking into the lowest obeisance of humility, kissed the earth at her feet. Then rising and surveying her with a melancholy, but deeply respectful look, he said,

"What am I but a slave before the daughter of Montezuma? The young man of the east is the king's brother. I speak the words of Guatimozin: 'My brother shall look to-day upon the king of Mexico, with the crown upon his head, at the rock of Chapoltepec, among the people.' These are the words of the king. Shall the king's brother obey the king?"

"Doth Guatimozin call the Eagle his brother?" exclaimed Zelahualla, with a look of the greatest satisfaction. "Then shall no evil befall him among the people. Let my lord the Christian and Great Eagle depart, and fear not: for the men of Mexico know that he was good to the king and the king's daughter, when the king was a captive; and therefore Zelahualla will remember what he says of the god of the silver cross."

Thus summoned, and thus dismissed, Juan withdrew his eyes from the beaming and singularly engaging countenance of the maiden, and looked to the Lord of Death, as if to signify his readiness to depart. But the Lord of Death seemed for a moment

to have lost his powers of locomotion. He remained gazing upon the princess with an aspect increasing in gloom, and once or twice seemed as if he would have spoken something in anger and reprehension. Yet deterred by the divinity of royalty that hedged about her, or more probably by the divinity of her beauty, he roused up at last, and, after making another deep reverence, which was as if a lion had bowed down at the feet of a doe, he strode away without speaking, followed by Juan and Techeechee.

From Techeechee Juan learned what he had in part gathered from the obscure expressions of the noble: He was summoned to witness the coronation of the young king in form before the assembled Mexicans, on the consecrated hill of Chapoltepec, on which occasion he was to be honoured and his person made sacred, by the king bestowing on him the title of friend and brother.

The path led Juan as before through the royal menagerie; and while passing among the wild beasts, Techeechee signified to the Christian that the presence of Befo among the Mexicans would subject him to much difficulty, if not danger; and would certainly, the moment he was seen, produce a confusion in the assemblage, indecorous to the occasion, and highly displeasing to the king and the Mexican dignitaries. To this Juan justly assented, and not knowing in what other manner he could dispose of his faithful attendant, he agreed, at Techeechee's suggestion, to confine him in one of the several empty cages, wherein he was assured and believed, he would remain in safety. This being

accomplished, and not without trouble, he endeavoured with caresses to reconcile the animal to his novel imprisonment, and then left him.

He found the Lord of Death at the pool, with a piragua, very singularly carved and ornamented, in which were six Mexicans, known at once by their dress to be warriors of established reputation, the rules of Mexican chivalry not allowing any soldier, even if the son of the king, to wear, in time of war, any but the plainest white garment, until he had accomplished deeds worthy of distinction. These were arrayed in escaupil, variously ornamented with plumes and gilded leather; they had war-clubs and quivers, and their appearance was both martial and picturesque.

At a signal from Masquazateuctli, they seized their paddles and began to urge the piragua towards the water-gate of the wall, and Techeechee leaping into the little canoe, Juan prepared to follow after him. He was arrested by the Lord of Death, who touched his arm, though not rudely, and looking into his face for awhile, with an expression in which anger seemed to struggle with melancholy, said,

"The Great Eagle is the brother of Guatimozin, – Masquazateuctli is but his slave. Where would the king's brother have been this day, had the king not taken him from the prison-house?"

"In heaven, if it becomes me to say so – certainly, at least, in the grave," replied Juan, in some surprise. "In this capture, or this

rescue, as I may call it, the king will bear witness, I did not myself concur; for such concurrence I esteemed unbecoming to my state as a Christian and Spaniard. Yet I am not the less grateful to Guatimozin, and I acknowledge he has given me a life."

"It was a good thing of the king," said the barbarian; "but what is this? Are you a Spaniard in Mexico, and alive? neither upon the block of the pyramid, nor in the cage at the temple-yard? The king feeds you in his house, he gives you water from his fountain, and robes from his bed, — he takes you by his side, and, among his people, he says, 'This man is my brother; therefore look upon him with love.' Is not this good also of the king?"

"It is," replied Juan, gravely; "and I need not be instructed, that it becomes me to be grateful, even by a warrior so renowned and noble as the Lord of Death."

The eyes of the barbarian sparkled with a fierce fire while he continued, —

"What then should you look for in Mexico, but shelter and food? — a house to hide you from the angry men of Spain, and bread to eat in your hiding-place? Where are the quiver and the macana? Will the king's brother fight the king's enemies?"

"If they be my countrymen, the Spaniards, *no*," replied Juan, with great resolution, yet not without uneasiness; for he read in the question, an early attempt to seduce him into apostacy. "I am the king's guest, — his prisoner, if he will, — his victim, if it must be, — but not his soldier."

"Hearken then to me," said the Indian, with a stern and

magisterial voice: "The king is the lord of the valley, the master of men's lives, and the beloved of Mexico; but he has not the heart of the old man gray with wisdom, and he knows not the guile of the stranger. Why should his brother do him a wrong? The king thinks his brother a green snake from the corn-field, to play with;⁹ but he has the teeth of the rattling adder!"

"Mexican!" said Juan, indignantly, "these words from the mouth of a Spaniard, would be terms of mortal injury; and infidel though you be, yet you must know, they bear the sting of insult. What warrior art thou, that canst abuse the helplessness of a captive, and do wrong to an unarmed man?"

"Do I wrong thee, then?" replied the Lord of Death, grimly. "Lo, thou art here safe from thy bitter-hearted people, and wilt not even repay the goodness of the king, by striking the necks of his enemies, who are also thine! Is not this enough? Put upon thee the weeds of a woman, and go sleep in the garden of birds, afar from danger, – yet call not the birds down from the tree; hide thee in the bush of flowers, yet pluck not the flowers from the stem. Let the guest remember he is a guest, and steal not from the house that gives him shelter. – Does the king's brother understand the words of the king's slave?"

"I do not," said Juan, with a frown. "They are the words of a dreamer; – " and he would have passed on towards the canoe, which he now perceived was waiting him near the wicket, but that the Lord of Death again arrested him.

⁹ The Mexicans were accustomed to tame and domesticate certain harmless reptiles.

"The king is good," he said with deep and meaning accents, "but the wrong-doer shall not escape. Perhaps," – and here he softened the severity of his speech, and even assumed a look of friendly interest, – "perhaps the Great Eagle has left his best friend among the fighting-men of Tezcuco? Let him be patient for a little, and his friend shall be given to him."

"You speak to me in riddles," replied Juan, impatiently. "Let us be gone."

The Mexican gave the youth a look of the darkest and most menacing character, and uttering the figurative name which Guatimozin had already applied to the princess, said,

"The Centzontli is the daughter of Montezuma, – the bird that is not to be called from the tree, the flower that is not to be pulled from the stem. – The king is good to his brother; but Mexico is not a dog, that the Spaniard should steal away the daughter of heaven."

Then, clutching his war-axe, as if to give more emphasis to his warning, the nature of which was no longer to be mistaken, he gave the young man one more look, exceedingly black and threatening, and strode rapidly away. The next moment, he leaped, with the activity of a mountain-cat, into the piragua, and speaking but a word to the rowers, was instantly paddled into the lake.

Juan followed, not a little troubled and displeased by the complexion and tone of the menace, and stepping into the canoe, was soon impelled from the garden. He perceived the piragua

floating hard by, and the Lord of Death standing erect among the rowers. As soon as the canoe drew nigh, the warrior-noble made certain gestures to Techeechee, signifying that he should conduct the youth on the voyage alone. Then giving a sign to his attendants, the prow of the piragua was turned towards the east, and, much to the surprise of Juan, and not a little even to that of the Ottomi, was urged in that direction with the most furious speed. As they started, the rowers set up a yell, as if animated by the prospect of some stirring and adventurous exploit.

Techeechee gazed after them for a moment, and then handling his paddle, he directed the canoe round the point of Tlatelolco, and was soon lost among a multitude of similar vessels, all proceeding to the southwest, in the direction of the hill of Chapoltepec.

CHAPTER VI

The review, division, and minute organization of the vast army now at the disposal of the Captain-General, occupied nearly the whole day, which was unexpectedly propitious, as the rainy season might be said to have already commenced. Clouds, indeed, gathered over the sky, in the afternoon, giving a melancholy aspect to the hills and meadows; and a thick fog rose from the lake and spread around, until it had pervaded the lower grounds on its borders. Yet not a drop of rain fell during the whole day, and, by sunset, the clouds dispersed, without having disturbed the firmament with thunder; and the lake was left to glimmer in the light of a young moon, and the multitude of stars.

The whole native population of Tezcuco had been drawn to the meadows, to witness the glories of military parade, and the city was deserted and solitary. Nay, even the watchmen on the walls, forgetting the audacious assault of the past night, and anxious to share a spectacle from which their duties should have separated them, stole, one after another, from their posts, until the northern gates were left wholly unguarded. The vanity of the Commander-in-Chief could not permit the absence of a single effective Spaniard from the scene of display, and the walls had been left to Tlascalans.

Late in the afternoon, and when the mists were thickest, and the hues of the fields most mournful, a single individual passed

from that gate at which Juan Lerma, eight or nine weeks before, had terminated the first chapter of his exile. A friar's cassock and cowl enveloped his whole form, yet the dullest eye would have detected in the vigour and impetuosity of his step, the presence of passions which could not belong to the holy profession. His eye was fixed upon a shadowy figure, almost lost among the mists, that went staggering along, as if upon a course not yet defined, or over paths difficult to be traced; and while he was obviously watching and pursuing the retreating shape, it seemed to be with a confidence that feared not the observation of the fugitive. Thus, when the figure paused, he arrested his steps, and resumed them only when they were resumed by the other; and, in this manner, he followed onwards, with little precaution, until Tezcuco was left far behind, hidden in the fog. As he moved, he muttered many expressions, indicative of a deeply disturbed and even remorseful mind.

"All this have *I* done," he exclaimed, bitterly, and almost wildly. "Mine own sin, though black as the soot of perdition, is stained a triple dye by the malefactions it has caused in others — *Mea culpa, mea culpa, mea maxima culpa!* Cursed avarice! cursed ambition! There *is* a retribution that follows us even to the grave; sin is punished with sin, — the first fault lays fire to the train of our vices, and in their explosions we are further stained, — punished, destroyed. That sin! and what has come of it? Where is the gain to balance it? Cajoled by the demon that seduced me, cheated and flung aside — suspected, degraded, demoralized —

a wanderer, a villain, a cur – the friend of rogues, and myself their fittest fellow – Heaven is strong, and justice oppressive. —*Munda cor meum ac labia mea!* for I blaspheme!"

Thus muttered the distracted Camarga, for it was he who gave vent to such troubled expressions. Some of these were uttered so loudly, that they seemed to reach the ear of the fugitive, who turned round, looked back for a moment, and then diving into a misty hollow, was for a short time concealed from his eyes.

"Ay, – fly, fly!" he muttered, gnashing his teeth; "fly, wretch, fly! But wert thou fleeter than the mountain-deer, thou couldst not escape the fiend that is already tearing at thy vitals. Fling thyself into the lake, too, and after death, open thine eyes upon a phantom of horror, that will sit before thee for ever!"

Then pursuing with greater activity, he again caught sight of the fugitive, who was ascending the little promontory of the cypress-tree, on which Juan Lerma had first beheld the faces of his countrymen.

"And Hernan Cortes will yet have me speak the story!" he murmured. "Be it so – live she or die she, he shall hear it, and curse the curiosity that compelled it. Ay! and his anguish will be some set-off to the joy of having triumphed over the poor wretch he persecuted. God rest thee, Juan Lerma! for thou at least hast died in ignorance; and but for this mischance, – this fatal mischance, – hadst been worthy of a better fate, and therefore saved from destruction."

As he uttered these broken words, he perceived La

Monjonaza, – for it was this unhappy creature whom he followed, – steal over the mound to the right hand, as if turning her steps from the lake landward. But being aware that she had beheld him, and suspecting this to be merely a feint, designed to mislead him, he directed his course to the water-side, and stepping among the rocks and brambles at the base of the hill, passed it in time to behold Magdalena stalking, with a countenance of distraction, towards the lake, as if impelled by some terrible goadings of mind, to self-destruction.

"Wretched creature!" he cried, springing forwards, and staying her frenzied steps, "what is this you do? Fling not away the grace that is in wait. —*You*, at least, may live and be forgiven."

To his great surprise, the unhappy girl, whose countenance had indicated all the iron determination of desperation, offered not the slightest resistance, while he drew her from the water-side; but turning towards him with the face of a maiden detected in some merry and harmless mischief, she began to laugh; but immediately afterwards, burst into tears.

"Good heavens!" said Camarga, with compassion, "are you indeed brought to this pass? What! the mind that even amazed Don Hernan – is it gone? wholly gone? Miserable Magdalena! this is the fruit of sin!"

At the sound of a name, so seldom pronounced in these lands, the lady rose from the rock, on which she had suffered herself to be seated, although it was observable that she showed no

symptoms of surprise. She gazed fixedly at Camarga for an instant, and a dark frown gathering on her brows, she turned to depart, without reply. Camarga, however, detained her, and would have spoken; but no sooner did she feel his hand laid upon her mantle than she turned suddenly round, with a look of inexpressible fierceness, saying, with the sternest accents of a voice always strikingly expressive,

"Who art thou, that comest between me and my purpose? If a priest or an angel, fly, – for here thou art with contamination; if a man, and a bad man, still fly, lest thou be struck dead with the breath of one deeper plunged in guilt than thyself. – If a devil, then remain, and claim thy prey from the apostate and murderess. Dost thou forbid me even to die?"

"Ay – I do," replied Camarga, trembling, yet less at her terrible countenance than her fearful expressions: "I am one who, in the name of heaven, – a name which is alike polluted: in thy mouth and in mine – command thee to recall thy senses, if they have not utterly fled, and bid thee, thinking of self-slaughter no longer, leave this land of wretchedness, and, in a cloister, and with a life of penitence, obtain the pardon which heaven will not perhaps withhold."

"Pardon comes not without punishment," said Magdalena, sternly; "and I would not that it should: and for penitence, – the moaning regret that exists without torture and suffering, – know that it is but a mockery. Kill thy friend, and repent, – yet dream not of paradise. Scourge thyself, die on the rack or gibbet, and

await thy fate in the grave. Begone; or rest where thou art, and follow me no more."

"Till thou die, or till thou art lodged within the walls of a convent," said Camarga, grasping her arm with a strength and determination she could not resist: "thus far will I follow thee, rave thou never so much. Oh, wretched creature! and wert thou about to rush into the presence of thy Maker, unshriven, unrepenting, unprepared?"

Magdalena surveyed him with a look that changed gradually from anger to wistful emotion; and then again shedding tears, she dropped on her knees, saying, with a tone and manner that went to his heart,

"I will shrive me then, and then let me go, for thy presence persecutes me. – Well, and perhaps it is better; for it is long since I have looked upon a man of God – long since I have spoken with any just Christian but *one*, – and him I have given up to the murderers. Hear me then, and then absolve or condemn as thou wilt, for I judge myself; and I confess to thee, only that my words may drive thee away, as would the moans of a coming pestilence. Hear me then, friar, and then begone from me."

"Arise," said Camarga, "I seek not thy confession, at least not now: I have that will draw it from thee, at a fitter time and place. In this distant spot, thou art exposed to danger from the infidels."

"If thou fearest them, away! Why dost thou trouble me? If thou stayest, listen to my words; for though they come too late, yet will they cause thee to do justice to the name, and say masses

for the soul, of Juan Lerma."

"Speak of Juan Lerma," said Camarga, with a trembling voice, "and I will indeed listen to thee. *In nomine Dei Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti*, speak and speak truly. Cursed be thou, even by my lips, if thou speakest that which is false, or concealest aught that is true!"

"Truth, though I die, – and let me die when it is spoken," said Magdalena, placing her lips with the instinctive reverence of habit to the cross which Camarga extended. As she kissed it, her heart seemed to soften, and she shed many bitter tears, while pouring forth her broken and melancholy story.

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